

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

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DATE: December 11, 2013
TO: MERA Governing Board
FROM: Dave Jeffries, Special Project Manager
SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM **C-2**: REPORT ON ROUND ONE AND TWO
PRESENTATIONS – MERA MEMBER OUTREACH

Recommended Action:

1. Receive, discuss and file Report on Round One and Two Presentations.
2. Discuss and approve Recommended Actions.

Background:

The Round One Presentations were designed to provide all MERA Member agencies with an update on the Next Generation System project and to introduce them to the funding mechanism chosen by MERA. Those presentations began on July 18, 2013 with presentations to the Marin City Managers and to a joint meeting of the Marin Fire and Police Chiefs.

One MERA Member Agency, the Central Marin Police Authority waived presentations as all of their board members were scheduled to receive the presentation at their home Board or Council meetings. All of the remaining presentations, including one for the Marin Public Work's Directors, have now been completed (26) or scheduled (1). In addition, we have scheduled two additional sessions for newly elected officials and those elected officials that were unable to attend their agencies presentation. These are scheduled for the week of 12/16/13.

At this point we are starting to develop the Round II presentations. In this round, we will be asking each of the MERA Member agencies to endorse and support the MERA Parcel Tax Proposal.

Round I Presentation Feedback:

During each of the presentations, questions and feedback were noted. In many cases, the questions were answered at the time, but some issues needed to be brought to the attention of MERA Committees and Boards.

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While not a complete list of the questions from the 25 MERA Member agencies and others, I have listed those questions that seem most important to share with you. Many of the remaining questions were issues that we had already considered and had answers available at the time.

Funding Issues:

1. Can MERA start a reserve account to fund the Gen III system?
2. What are our jurisdiction's current bond and O&M costs?
3. What are the O&M costs for Gen II?
4. Would it be cheaper to lease rather than purchase equipment?
5. Can we split the Gen II costs between Parcel Tax and Agency budgets?
6. Is there a plan to sell off Gen I equipment? Does that affect Gen II budget?
7. How do we begin charging non-member agencies for system use?
8. Functionality for our agency and re-examination of O&M and distribution of costs essential for continued support.
9. What methodology will be used to determine O&M costs for Gen II for each agency?
10. Can Grants be used to cover O&M? What are the prospects to obtain grants?

Generation I Issues:

1. What is being done about the Gen I promise of radios for schools?

Vendors:

1. Are there vendors besides Motorola?
2. Will the RFP process be transparent?

Technology:

1. Why can't MERA coordinate with other counties in same situation? (Super-system and joint purchasing)
2. What is the life expectancy of the Gen II system? Will we get 20 years from Gen II?
3. Where will the new towers be located? How many?
4. How will Gen II address lack of service and coverage for West County?
5. Pleased about better coverage and resolution of paging issues for West County
6. Why can't the police simply use smart phones?

Outreach:

1. Concern about voter fatigue and impact of other tax measures in 2013 and 2014.
2. Is there any opposition?

Membership

1. Are their plans to expand MERA membership to other agencies?

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Round II Presentation Development:

An earlier version of this report was presented to the Project Oversight Committee, Finance Committee and Executive Board for review and action. Included in this report is a summary of their actions taken at their last meetings and a list of action items specifically referred to the Governing Board for input and action.

For the Round II Presentations we are developing a brief, 10-15 minute presentation focused on the three issues that MERA faces as well as the financing proposal for the Gen II system. As part of the presentations, each MERA Member agency will be provided with a sample staff report and resolution that can be adapted to local formats. Member Agency Chiefs will be asked to assist with the introduction and the adoption of the resolution, with the MERA Special Project Manager delivering most of the presentation and details.

A draft resolution is currently being developed by MERA staff, the Project Oversight Committee and MERA General Counsel.

I anticipate the Round II presentations beginning in late January, 2014 and concluding by the end of May, 2014.

Project Oversight Committee (POC) Actions:

To date, the POC has taken the following actions in regard to the Round II presentations:

1. Supported the format and model for the Round II presentations.
2. Developed and endorsed draft language to include a Citizen Oversight Committee into the Parcel Tax ballot language.
3. Referred to the Finance Committee issues involving Parcel Tax details, updated Project Budget, Bond sale timelines and Gen II Operating and Maintenance funding.

Finance Committee (FC) Actions:

Prior to their 12/04/13 meeting, the FC has taken the following actions in regards to the Round II presentations:

1. Confirmed that the NBS Study accurately describes the Parcel Tax effort and that FC recommends the inclusion of Income Qualified Senior Homeowner exemptions pending legal analysis. At the time of this staff report was authored, some of these areas are due for further FC discussion on 12/04/13, with a report to the Governing Board on 12/11/2013.
2. Provided a potential Bond Sale timeline, assuming the Parcel Tax passes in 11/2014.
3. Provided draft language in regards to Gen II Operating and Maintenance funding.

Executive Board Actions:

To date, the Executive Board has taken the following actions in regards to the Round II presentations:

1. Endorsed the draft language for a Citizen Oversight Committee for inclusion in the Parcel Tax Measure.
2. Endorsed the draft language regarding funding of Gen II Operating and Maintenance funding.

Recommended Actions for the MERA Governing Board:

1. Inclusion of a Citizen Oversight Committee in the MERA Parcel Tax Measure with the following language, “An Independent Citizen Oversight Committee, to be established by the MERA Governing Board by Resolution, shall review the collection and expenditure of tax revenues collected under the authority of this ballot measure. The Committee shall consist of at least five members, who shall be residents of Marin County. The terms of the Committee members and their respective duties shall be established by Resolution of the MERA Governing Board.”

Discussion: In the MERA 2013 Polling, inclusion of a Citizen Oversight Committee added several points of support to the proposed measure. In addition, during the Round I presentations, there seemed to be support for including this measure as providing community oversight and transparency in regards to the collection and expenditure of public tax funds.

2. Adoption of an Income Qualified Senior Homeowner Parcel Tax Exemption, pending concurrence of MERA General Counsel.

Discussion: This item has been discussed in the Round I presentations as being under consideration. This item has the potential to assist Senior Homeowners and increase support for the Parcel Tax measure.

3. Adoption of the following Finance Committee language regarding Gen II Operating and Maintenance Costs, “The capital funding mechanism (parcel tax) is designed to relieve local member budget impacts. If successful, MERA can turn its attention to other revenue sources that can assist MERA member agencies in reducing their operating and maintenance costs.”

Discussion: During the Round I presentations, there were questions asked in several venues about MERA’s plans for funding Gen II Operating and Maintenance costs. While final decisions on that issue are likely a couple of years out, this language underscores the importance of Parcel Tax passage, while recognizing the concern raised by MERA members.