

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District
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DRAFT: 10/13/15

Executive Board

Minutes of September 9, 2015 Meeting

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hymel on September 9, 2015 at 3:31 p.m. in the Heritage Conference Room, Novato Fire Protection District Administration Office, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945.

Board Members Present:

County of Marin
Marin County Sheriff
City of Novato
Fire Services
Ross Valley Cities/Towns
Special Districts

Matthew Hymel
Robert Doyle
Jim Berg
Richard Pearce
Debra Stutsman
Bill Hogan

Board Members Absent:

City of San Rafael
Police Departments
Southern Marin Cities/Towns

Chris Gray
Todd Cusimano
Jim McCann

Staff Present:

MERA Executive Officer
MERA Deputy E.O. – Next Gen Project
MERA Operations Officer
DPW Communications Services Manager
County Communications Engineer
Recording Secretary

Maureen Cassingham
Dave Jeffries
Craig Tackabery
Shelly Nelson
Richard Chuck
Jennifer Schwarz

Guests:

MERA Finance Committee Vice Chair
Marin County Public Works Director

Tom Gaffney
Raul Rojas

A. Consent Calendar

All matters on the Consent Calendar are to be approved with one motion unless a Member of the Executive Board or the public requests that separate action be taken on a specific item.

1. Resolution of Commendation – Jennifer Tejada, MERA Governing Board Member
Former Chief of Police, City of Sausalito
2. Minutes from July 8, 2015 Executive Board Regular Meeting
3. Next Gen System Project Costs Replenishment Update
4. Bi-monthly Report on MERA Reserve Funds Balances
5. Report No 31 on Strategic Plan Implementation
6. Revised FY15-16 Executive Board Meeting Schedule

M/S/P Pearce/Berg to approve Consent Calendar Items 1-6 as presented.

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

Motion carried.

Pearce added his appreciation for Tejada's excellent work on the Outreach Committee.

B. Executive Officer's Report (Cassingham)

1. Recommendation of Financial Advisor for Financial Advisory and Bond Sale Services – Next Gen System Project

Cassingham presented the recommendations of (1) Sperry Capital, Inc.; (2) Gaffney and Cassingham to complete contract negotiations with Sperry with input from MERA General Counsel; and, (3) authorization of the Executive Officer to execute the final Letter of Engagement. She reported that the Finance Committee on August 12 approved the RFP. She and Gaffney were tasked with the selection process and development of the recommendation presented today. She said normally this would have been presented to the Committee before the Executive Board but four Committee members are on the Executive Board, and Gaffney, the fifth, is co-presenting today.

Cassingham said the RFP includes a \$10,000 budget for the F.A. to review MERA's phased bond financing strategy and market conditions and trends relative to this strategy. Four pre-qualified local firms were solicited for proposals with two responding by the August 28 deadline. Both Sperry and PFM received an A+ rating on all the criteria except for fees. Sperry's fees were about 30% less plus they included a Preliminary

Financing Plan which was above and beyond the RFP showing a clear understanding of MERA's financing goals.

Cassingham noted Sperry has recently assisted MERA with the surety substitution and the performance was excellent. The substitution ultimately involved much more work than anticipated and they were the originators of this opportunity for critical Project cash flow. Gaffney added he expected to get more proposals but the two received were very good and fees were very favorable. The whole idea was to get a third party view to test all our financial assumptions to date. We are very pleased with Sperry. Pearce said he liked the idea that Sperry is local. Cassingham confirmed with Gaffney that he has favorable past experience with both firms.

M/S/P Pearce/Stutsman to approve the recommendation of Sperry Capital, Inc., to provide Financial Advisory and Bond Sale Services to MERA for the Next Gen System Project per their proposal, (2) authorize Gaffney and Cassingham to complete contract negotiations with Sperry with input from General Counsel, and (3) authorize the Executive Officer to execute same.

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

Motion carried.

2. Report on Creation of Gen III Reserve

Cassingham reprised the last two years plus discussions of the Reserve including the August 12 Finance Committee review of same. She also cited the December 10, 2014 Governing Board directive to develop a Gen III Reserve Plan. Jeffries' Member outreach regarding the Next Gen Project underscored support for the Reserve. Discussion of the Reserve has been in parallel with the cost of the System Upgrade Agreement (SUA) to keep the Next Gen System current.

Cassingham said input is requested on the key issues that keep coming up, namely the amount of the Reserve and the extent of the Gen III System it should fund, sources of funding and timing of the establishment of the Reserve. DPW and vendors would likely be MERA's resources in estimating Gen III costs. The Finance Committee has focused on continuing all or some portion of the member retired debt services contributions of \$2.1M per year to fund a Gen III Reserve, cover increased Next Gen O&M and/or fund the SUA. The Finance Committee has recommended the new Financial Advisor be tasked with working with MERA in developing the Gen III Reserve and costing funding options as we work on Next Gen financing together. Cassingham added the discussion of an annual review by the Governing Board regarding Gen III Reserve goals and strategy with its other annual budget adoptions.

Gaffney said Gen III decisions may be best timed when we determine the costs of Next Gen. Pearce said, as Jeffries noted, MERA made promises during Next Gen member

outreach to work on a Gen III Reserve. In response to Hogan, Gaffney said it may be possible to create a Next Gen Reserve with the parcel tax that could have bearing on Gen III. Bond Counsel will need to advise.

Hogan asked about the SUA. Pearce said it could be paid for by a self-funded Sinking Fund or it could be a vendor contract option. The F.A. can advise us on the best, most cost-effective approaches for MERA. Gaffney added that the first approach is a capital charge and an SUA is an operating cost. Hogan asked if the parcel tax can be used to pay for the SUA if it supports Next Gen System updates. Gaffney said the SUA is an eligible parcel tax use but use for a Gen III Reserve would have to be explored with Counsel. Hymel said this is a longer term consideration which the F.A. can assist with.

3. Report #6 on Next Gen Project Oversight Committee (NGPOC) - Jeffries

Jeffries presented his report as an informational update. On July 8, the Executive Board authorized DPW to negotiate a contract with Federal Engineering. The process concluded with presentation of the contract to the Governing Board on August 26, which was approved with the inclusion of an FE draft Project timetable. He confirmed with Hymel that the presentation date to the BOS was moved to September 22.

Jeffries said once approved, DPW would issue a Notice to Proceed to FE. MERA staff will work with FE on a detailed Project timeline and create a corresponding meeting schedule for MERA reviews and approvals. FE monthly reports would be disseminated to MERA Committees and Boards to keep them apprised of the status of key tasks, work in progress and upcoming project activities. He added that staff would be restarting a MERA Newsletter, including updates on the Project's progress.

4. Report on Non-Member System Users Zero-Rate Fee Schedule and Next Gen Operating Costs

Cassingham reported on the Non-Member Users Subcommittee meeting today prior to this meeting. Pearce, the DPW team, Jeffries, and Cassingham met to discuss the current zero-rate fee for non-member use and their possible contribution to Next Gen O&M. The spreadsheet attached to the Board staff report on this was reviewed. It was agreed that Inverness Fire Volunteers be removed as they are covered by member IPUD. The type of service they provide was discussed, for example mutual aid, automatic aid and reliance by some on the MERA system as an agency's own system. Number of radios and source of procurement of MERA's radios was also included on the list. Some non-member radios were paid for by the original Bonds.

Cassingham said when the zero-rate fee is discussed in conjunction with the annual budgets, questions arise about non-member use, system impacts and whether they should be charged. The Subcommittee generally concurred to leave the rate for mutual-aid users as is but research how, for example, Federal and State non-member users came to use the System, their current and future relationship with MERA and its members and possible formalization of their continued use by Governing Board action. More time will be

needed to complete this research and communicate in advance to the non-members if any changes are proposed.

Pearce confirmed with Doyle that the Sheriff dispatches for Pt. Reyes and noted they have 47 radios. Doyle said the number should be reviewed as it sounds high. Hogan said Pt. Reyes has its own fire which may account for part of this number. Pearce said it's hard to determine system utilization unless non-members have their own talk group. Hogan confirmed Pt. Reyes are regular users during the day. Nelson said statistics cannot be generated without separate talk groups.

Hymel asked about the difference between contract services and mutual aid. He thought ambulance might be considered mutual aid. Pearce said automatic aid is a requirement through the EMS office. Jeffries said EMS requires ambulances to have MERA radios since they are part of the response system and part of their contract requirements. Pearce said if there is a significant drawn-down of ambulances, they act as backfill. Doyle noted that GGNRA breakdown as law and fire but Seashore does not. Nelson confirmed Seashore uses for fire and law under one user name.

Hymel asked about next steps. Cassingham said a closer look at the non-mutual aid users would be in order, followed by formalization of their system use. She will work with the Subcommittee on this. Hymel asked how hospitals use the system. Pearce said the receiving facilities talk to the paramedics in the ambulances. Pearce agreed with Jeffries that since ambulances are for-profit, cost-sharing with them is worth exploring. Jeffries said, as with the Humane Society, any cost-sharing may result in contract pass-throughs back to the member agencies that use them. Hymel said research on how non-members came to use the system may shed light on all this.

5. Other Information Items

None.

C. Operations Reports - Tackabery

1. Update on Bay Hill Tower Replacement Project

Tackabery summarized his information report noting Executive Board approval of installing a temporary tower and relocation of MERA equipment to the replacement tower. Work is underway on the temporary and the new tower is being installed by others. When the new tower is complete, MERA will install its equipment and cable on October 4 and remove the temporary. Final cost is expected within budget.

2. Discussion of Need for End-User Training Policy

Tackabery presented his report which provided historical background on the Operational Issues Working Group Subcommittee's efforts to review and update end-user, dispatch and manager supervisors' training materials. The completed materials are now posted to

a password-protected training page on the MERA website. The Subcommittee has since reviewed and updated the trained trainers list. Two classes to train the trainers were held in May. A County-wide training of end-users will be conducted in October with two classes for all the member agencies.

In the training done to date, Tackabery said it was determined that there was a need to improve supervisor training. A class for this is planned for early 2016. And, the Subcommittee found there is no written policy of end-user training requirements. The Mutual Aid Communications Plan does not specify training requirements. Four issues were identified by the Subcommittee: (1) that a formal policy would give standing and establish training as a priority; (2) whether a policy should mandate training requirements, especially for first-time users; (3) should a policy require certificates of completion or define a process for same; and (4) should each agency have a trained trainer on staff.

Tackabery requested a policy discussion to provide direction on formalization or keep the status quo. Pearce said a policy is important and asked whether this could be handled by the member departments, or one-time classes followed by online refreshers. Tackabery said it seems like fire departments have more structured training processes as a group. Police Departments and Public Works do more individual trainings and less collectively. Nelson added the fire academies address this as well as through established annual trainings, whereas law enforcement does not have similar mechanisms. She said the MERA training syllabi are instructor-led, not PowerPoint. Manager supervisor training class is interactive and scenario driven, as is dispatcher training.

Pearce emphasized that training is a big piece of the System and its effectiveness. Hymel said it would make sense that agencies of a certain size would have their own trainers. With smaller agencies, this may not be practical. In response, Nelson said there are 37 trainers spread across the disciplines and not every member has one. Jeffries said Novato provides training during orientation. Field training officers bridge the rest of the gap. A trainer could do the original orientation. Manager classes could benefit from a multi-discipline approach, especially for bigger events.

Hogan said MMWD handles basic training through FTO with periodic refreshers. The value of regular training from MERA would be for irregular incidents like a fail/soft, big events, etc. Nelson discussed minimum talk protocol and discipline. Jeffries said refreshers help minimize busies. Tackabery said it would be difficult for MERA to track the training of 2800 users which is where the individual agencies come in. Pearce said it is important to provide the tools and put it on the agencies to train. Berg noted the potential liability of the use of a single plan and make it incumbent on the agencies to follow it. Nelson confirmed for Doyle that smaller agencies need to either train together for training or rely on larger agencies. Tackabery noted county-wide training is helpful to the smaller agencies plus it provides for cross-training.

Tackabery summarized the discussion stating training should be somewhat structured. Hymel said smaller agencies should be asked to partner with smaller or a larger agency.

Rojas asked if this should become a policy to be communicated to the members. Hymel said at minimum, the list of member agencies should be shared. Rojas added that smaller agencies should be asked to identify their training partner agencies. Tackabery said he would present a policy at the next Executive Board meeting.

3. Proposed Replacement Radios Policy and Procedures

Tackabery presented the Finance Committee requested Radio Replacement Policy that requires member and non-member replacements to work with the Next Gen System. He noted the Policy was very similar to NERA's New Radio Policy. Tackabery confirmed for Pearce that all replacement radios must be upgradable. Rojas said there were previous discussions of the replacement of all member radios with Next Gen and what happens with the prior purchase of upgradables. Tackabery said that issue remains to be addressed and this Policy focuses on replacements now. There is the issue of who pays to upgrade replacement later. Jeffries said this has been addressed with the commitment to replace all radios one-for-one with Next Gen. The benchmark date has been what was the number in use on the Parcel Tax Measure election date. Pearce said there would be value to having operational replacement radios on the shelf. Hymel said while this has not been resolved, these radios could also be used by non-police/fire users not covered by the parcel tax. He said radios capable of use on Next Gen was the primary consideration now.

M/S/P Berg/Pearce to adopt the Replacement Radios Policy and Procedures as presented.

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

Motion carried.

4. Request for Additional Radios – Marin County Probation Department

Tackabery presented the request for five additional radios from County Probation. NERA Ops had a good discussion about their use and recommended approval with the requirement that they be upgradable. Berg asked if they were eligible for one-to-one replacement. Hymel confirmed they are not since they were not part of the November election base number. Doyle added that the additional radios are part of a Probation safety issue.

M/S/P Doyle/Berg to approve County Probation's request for five radios, with the requirement that they be APX one-band operational, second upgradeable or APX dual band, both bands operational radios.

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

Motion carried.

5. Status/Work Statistics Reports (Chuck)

Chuck presented NERA System Usage Reports for May, June and July 2015. There were 6 seconds of busies out of 757 hours call time in May. June had total call time of 759 hours with 3 seconds of busies. July had 794 hours call time with 0 seconds busies.

Pearce asked, with talk of El Niño, if the protocols were in place. Nelson said they are in place for fire season but Pearce wanted assurance they would be in place for flood season. Chuck said County Fire does a regular VHF overlay exercise and coordinates with the other fire departments.

6. Other Information Items

None.

D. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

None.

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Cassingham
Executive Officer and Secretary

NEXT: MERA Executive Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 18, 2015 – 3:30 p.m.