

# MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District  
95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945  
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**DRAFT: 3/23/17**

## Executive Board Regular Meeting

### Minutes of March 8, 2017 Meeting

#### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Cusimano on March 8, 2017, at 3:30 p.m. at the Novato Fire Protection Administration Office, Heritage Conference Room, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945. Self-introductions followed.

#### **Board Members Present:**

Marin County Sheriff  
City of San Rafael  
City of Novato  
Fire Services  
Police Departments  
Ross Valley Cities/Towns  
Southern Marin Cities/Towns  
Special Districts

Robert Doyle  
Chris Gray  
Matt McCaffrey  
Richard Pearce  
Mike Norton  
Todd Cusimano  
Greg Chanis  
Tom Roach

#### **Board Members Absent:**

County of Marin

#### **Staff Present:**

MERA Executive Officer  
MERA Deputy Executive Officer-  
Next Gen Project  
MERA Operations Officer  
County Communications Engineer  
Recording Secretary

Maureen Cassingham  
Dave Jeffries  
Pat Echols  
Richard Chuck  
Lauren Pallas

#### **Guests:**

County of Marin  
Federal Engineering

Dan Eilerman  
Dennis Marin

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) Minutes from January 11, 2017 Executive Board Regular Meeting
- 2) Report No. 52 on Strategic Plan Implementation
- 3) Update on Non-Member MERA System User Letters of Agreement (LOAs)
- 4) Update on Retirement of 2007 Project Note.
- 5) Bi-Monthly Report on MERA Reserve Funds Balance.

*M/S/P Pearce/Gray to approve Consent Calendar Items 1 through 5 as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
Motion carried

B. Executive Officer's Report – (Cassingham)

- 1) Proposed Preliminary FY17-18 MERA Operating, New Project Financing and Revenue Bonds Budgets

Cassingham said the Finance Committee has reviewed and recommended Executive Board approval of the three Preliminary Proposed FY17-18 MERA Budgets. She noted the Operating Budget is the only one over which there is discretion. The proposed total is \$1,973,710, reflecting a 4.5% increase over prior year. Her report provided a history of prior year budget totals.

Cassingham said the Citizens Bank Loan Note has a \$225,000 budget, the amount which was determined by the Governing Board years ago. This amount slightly over-collects the actual Note payment of \$208,000, which is retained in the Fund for current System projects. 2010 Revenue Bond payments are prescribed by the Debt Service Schedule. The FY17-18 payment is \$2,123,200.

Cassingham noted the variances in the Operating Budget for the 4 County service contracts, which reflect 3.6% CPI adjustments. Likewise, there is a 3.6% CPI for the Executive Officer's contract line item. Exhibit 2 of the Budget reflects 6 months' site rental and utilities for Tomales. Remaining MALT documentation for Tomales will be presented in April.

*M/S/P Pearce/Gray to recommend approval of the Proposed Preliminary FY17-18 Budgets for the Operating, New Project Financing and 2010 Refunding Revenue Bonds Funds for distribution to the Member agencies by March 17.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
Motion carried

2) Other Information Items

None

C. Operations Reports – (Echols)

1) Update on Next Gen Project

Echols reported that the Board of Supervisors approved the Motorola Next Gen implementation contract on March 7. He thanked Chuck, Jeffries, Brown, Pittman, Operations Working Group, and the Project Oversight Committee for their great efforts with this over the last 6 months. This hard work produced the best contract we could get given only one vendor to work with.

Echols said the Motorola kickoff meeting is scheduled for March 24 at 10:00 a.m. at MCC. The MERA Negotiating Team will attend with invitations to Pearce and Cusimano. Marin will also attend as Project Manager. He will be located at the County Communications Office when not in the field. An RFP for CEQA consulting services has been drafted to undertake environmental studies and produce environmental documents. This will be on the street soon.

Echols said the kickoff meeting will commence detailed design including two steps. The first is preliminary detailed design to be submitted in May or June. Review would follow and final design would reflect those updates in July or this summer. This step would provide more for CEQA analysis and the environmental consultant would be aboard.

Echols added that concurrent with the environmental work would be the entitlement work primarily for the new sites. Tomales has been secured, but Wolfback Ridge, the new Over The Air (OTA) site and Muir Beach are pending. Muir Beach Volunteer Fire is building a new station with MERA co-locating there. Leases are predicated on design detail. Existing site leases need to be revisited for any limitations that might be imposed for Next Gen. Two systems will be operating in parallel, which will increase site activity and equipment, and may have short-term lease impacts. The DPW team will work with Cassingham to ensure compliance. Cassingham added that site ownership varies, from corporate to families, which can impact compliance discussions.

Echols said fire station alerting was an embedded change order in the Motorola Contract, which will need to be addressed once the 2 vendors are evaluated. Motorola has proposed Mach Alert; however, there have been issues with their capabilities. Brown and others have been researching U.S. Digital, along with doing client reference checks. Phoenix G-2 produced by U.S. Digital is the preferred solution and a final cost proposal is pending, along with a matching extended warranty to the Motorola system. A recommendation will be presented to the Governing Board in April, followed by Board of Supervisors approval of a change order to the Motorola Contract.

Jeffries said the GPS tracking is still under review. Motorola has estimated the cost to MERA at \$400,000 with extra agency costs for CAD Systems interface. He will be meeting with the Police Chiefs' Association tomorrow on this and Fire Chiefs the following week for input. The goal is to have a GPS recommendation by the April 26 Governing Board meeting.

Jeffries distributed and reviewed the draft MERA Next Gen Budget Overview previously presented to the Finance Committee and Governing Board. The Budget, which has been revised with costs now known, reflects use of Measure A Funds. The overall total is \$69M, including 15% contingency. Site acquisition and construction costs are estimates which will become known as bids are received. The draft budget is subject to ongoing revisions, which will periodically be presented to our Committees and Boards.

2) Proposed Conventional Radio Channels Recommendations for Next Gen System

Echols said Motorola's proposed Next Gen System will not use all of the existing sites and will include new sites. When Gen I went into operation, the existing Conventional Channels the County had owned and operated prior to the formation of MERA were essentially integrated into the MERA System as backup. MERA, in subsequent years, has adopted Mutual Aid Policies and a VHF Overlay Plan, which rely on these Conventional Channels for their implementation.

Echols said once it was realized Next Gen would not be utilizing some of the sites, like Forbes Hill and Bodega Bay, Ops Group input was sought on whether these channels were still needed. Chuck prepared a detailed spreadsheet on this with recommendations. Last Wednesday, Ops weighed in on the recommendations and how we could re-deploy these resources. The Ops Group unanimously supported retention of these resources for interoperability, backup and mutual-aid purposes. At this meeting, State Parks expressed concern if these resources were to go away since outside agencies rely on them when operating in Marin County.

Echols requested Chuck estimate the cost of implementing these recommendations which is \$172,000, including a 15% Contingency. This does not include DPW labor for relocation of existing equipment. The question here is about sustaining these channels and how that would be paid for. Pre-MERA and interoperability, the County operated these channels and was the only entity using these resources. With their migration to

MERA, everyone now benefits from their use.

Cusimano said he understands the use of the Channels for mutual aid and support as a backup. He asked if MERA sustaining the channels was part of our philosophy and whether Next Gen monies should be used to support them going forward. He requested further discussion as well as whether the Channels should be a shared cost. He also noted that the estimate did not include DPW staff relocation costs.

Doyle said the downside would be that the County could just abandon the Channels and what would this mean for the MERA Members. He added this would not be a plus for us. This should be shared by all of us. Cusimano said in presenting this to the Governing Board, an analysis vetting the pluses and minuses would be helpful.

Jeffries said MERA has taken on the County's responsibility of Volunteer Paging. Likewise, GPS tracking is a new technology that is being explored, which could add to mission creep. It is not clear to him that the conventional channels should be a MERA cost since it is County equipment. He asked if Sonoma Mt. microwave costs were included in the estimate. Echols said Sonoma is not included. He said we could maintain using the current equipment for another 10 to 15 years, so replacement would be a deferred cost. Jeffries said maintaining Sonoma would be an additional cost. It is a valuable resource but we need to determine if this should be a MERA cost.

Pearce said MERA has also taken on Fire Station Alerting and related costs and he is not sure whether MERA should be taking all this on. We are also providing free service to a number of non-member agencies which needs to be considered. There is a big issue with State Parks. Eilerman said shared benefit should be a shared cost as it has been for 20 years. He questioned why MERA wouldn't cover it and would welcome a discussion.

Cusimano noted the County pays a significant portion of MERA current budgets costs so arguably this is a shared cost. He said we do not know all the costs of relocating the Channels, which needs to be reviewed as part of this consideration. Pearce asked if we need everything that is being recommended. Chuck said we need to retain the national and State interops, CLEMARS-type channels and shared channels. County-wide Marin Command is now being converted to a national call-in channel. County-wide mutual aid is being converted to a new TAC-type channel.

Chuck provided history, noting when last Gen went in, all these resources were the County's. Conventional resources went into the consoles with MERA, with shared use of these resources. Newer consoles allow channels to be locked out. This is the background on how MERA inherited these resources.

Pearce asked if the County received any additional funding for these resources, say from Cal Fire or National Parks. Chuck said he was unaware of any such funding. Jeffries said this matter is entirely up to the Governing Board, but it is important for them to have all they need to make an informed decision. This has not been a MERA cost, but does

benefit MERA members. Pearce said he preferred to have a full discussion of this at the Executive Board level, not at the Governing Board level, and this can't be accomplished today.

Chuck noted that the majority of these channels are used by agencies coming into the County. We don't use them among our agencies because we have MERA to operate on. Echols said this is part of the Mutual Aid and Communications Plan adopted by MERA and are vital to the VHF Overlay Plan adopted by MERA. At a minimum, we should keep the VHF channels for fire agencies.

Cusimano asked, if we are not under any time constraints with the Conventional Channel recommendations, if this matter could be agendaized for the May Executive Board meeting. Jeffries said this needs to be incorporated into detailed design review so a decision would be needed in May. Pearce suggested the Police and Fire Chiefs should weigh in at their next meetings.

Doyle asked what other information was needed from DPW for the May meeting. Labor costs for relocation were mentioned. Pearce asked for confirmation of compensation to the County for maintaining the channels. Chuck said DPW maintains all the channels. Pearce asked for an annualized estimate of those costs. Chuck said costs were not much. They maintain a single conventional radio at each site, which is serviced once a year. There is only annual Preventive Maintenance (PM).

McCaffrey asked about the most likely scenario in which these channels would be used. Jeffries said out-of-area users can be patched into MERA for interoperability; for example, Sonoma County coming in and Fire uses Cal Fire routinely. McCaffrey asked about the last time the channels were used. Pearce said the Novato Fire, which used Cal Fire resources. He noted the VHF Overlay Plan was created to move Fire off MERA in the event MERA was overtaxed. McCaffrey asked how likely they would be used in the future. Cusimano said before we consider spending \$172,000 plus, he wants to understand all costs involved. If we use it, we should probably support it, but it should be looked at given the other costs we are absorbing, like FSA.

Cassingham asked about any ongoing operational costs if the channels come to MERA. Jeffries said we seem to be looking at one-time costs at this point. Echols said the Sonoma Mt. lease would be ongoing. Jeffries said PM would be ongoing. Eilerman asked for a public safety impact assessment of the County not maintaining the channels, if MERA chooses not to maintain them. Pearce said we need to know what is going, what is staying and all the costs related to these recommendations. This matter was continued to the next meeting.

3) Status/Work Statistics Reports – (Chuck)

Chuck said last month was calm. All the weekly and quarterly preventive maintenance was completed, which has kept the System operating as good as it has been. No total System outages have occurred since the System went in. Dispatch center back-up radios and remotes were re-programmed. Fuel was delivered to Big Rock. A Dollar Hill propane leak was repaired. DPW worked on the Mill Valley Station 7 dispatch audio.

Chuck reported activation of new security system FOBS since Motorola stopped supporting the originals. They were within a day of being locked out. The East Central site controller power supply was repaired. Capacitors were nearly 20 years old and are getting hard to find. Emergency Operations Facility (EOF) conventional radios were also repaired and a redundant network patch was added to the EOF.

Regarding System usage, Chuck noted the percentages are always the same. For February 2017, there was nearly 719 hours of air time with 5 minutes of busies due to the storms. Year-to-date, we had 7 minutes of busies, which is 6/100 of what the System was designed for.

4) Other Information Items

Pearce noted discussion at the Governing Board meeting wherein the Motorola Contract was approved and all the work that had gone into the final proposal and contract. He thanked Echols, Jeffries, Chuck, Ortiz, Kiernan and Cassingham for their great work.

D. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

None.

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Maureen Cassingham  
Executive Officer and Secretary

**NEXT:** MERA Executive Board Meeting  
**Wednesday, May 3, 2017**