

# MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District  
95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945  
PHONE: (415) 878-2690 FAX: (415) 878-2660  
WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG

**DRAFT: 7/24/17**

## Measure A Citizens Oversight Committee

### **Minutes of June 21, 2017 Regular Meeting**

#### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Pro Tem Levinson at 4:01 p.m. on June 21, 2017 at the Marin Civic Center CAO Conference Room 315, San Rafael, California 94903.

#### **Committee Members Present:**

District #1	Elizabeth Greenberg
District #2	Bill Levinson
District #3	Chuck Reite
District #4	Larry Luckham
District #5	Paul Herrerias

#### **Staff Present:**

MERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
MERA Deputy Executive Officer-Next Gen Project	Dave Jeffries

#### A. Minutes of March 15, 2017, Citizens Oversight Committee Regular Meeting

*M/S/P Luckham/Reite to approve the minutes as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
Motion carried

B. Update on Status of Next Gen System Project – (Jeffries)

Jeffries recapped the 12 issues presented in his report beginning with the Project's customer design review stage with Motorola. He said Fire Station Alerting (FSA) has been a challenge over these last few months. However, it had been recognized as a baked-in change order in the Motorola contract. Staff is recommending Mach Alert at \$2.8M, which includes the technology and extended warranty. The warranty portion will be acquired within 1 year at the quoted price.

The change order will be presented to the Governing Board next week with continuing discussion about Mach Alert interface with Intergraph CAD. MERA will provide the connection to the fire stations and further connections and features will be the cost responsibility of the respective local agency.

Jeffries said a presentation will be made next week to the Governing Board on one-for-one radio exchanges and related packages. He is working with County Communications Division to develop an agency radio inventory to guide the purchasing process. Some feature discrepancies may not be a problem; however, for example, encryption versus non-encryption could pose a \$500 difference in radio cost and affect the ordering process.

Luckham asked about the radio form factor. Jeffries said the new ones are smaller and feature a T-grip. There will be new capabilities. Reite asked if the one-for-one radios have return value. Jeffries said given their age, replacement status and T-band programming. This may become a local agency issue. It may be that some are retained for tactical purposes. Luckham noted that some Fire may want additional radio add-ons, which Jeffries clarified would be an agency or personal expense. For example, if one style mic costs X and an agency wants additional features, the agency would pay the cost difference.

In further clarification with Reite, Jeffries said the one-for-one replacement is not really an exchange, but an assignment of a new Next Gen radio reflecting November 4, 2014 Election Day inventory. Reite and Greenberg asked about salvage value. Jeffries said this would likely be an agency decision predicated on salvage values versus disposition costs. He said once the inventory is completed, an Equipment Fair is tentatively scheduled for mid-to-late July for agencies to see the proposed equipment and options. Luckham requested invitations to the Committee to attend the Equipment Fair.

Levinson noted an economy of scale in having the County purchase all the radio equipment versus individual agencies. Jeffries said MERA will buy all the radios. Levinson said he was referring to the supplemental equipment. Jeffries said supplementals will be purchased by MERA, which will be reimbursed by the agencies. There will be flexibility for users to buy for their unique needs that will not affect System operations. He added that the number of model choices will be limited by MERA for consistency, parts and servicing.

Jeffries said we are working with the County and Mach Alert on bandwidth issues, remote dispatch, fire station alerting and redundant paths. All fire stations will have connectivity with the ethernet path. He added that police and fire are working on talk group templates and what

will go into the radios. There will be briefings with both groups to ensure interoperability. There will be a list of current channels that will no longer be available, along with new channels in the 700 MHz range, to help devise the talk groups.

Levinson asked about the hacking potential. Jeffries said the System can be listened to by using scanners. Hacking is a data issue. We use our own microwave path to connect the mountaintop sites. County IT is establishing the firewalls. He could not provide 100 percent assurance against hacking; however, setting the right securities for correct access is part of the IT design to deal with this per the Motorola Contract.

Greenberg asked about encrypted channels. Jeffries said it is not about encrypted channels, but certain talk groups can be encrypted. You cannot talk with dispatch on encrypted primary channels. He added we are working on the technical details of a cutover plan for the transition period of 9 to 12 months of parallel system operations.

Jeffries noted the microwave backhaul is a key issue for us. Nokia is finishing microwave path surveys that involve physical field shots from one site to another. In response to Greenberg about weather factors, Jeffries said line of sight needs to be confirmed first, followed by wavelength and weather issues toward the coast, which will have to be figured out.

Jeffries said work is underway on design documents for site development. Preliminary drawings are due this month and the CEQA review has begun. Some environmental updates may be needed for existing sites. Several new sites are very isolated and may elicit few public comments and others already have equipment in place. Luckham asked if there has been any indication of public opposition.

Jeffries said the new Wolfback Ridge is already an antenna site. There will be likely be little objection to a few more antennas. Muir Beach will want MERA to co-locate with their new fire station on an undeveloped site. The local Fire Department can assist in working with the community, given this is a public safety site, and that should minimize objections. He noted the Tomales site is rural, which should be helpful and OTA is near Mt. Burdell with a tower in the distance.

Jeffries said most of our sites are existing with the differences being new equipment and temporary equipment during construction. Current equipment will disappear when replaced with the new equipment. Dish location may change. In response to Greenberg, Jeffries said towers can in some cases be camouflaged. Reite inquired about the Tiburon Site. Jeffries said the Site is not currently planned for reuse. The Martha housing development includes land for a tower site, which is not part of the current plan, but will be revisited in terms of coverage and timing of availability. Luckham asked if the Tiburon Site would be retained just in case. Jeffries said this will be reviewed during design. RFPs will be issued separately for construction.

Jeffries reviewed the internal Project coordination team and weekly and biweekly calls and meetings on technical and Project management issues. Motorola is on-site weekly. A revised Project schedule is expected by late-June or early-July. Land use and site development issues

pose some unknowns at this point. Finally, a request for GPS tracking in Next Gen radios was vetted and a recommendation to the MERA Governing Board not to pursue that technology was approved. Luckham asked if it was a cost issue. Jeffries said most of the police vehicles are tracked now. There was interest in tracking, but there are newer and other ways to do this better than a radio feature.

Levinson asked if MERA was generally happy with Motorola. Jeffries said yes, but there have been a few issues we have had to push on, like guaranteed interface between Mach Alert and Intergraph for FSA. We need to be assured that there will be seamless integration between Motorola's vendor Mach Alert and the Sheriff's CAD vendor Intergraph. We have a year to work this through.

Jeffries said System staging will occur back East in a warehouse after completion of design, followed by equipment delivery by the end of the year. The staged System must work before shipment. Subscriber equipment is scheduled to be shipped by December 31, 2017. Acceptance before year-end will assure a \$500,000 discount. Radio programming will begin a month or two after shipment.

Greenberg asked if test cases had been written for pass/fail testing. Jeffries said a testing protocol will be in place. MERA and DPW will do testing on the member agencies' behalf. He anticipates a 3-4 day process, possibly up to a week. In response to Herrerias, he said all the warehouse staged equipment will be tested. A sampling of mobile and portable radios will be tested.

Herrerias asked about tracking portable radios should they be lost. Jeffries said they can be turned off remotely. GPS tracking requires a place for data to go and use of the data, ergo more cost. Levinson asked if the radios could be turned off if the System was hacked. Jeffries said that in order to access the system, the radio ID has to be recognized. The Radio Shop can disable these IDs. Levinson requested a third-party security expert review System protections.

Jeffries said the 2 places that could disable were the County Comm Center and the Radio Shop, which are inside the network. Access from outside the network, except for DPW radio technicians, does not exist. The security concern is part of System design and this is part of the Contract.

C. Update on Measure A Collections – Utility-Owned Parcels.

Cassingham noted the matter of payment delinquencies for Utility-Owned Parcels had been discussed at prior Committee meetings. Because the number of delinquencies has increased over prior year and the prior year amount had been written off as Bad Debt, there is a responsibility to rethink our collection options. There is a 3 year statute of limitations to effect collections. The FY16-17 uncollected amount of \$3,422 has been revisited with NBS and MERA General Counsel.

Cassingham said rebilling by Certified Mail has produced some results. Because the County does not apply Parcel charges on property tax bills for utility-coded properties, NBS must bill separately, which may be taken as unofficial tax billing and therefore disregarded.

Cassingham has asked MERA General Counsel to prepare a collection letter threatening Court action for non-payment. To actually go to Court, the County would have to assign its rights to MERA, since it was the County that placed Measure A on the ballot. Herrerias asked about using Marin County letterhead. Cassingham said the County would have to grant permission, which she believed would not be approved. She added that MERA's letter is the least expensive approach to collection and most likely to produce results.

Levinson suggested phone calls to non-payers. Cassingham said a written collection demand would document our efforts. Greenberg suggested the County send letters. Cassingham said Parcel Tax Administration is MERA's responsibility as stated in the post-election Services Agreement between MERA and the County. She added that not taking this next step in collection was unfair to other taxpayers and the amounts add up over 20 years. Levinson said this approach keeps in mind cost/benefit given the size of the outstanding amounts. Cassingham will report back on the outcome of these efforts. This report was received as informational.

D. Review of Fund 70038 FY16-17 (March-June 2017) Next Gen Project  
Revenues and Expenditures

Cassingham produced hard copies of the invoices paid for the period for Committee review. She said the requisitions were grouped by vendor. She also noted the P&L for the 2016 Bonds Fund 70039 will be presented to the Committee at the next meeting, which will reflect payment of large sum progress payments to Motorola and Federal Engineering (FE). One Motorola progress payments of \$1.7M will be reflected, plus payments for FE Consulting and Project Management Services.

Cassingham noted Bond proceeds have been invested in a Guaranteed Investment Contract (GIC) and would not be drawn down before April 1, 2017, or risk loss of interest. Herrerias asked about the transfer into Fund 70038. Cassingham said she was checking on this transfer which may not be attributed to the Fund and, if so, an adjustment will be made. She explained that the County and MERA entered into a Financing Agreement which provides for County collection and remittance of Parcel Taxes to U.S. Bank for the Bonds beginning in FY16-17. She will work with the County regarding their payment process to U.S. Bank.

Luckham and Herrerias suggested that balance sheets be provided to accompany the P&L detail. This will provide more clarity for transfers and balances. Cassingham will work with NFPD to produce them. In response to Greenberg about the amount of NBS fees exceeding collections, Cassingham explained this is but one facet of all the parcel tax administration they provide, which includes the Senior Exemption, periodic levy checks and required reports to the County. She will provide the list of services they perform.

Herrerias asked about the County's Tax fees under Code 6650. Cassingham confirmed these fees are for the collection of Measure A Parcel Taxes. She said the fee is formula-based on the number of parcels on a sliding scale. For example, the per parcel fee for the first 20,000 parcels is at one rate while the next grouping is charged at a slightly lesser rate.

E. Discussion of Future Schedule of Citizens Oversight Committee Meetings

Cassingham noted that the Committee by resolution has scheduled the third Wednesdays of the month at 4:00 p.m. at the Marin Civic Center for its regular meetings. If there is insufficient business to transact, the Committee is notified by the Executive Officer and Notice of Cancellation is publicly posted. She asked for Committee concurrence for a September 20 meeting when there will be sizeable and numerous Next Gen Project invoices to be reviewed. The Committee agreed on this date.

Cassingham said she will agendize a meeting schedule resolution for Committee consideration that will permit a forward-looking assessment of meeting frequency and timing.

Levinson expressed interest in site visits as the Next Gen Project progresses. Jeffries said the move to the new System will start in spring 2018. Site facilities will be space challenged during the period they house old and new equipment. Herrerias inquired about disposition of old equipment. Jeffries said much of the backbone and towers are reusable. Radio equipment will be evaluated by DPW. Luckham inquired about donation to other agencies. Jeffries said this would be challenging if there is no corresponding infrastructure and would be costly to administer.

F. Other Information Items

None.

G. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

None.

H. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Maureen Cassingham  
Executive Officer and Secretary