

# NERA: **WHEN SECONDS SAVE LIVES**

Funding the Next Generation Public Safety Communications System of the Marin Emergency Radio Authority

*An Overview for the NERA Citizens Oversight Committee*



June 8, 2015

## Before NERA



NERA was developed following a series of frustrating incidents in the 1990's where one agency could not communicate effectively with another agency working on the same emergency.

Problems were:

- Multiple radios were required
- Signals were dropped
- Radio static caused delays
- Sometimes, radio traffic from the Midwest US would carry on local channels

## Key Dates in MERA's Inception

- **1995-1998** – Feasibility studies and meetings were conducted among police, fire and other major operations. Then a Communications Oversight Committee representing city managers, police and fire chiefs and special districts formed to study the options. MERA was the result of their work.
- **February 28, 1998** – The Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA) was formed to "...plan, finance, implement, manage, own and operate a multi-jurisdictional County-wide public safety, public service and emergency radio system."
- **February 11, 1999** – The MERA Board authorized the sale of bonds in the amount of \$26,940,000 to finance the project.
- **January 24, 2004** - Installation of San Rafael Police radios begins (first MERA agency).

## Connecting 25 Member Agencies:

Local Government, Fire, Police, Public Works, Special Districts, Transportation and other Emergency Responders

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. County of Marin                   | 15. Inverness Public Utility District       |
| 2. City of Belvedere                 | 16. Kentfield Fire Protection District      |
| 3. Town of Corte Madera              | 17. Marin Community College District        |
| 4. Town of Fairfax                   | 18. Marin Transit                           |
| 5. City of Larkspur                  | 19. Marin Municipal Water District          |
| 6. City of Mill Valley               | 20. Marinwood Community Services District   |
| 7. City of Novato                    | 21. Novato Fire Protection District         |
| 8. Town of Ross                      | 22. Ross Valley Fire Department             |
| 9. Town of San Anselmo               | 23. Southern Marin Fire Protection District |
| 10. City of San Rafael               | 24. Stinson Beach Fire Protection District  |
| 11. City of Sausalito                | 25. Tiburon Fire Protection Dist.           |
| 12. Town of Tiburon                  |   |
| 13. Bolinas Fire Protection District |   |
| 14. Central Marin Police Authority   |   |

## Capable of Connecting to Other Agencies & Systems

### FIRE & MEDICAL

1. Multi-Agency Coordination
2. Large Incident Fire Command
3. Field EMT's to Hospital
4. Medical Mutual Aid
5. State Emergency Management
6. City of San Rafael local Interoperability

### LAW ENFORCEMENT

1. On-scene Law Enforcement
2. CHP Dispatch Channels
3. Agency to Agency Coordination
4. Petaluma Police Dispatch
5. Sonoma Sheriff Dispatch

### MUTUAL AID

1. National Mutual Aid
2. State Mutual Aid
3. Regional Mutual Aid
4. State Travel and Strike Teams
5. Statewide Coordination

### OTHER AGENCIES

1. Golden Gate Transit Dispatch
2. US Coast Guard
3. Pt. Reyes Seashore Dispatch
4. Golden Gate National Recreation Area Dispatch

## What Is MERA Today?

The Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA) is a Joint Powers Authority in Marin County to plan, implement and manage a countywide public safety and emergency radio system for the use of all member agencies.

It includes:

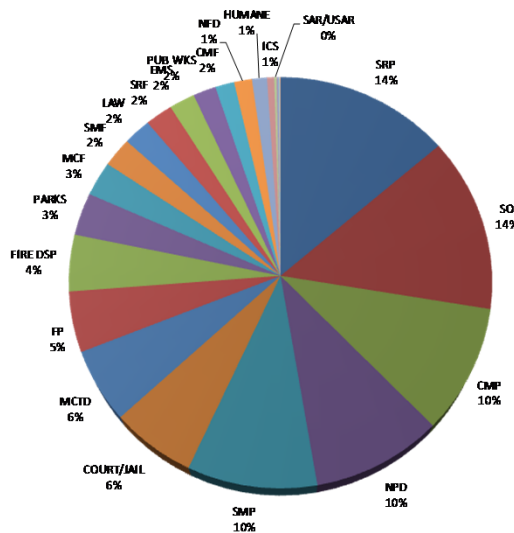
- Seven 911 Dispatch Centers, with 28 dispatch consoles
- Nearly 2,900 radios deployed across the county
- Uniform radio communications shared by every major safety agency in the county

## System Usage in 2014

Annual Calls: 3,775,868  
 Annual Calls in Hours: 9,050  
 Busy Time in Minutes: 11

### Top 10 Users for the year 2014

San Rafael Police	1,250 Hrs
Marin County Sheriff	1,245 Hrs
Central Marin Police	906 Hrs
Novato Police	878 Hrs
Southern Marin Police	871 Hrs
Court / Jail	571 Hrs
Marin Transit	522 Hrs
Fairfax Police	430 Hrs
Fire Dispatch	403 Hrs
Parks	304 Hrs



## Why the MERA Gen I System Must Be Upgraded

**RELIABILITY:** The existing system is aging and approaching obsolescence. The system is experiencing component malfunctions causing system reliability to decrease. Replacement equipment is being phased out by the manufacturer, with certain elements already no longer manufactured and increasingly difficult to source.

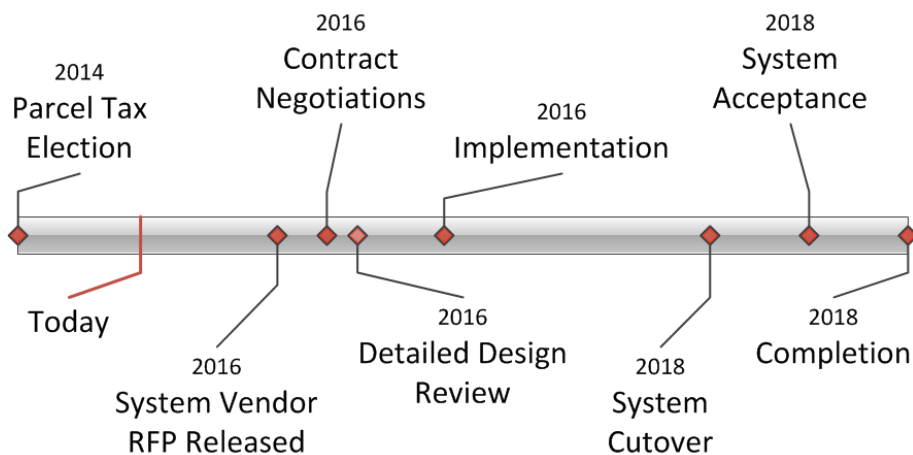
**CAPACITY:** MERA has nearly 2,900 users today on a system built for 1,580. The system must expand capacity to eliminate busy signals during major emergencies and to add additional mutual aid partners. The Next Generation system is planned for 5,000 potential users.

**COVERAGE:** Coverage must be extended to high priority areas that have limited coverage today. The Next Generation system will expand coverage with the addition of new tower sites.

## MERA's Proposed Gen II System: Faster and More Reliable = Safer

- Reduce 911 response times with an upgraded radio network, better technology and more capacity.
- Expand coverage to high priority areas of County.
- Increase reliability during nature disasters.
- Move to the 700 MHz band allowing use of the UASI mutual aid frequencies, existing 800 MHz frequencies and others – which are especially needed in a disaster situation.
- New radios with the state-of-art technology will be provided to every safety personnel (Options that could be selected include GPS tracking).

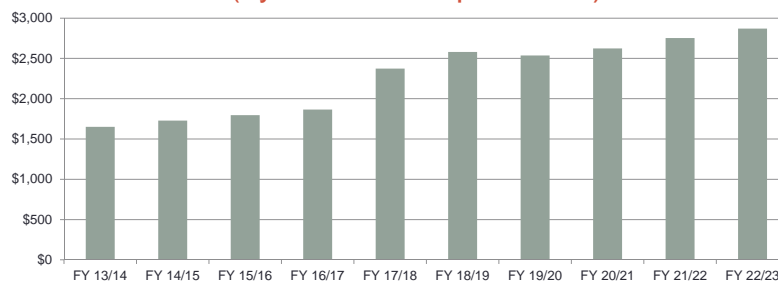
## Gen II Project Timeline:



### Parcel Tax Gen II Capital Budget

• Site development and upgrades, environmental compliance, licensing and leases	\$10.6 M
• Radio communication system, site equipment and dispatch consoles	\$13.9 M
• Microwave system	\$5.0 M
• Mobile and portable radios	\$10.5 M
-----	
= SUBTOTAL CAPITAL COSTS*	\$40.0 M
<small>*(includes contingency)</small>	
+ Capitalized Interest	\$2.3 M
+ Reserve Fund	\$3.6 M
+ Issuance Costs	\$0.4 M
-----	
= BOND ISSUE TOTAL	\$46.3 M

### Operating and Maintenance Budget (System-Wide Expenditures)

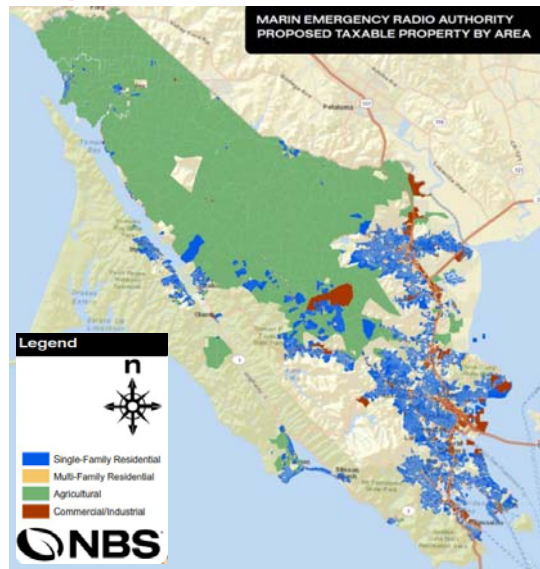


- O&M Budget for FY 13/14 is based on the approved budget.
- All other FY's are estimates.
- FY 13/14 to FY 22/23 predicts an annual 7.4% increase.
- This increase impacted by Inflation and an Expanded System.
- A Service Upgrade Agreement (SUA) could increase O&M by \$450,000 annually for 10 years starting in FY19/20. (SUA is an Option)

All figures are in thousands.

## Parcel Tax Proposal Overview

- Required 2/3 vote of Registered Voters.
- Approved on the November 2014 ballot.
- Includes Exemptions for Income Qualified Senior Homeowners and Citizens' Oversight Committee.
- Shares tax burden throughout the county.



## Parcel Tax Overview: Residential and Agricultural Details

Property Description	Method	Maximum Rate
Single Family Residential	Per Parcel	\$29.00
Multi-Family Residential	Per Unit	\$26.10
Agricultural – Up to 5 Acres	Per Parcel	\$29.00
Agricultural – Over 5 Acres	Per Parcel	\$58.00

Parcel Tax Categories	# of Parcels	Tax Units	Total Parcel Tax	Average per Parcel	Median
Single Family	81,107	81,107	\$2,352,103	\$29	\$29
Multi-Family	4,986	24,551	\$640,781	\$129	\$52
Agricultural	715	1,361	\$39,469	\$55	\$58

## Parcel Tax Overview: Commercial, Industrial and Utility Details

Property Description	Method	Maximum Rate
Up to ½ acre	Per Parcel	\$87.00
Greater than ½ acre and up to 1 acre	Per Parcel	\$174.00
Greater than 1 acre	\$174 Per Parcel AND \$29 for each acre over 1 acre	Up to \$2,500.00

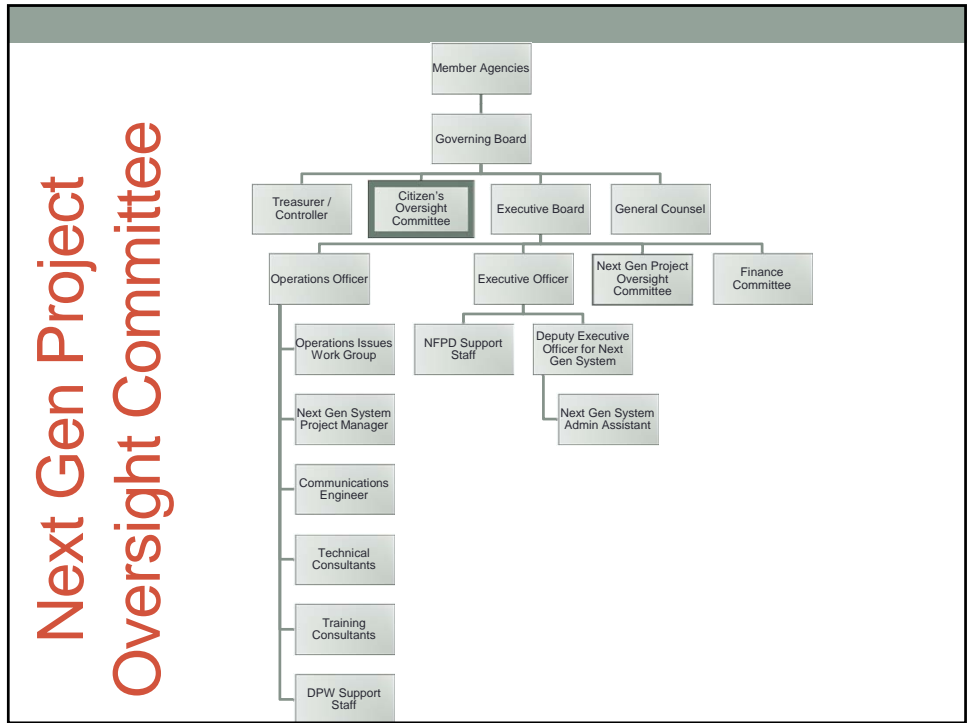
# of Parcels	Tax Units	Total Parcel Tax	Average per Parcel	Median
4,015	10,360	\$585,193	\$145	\$87

## Citizen Oversight Committee Members

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

**Please introduce yourselves and share some of your background.**





## MERA Staff

**Executive Officer (Maureen)** – means the Governing Board-appointed officer responsible for the administration of the Authority including staffing the Governing Board, Executive Board, and other standing committees; monitoring and evaluating service contracts, coordinating with General Counsel on MERA issues, working with member and other agencies, preparing and administering budgets and public financing, coordinating audits, coordinating records retention and public records archives; representing MERA with media, members, other governmental agencies and residents; and, coordinating FPPC filings and performing other duties as assigned.

**Operations Officer (Craig)** – means the County Director of Public Works (or his/her designee) who directs and oversees DPW contractual services to MERA including the Communications Engineer and other consulting services, user training, technical and administrative services and system maintenance and Next Gen Project management and oversight. *The Operations Officer also serves as Chair for the Operational Issues Working Group.*

## MERA Staff

**Next Gen Project Manager (Consultant)** – means provider of Next Gen Project management, procurement services, implementation oversight, quality assurance, coordination, performance testing oversight, system cutover and acceptance, oversight and status reports to the Next Gen System Project Oversight Committee, under the supervision of the Operations Officer.

**DPW staff (Richard and Shelly, DPW Communications Division)** – means County Staff members who provide technical assistance for the administration of the current MERA system including operation of the Motorola trunked system contract, MERA system subscriber programming, MERA system network programming and database administration; technical assistance regarding network maintenance, interference and installation issues, technical interface between current and Next Gen Systems, monitoring State and Federal communications systems legislation and seeking and tracking communication system grants for MERA.

## MERA Staff

**Operational Issues Working Group** – an advisory group, consisting of system users and dispatch professionals, to the Operations Officer whose purpose is to:

- a. Provide input on proposed major technical changes to the network and the supporting equipment. Monitor progress and provide input during the implementation phase.
- b. Provide input on operational issues that include training, use protocols, new equipment requests, and new users
- c. Monitor system maintenance effectiveness and efficiency
- d. Ensure system continuity
- e. Assist in the dissemination of information

## MERA Staff

**Deputy Executive Officer for Next Gen System (Dave)** – means provider of contract technical and administrative services to the Executive Officer and MERA's Boards and Committees to assist with Next Gen System Project interface and monitoring.

- Facilitates administrative support for Executive and Governing Board decisions on Next Gen Project Implementation.
- Includes member and public presentations, Project media relations, attendance at Next Gen Oversight Committee meetings, review and input on Next Gen documents, including consultant and vendor RFPs, participation in consultant and vendor selections and design review, preparation of reports for MERA Boards and Committees' action to implement Next Gen Project, input on Next Gen training development and participation in Operations Issues Work Group.

**Next Gen Project Administrative Assistant (Alex)** – means contract staff who provides administrative and clerical support to the Executive Officer and Deputy Executive Officer for Next Gen System.

- Includes scheduling of and participation in member and public presentations, development of Project newsletters, provision of Next Gen System Project Oversight Committee support and other related tasks.

## COC Resolution #2015-02

### Duties:

- Reviewing expenditures of revenues collected pursuant to the Tax Ordinance;
- Reviewing annual Independent Compliance Audits;
- Reviewing Annual Reports to the County Board of Supervisors and MERA Governing Board on the amounts of tax revenues collected and expended, along with Project status.

### Number of Members:

- Five (5) Members with a quorum of three (3). Initial terms are two years for (2) members and four years for (3) members. Thereafter, terms are four years with no term limits.

## COC Resolution #2015-02

### Qualifications:

- In addition to County of Marin residency and property taxpayer status, membership is restricted to persons who are neither elected officials nor employees from any agency or organization that oversees or benefits from parcel tax expenditures.
- Attention to detail and willingness to commit at least 10 hours to Committee work per quarter is required.
- Experience with construction, business practices, project administration, accounting or budgeting is helpful.

### Bylaws:

- The Committee will adopt Bylaws approved by the MERA Governing Board within 90 days after appointment.

## COC Resolution #2015-02

### Meetings:

- Meetings will be convened at least quarterly initially but not less than annually, open to the public and conducted in compliance with the Brown Act, California's Open Meeting law. Meetings will be publicized and posted in advance. Committee reports and minutes will be available on MERA's Website ([meraonline.org](http://meraonline.org)). Location of the meetings will be at the Marin Civic Center, San Rafael, California, for centrality/access purposes.

## COC Timeline

ID	Task Name	Resource Names	Staff Lead	Start	Finish	% Complete	2015												2016											
							Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1	<b>CITIZEN OVERSIGHT</b>			2/2/2015	6/30/2015	75%	[Progress bar: 75% complete]																							
2	<b>Advertise COC Openings</b>			2/2/2015	3/27/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
3	Update MERA Website	Exec Officer	MC	2/2/2015	3/2/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
4	Week of 03/02/15	Dep Exec Ofc	DJ	3/2/2015	3/6/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
5	Week of 03/16/15	Dep Exec Ofc	DJ	3/16/2015	3/20/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
6	Week of 03/23/15	Dep Exec Ofc	DJ	3/23/2015	3/27/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
7	<b>Select COC Select. Cmte</b>	Exec Board	MC	3/13/2015	3/13/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
8	<b>COC Resolution</b>			3/25/2015	6/30/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
9	MERA Approval	Gov. Board	MC	3/25/2015	3/25/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
10	Marin BOS Information	Marin BOS	CT	6/1/2015	6/30/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
11	<b>COC Applications Due</b>	Exec Ofc	MC	4/3/2015	4/3/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
12	<b>Interview COC Candidates</b>	COC Sel. Cmte	MC	4/29/2015	4/29/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
13	<b>Recomm. COC Members</b>			5/6/2015	6/30/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
14	MERA Selections	Exec. Board	MC	5/6/2015	5/6/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
15	MERA Appointments	Gov. Board	MC	5/13/2015	5/13/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
16	Marin BOS Confirmation	Marin BOS	CT	6/1/2015	6/30/2015	100%	[Progress bar: 100% complete]																							
17	<b>COC Initiation</b>			6/1/2015	6/30/2015	0%	[Progress bar: 0% complete]																							
18	Review Reimburse. Res. (See Finance)	COC	DJ	6/1/2015	6/30/2015	0%	[Progress bar: 0% complete]																							
19	Approval of ByLaws	COC	DJ	6/1/2015	6/30/2015	0%	[Progress bar: 0% complete]																							
20	<b>COC On-Going</b>			7/1/2016	9/1/2016	0%	[Progress bar: 0% complete]																							
21	Expenditures Review	COC	MC	7/1/2016	9/1/2016	0%	[Progress bar: 0% complete]																							
22	Annual Report Review	COC	MC	7/1/2016	9/1/2016	0%	[Progress bar: 0% complete]																							
23	Independent Compl Audit Review	COC	MC	7/1/2016	9/1/2016	0%	[Progress bar: 0% complete]																							

# QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

