

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 15, 2009

TO: MERA Board of Directors

FROM: Maureen Cassingham, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM B-3: APPOINTMENT OF AD HOC STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Recommended Action: Approve the Executive Committee appointment of an Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee as generally discussed by its members on July 8, and incorporating Board input, to work on a MERA strategic plan with consultant facilitation and County DPW technical support at costs to be determined.

Background: On February 11, 2009 and March 11, 2009 the Executive Committee and Board approved, as part of the 2009 Executive Officer Work Plan, the development of MERA's Strategic Plan during the second half of CY 2009. The project was described in the Work Plan as follows:

“The Operations and Executive Officers will prepare a draft strategic plan as the first step in MERA's strategic planning process for member agency vetting and Board adoption. The draft will be developed with the assistance of a Board or Executive Committee appointed Ad Hoc Committee convened specifically for this purpose. The Ad Hoc Committee will seek input from the Police and Fire Chiefs' Associations, the Operational Issues Work Group, technical consultants and other staff during this period. Periodic iterations of the draft will be submitted to the MERA member agencies for their information and comments to assure the plan reflects their goals for the system. The plan will address the future of the system, its half-life status, user needs and expectations, state of other similar emergency communications systems, emerging technology and identify resources to enhance and/or replace it when necessary.”

The timing of this effort coincides with MERA's need to define itself as a project and determine if/how the system can address user requests given current economic conditions, topographical and other environmental challenges in serving member areas, technological changes and, other public agency initiatives.

As with the reconstitution and appointment of the MERA Finance Committee, the Executive Committee discussed limiting the number of Committee members on the

proposed Strategic Planning Committee to four (4) which would facilitate convening meetings. The Ad Hoc Committee would also include at least one member with history of MERA, representatives from the Police and Fire Chiefs' Associations, city management and technical/user groups.

As for facilitating the work to be done, the Executive Committee supported the selection of a professional communications consultant like MTA engaged for its strategic planning efforts and MGSA has used for the Wireless Marin project (i.e. CBG Communications, Inc.). Committee members noted that outside facilitation would be a "good investment", offer a "fresh look", keep the process moving and assure objective communicable outcomes for member agencies. The Executive Committee also supported the use of County DPW to provide technical support for the strategic planning effort. Members requested proposals from CBG and County DPW that offer several scoping and cost options to develop the plan on a phased basis over a one-year period with a finite number of Committee meetings. Administrative support services for this project would be provided by the Executive Officer. Working like and in conjunction with MERA's Finance Committee, it is proposed that the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee would report to the Executive Committee.

No funds have specifically been included in MERA's operating budget for professional facilitation and technical support; however, the \$20,000 contingency line item could be used initially and increased, if needed for these services.

The Board's input and guidance regarding this very important project is encouraged.