

# MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

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**DRAFT: AUGUST 27, 2012**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN: OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF JULY 26, 2012**

#### A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Cusimano at 3:11p.m. on July 26, 2012, in the Cavallero Conference Room at the Novato Fire Protection District's Administration Office, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA.

#### Committee Members Present:

Twin Cities Police Authority  
County of Marin Sheriff  
City of Larkspur  
City of Sausalito

Todd Cusimano  
Robert Doyle  
Robert Sinnott  
Jennifer Tejada

#### Staff Present:

MERA Executive Officer  
MERA Operations Officer

Maureen Cassingham  
Craig Tackabery

#### Guests Present:

Indie Politics/Price Campaign Solutions      Dan Mullen, Terry Price

#### B. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair

*M/S/P Sinnott/Tejada to elect Cusimano as Outreach Subcommittee Chair.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

*M/S/P Cusimano/Tejada to elect Sinnott as Outreach Subcommittee Vice Chair.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

C. Appointment of New Subcommittee Members

Cusimano announced that Police Chief Bishop, City of San Rafael and Interim Chief Berg, City of Novato, have agreed to become members of the Subcommittee.

D. Approval of Minutes from June 7, 2012, Meeting

*M/S/P Sinnott/Tejada to approve the minutes from the June 7, 2012, meeting as presented.*

AYES: All

NAYS: None

Motion carried.

E. Outreach Deliverables and Timeline – Indie Politics and Price Campaign Solutions Consulting Services (Mullen and Price)

**First 6-9 months** – Coordinate internal communications to “set the stage” for the launch of a long-term funding effort and public education campaign:

DRAFT OUTREACH PLAN

Mullen distributed the draft Plan dated July 26, 2012. He and Price are seeking Subcommittee input before presenting it to the larger group. He noted that the goal was to achieve next generation system funding through successful passage of a parcel tax to fund bonds.

Mullen reviewed the Plan Objectives and Strategy. He suggested we poll for June 2014 and November 2014 ballots. Ballot timing also affects the timing of tax collection for the project. Doyle asked which election date is least cluttered. Mullen said probably June but there is higher turnout in November and likely a better base of support.

Price provided background for establishing the current Joint Committee meetings to better coordinate the work being done independent of one another. What is now being proposed is formation of an ad hoc group to provide oversight of the outreach effort. The Group will oversee the implementation of the Plan and make decisions about documents to be produced, advertising budgets, etc. By creating an Oversight Committee, there should be less work for the members of our current committees. Hymel needs to be a part of the new Oversight Committee given his position, his agency and ideas. Oversight would replace the Joint Committee meetings. Mullen reviewed the proposed composition of this Group. Price said this would be a major recommendation by this Subcommittee to the Joint Committees in August versus the Project Manager position being discussed by the Finance Committee. That position is proposed to be a single staff spokesperson for the Next Gen Project with an undetermined job description at this point. Finance Chair Hymel said the \$50M Next Gen Project needed ownership which is what this position is

intended to provide. Mullen said rather than have a single staff at a part-time salary to own the project, they recommend an Oversight Committee, all of whom own the project.

Tejada suggested adding a representative from the Marin Managers Association to Oversight which would enhance the ownership of the project. While all are very busy, it would give MMA a role which they could choose to delegate. Cassingham noted that MMA had elected two City Managers to the MERA Executive Board earlier today. Possibly one of them could serve on the Oversight Committee. Doyle asked Cusimano about the size of the Twin Cities Oversight Committee. Cusimano said the total team was about 20 with 12 core members. Price and Mullen said Committee Members included Public Works, Project Engineers, Project Managers, City Managers, Bond and General Counsels, Police Chiefs and the two of them. Doyle noted what Mullen and Price are proposing seems like a large group. Mullen said this is about the same size as the Joint Committees but a different composition.

Cusimano asked the status of the Fall Workshop on the Next Gen Project. He said we could form the Oversight group at the Workshop. Tejada said it is important to get representatives from the larger voting populations like Novato or San Rafael. Price said possibly core members of this Oversight Group could get together before the Workshop. Cusimano asked if Oversight appointments could be put on the next Outreach agenda. Cassingham will follow up, noting the Executive Board will be asked for input on MERA leadership and turnover issues on September 12.

Mullen presented the proposed responsibilities of the Oversight Committee plus the need for appointment of a Sign-Off Subcommittee. The Consultants Responsibilities outlined in the Draft Plan reflect the tasks in Mullen and Price's current contract. Mullen said it is unclear what County Staff time might be available for outreach based on the \$2M included in the Next Gen project budget. He asked Tackabery what was included in that line item. Tackabery said this was probably for project implementation staff. Price said some of this could be charged to the bonds. He asked if DPW staff time would be available to help with outreach. Tackabery said DPW is committed to doing what we need to do for this project.

Mullen recapped the need for New Member Orientation due to high turnover before the Workshop. Mullen said assignment of new members to committees should make the best use of their skills and abilities. Cassingham said the last orientation, which was Spring 2011, was provided by Mansourian and her. His presentation focused on the technical while hers focused on administration. She and Tackabery have discussed a 2012 orientation but decided to postpone it until after the Board had acted on MERA's new governance. She said September/October would be doable, but she would coordinate with Tackabery. Price said this is critical as part of the overall educational process. Tackabery said the orientation focuses on MERA's history, the current system and what lies ahead for the aging system. Price said content of the orientation and workshop go hand in hand with orientation going first. Tackabery said it could be at the same meeting. Cassingham urged that we do not get out in front of the Executive and Governing Board with the Workshop.

Mullen presented the Major Activities noted in the Plan, including formation of an Outreach Team. He said the team would include police, fire, city management and public works spokespersons. Price said assignments will be given to team members like speaking to Rotary. The biggest challenge is to identify the persons who will work with the different organizations. It should be peer based with police talking to police, etc. He stressed the importance of “fit” and the person knowing the people and politics associated with a given organization. He said we should only use a Project Manager as a key spokesperson if we cannot find Outreach team members to do it. Consultants should not be used for outreach. Doyle asked how you run a successful campaign with this strategy since contact is made with so few people, the number being insignificant in comparison to sending written materials. Mullen said there is no money for direct mass mail. He said that this strategy is not necessarily to fully educate the public but identify areas of potential opposition. Presentations create a feedback loop. Price said we will start with MERA Board members and then MERA member governing bodies followed by targeted contact with the public.

Tackabery said, based on his experience, there isn't much free time in members' schedules, so an experienced trusted spokesperson is needed who has the time and background to do this. Cusimano said we all know and own our own areas. Every police chief and fire chief needs to get together from a public safety standpoint to address their respective governing bodies and communities. Doyle this is an important project and we can't say we are too busy. Tejada supported each jurisdiction being educated by their own leaders who they trust to provide this information, backed up by a technically savvy person to answer questions. Mullen said we may want to centralize financing and technical expertise to back up local leaders. Cusimano said these leaders could be provided with financing fact sheets. Tackabery said when he worked on the sales tax measure he was grilled with many questions. Mullen agreed that there will be many questions and that they will vary from city to city. Tejada said it is easier for her to follow up with her City Council's questions than a presenter from another jurisdiction, plus she knows their individual styles.

Sinnott suggested both police and fire should be the local public safety experts backed up by financial and technical expertise. Tackabery said he may not be the technical person but he will identify that person. Cusimano and Mullen noted the importance of bringing all the managers along. Mullen said if the managers are advised of the reduced financial impacts on their budgets with the new system funded by a parcel tax, this should help with their support.

Mullen addressed the Plan section on creation of Next Gen System informational materials and media, which he and Price would produce. Doyle asked about what grabs people and asked how we get people interested in this project. Price said the best people to answer this question will be the pollsters. They will have history on other tax measures and what was successful. Doyle said, based on his last campaign, to get people to absorb information, it must be different. It must get their attention that this is important.

Price updated the Subcommittee on campaign regulations, noting that no taxpayer funds can be used for advocacy. As soon as the measure is placed on the ballot, all activity by MERA stops and the campaign takes over with advocacy.

Mullen said we need to start to work now on the MERA member workshop tentatively scheduled for late September/early October. He reviewed the purpose of the Workshop as outlined in the Plan. Cassingham is working on date/time/location and a Save-the-Date announcement. Mullen briefly summarized the Workshop design and content. After the Workshop, Mullen said the Plan calls for member representatives making public presentations to member governing bodies and beyond. Presentations will include statement of project need, costs, financing options, likely ballot language and bond terms. The measure could fund an oversight committee, be worded to exclude seniors at certain income levels, and include funding for other important public safety programs like Safe Routes to Schools and drug intervention programs. All of this could help garner public support in a 2/3 election. Bond terms discussed by the Finance Committee were 25 years with radios and 18 years without them. Finance and technology experts need to be able to discuss the need for including radios.

Sinnott asked about the consequences of measure failure. Tackabery said if this fails, we won't have a reliable public safety communications system. Motorola has notified us that replacement parts will no longer be available. Doyle said this is a tough issue in that people think public safety communications are part of the basic public service package they already pay for. Mullen said raising internal awareness and making the public aware of critical communications behind police and fire response is key to building support for this project.

Doyle asked if there were issues in building manager support. Mullen said managers are chief allies who need to be educated. The only problem is the turnover in managers. Doyle noted Hymel's longstanding involvement with MERA and that he is part of the managers association which will be helpful to us. Tackabery said we need to convince managers and local safety leaders that this election is theirs and not intended to be competitive with other city issues.

Mullen mentioned the branding and slogan tagline work to be done by Oversight. Website recommendations will be based on feedback from the Fact Sheet and FAQs as well as poll results. Presentations of this information will follow to educational, neighborhood and service groups and chambers of commerce. Based on poll results, there may be a need to further educate the public using targeted direct mail. Price added that demographics may make a difference in our messaging which polling should identify.

Mullen addressed the proposed 20-33-month timeline to implement the Outreach Plan. The work of MERA's committees must end three to four months prior to the election. A June election ends activity in March and a November election ends activity in August. He said Bond Counsel will provide a financing calendar which would be overlaid on the election calendar. The Finance Committee discussed when a parcel tax might be

collected after a November 2014 election, which could be another eight months out. A June 2014 election could possibly be applied to the August 2014 tax rolls.

Mullen further commented on tasks in the Plan Timeline. Their work on the Fact Sheet, FAQs, messaging and related planning, will continue as they get more information. Mullen said pollster solicitation would occur in November 2012. The poll would be conducted in early 2013. Price said doing the poll too early, could affect the results. If we wait too long, we won't have the information we need to guide us in our outreach. Early polling for MERA's project will give us insight to what voters think so that this information can be used with the MERA members.

Sinnott asked if we should be informing the school districts about our proposed measure to minimize competition with their measures. He said this may not affect the timing of their measures but would give them a heads-up on ours. Price said some measures have automatic sunsets which control when the districts schedule their measures. Mullen asked if there was reason not to be talking with others about a June or November 2014 ballot measure. Cassingham stressed the need for informing our Executive and Governing Boards first before going public.

Mullen stated the proposed budget in the Plan is the same as their current contract, which totals \$75,000 for consulting, website vendor, media production and airing and the public survey. Cusimano and Sinnott expressed appreciation for the Plan and expertise behind it. Tackabery suggested Price and Mullen look at how the Water District did their fire flow project and the use of bill enclosures. He said every agency has e-newsletters and other channels for distributing information we might tap into.

F. Request for New MERA Governance Media Release

Cassingham said Board Member Anderson, Marinwood Community Services District, had requested, at the June 20 Board meeting, a media release on MERA's new governance in response to a public inquiry about it. She asked the Subcommittee and Consultants for guidance as to how to proceed so as not to get at cross purposes with MERA's outreach efforts. Mullen said they advised against a PSA and suggested a media release. He cautioned however, that we have no Sign-Off Committee in place to approve such communications. Sinnott and Cusimano noted that FAQs on this had been provided to the members when JPA Amendment No. 5 and the Restated Bylaws were being considered. Cassingham said the FAQs could be updated and redistributed to the MERA members for them to release to the media and public. It was the consensus of the Subcommittee for Cassingham to proceed accordingly.

G. Next Quarterly Joint Meeting of Governance Work Group, Finance Committee, Outreach Subcommittee, and Technology

Cassingham said the Joint Meeting has been scheduled for August 8 at 2 p.m. at the Marin Civic Center. The agenda packet will be distributed on August 1.

H. Other Information Items

Price said he would like to begin the pollster selection process soon so that they can be advisory to our outreach. Mullen said pollsters charge flat fees for their time and for the poll, so hiring them sooner does not increase cost. They will contact several firms via an RFP and share the response with Outreach.

Price asked for Outreach to take a position to the Joint Committee on the Project Manager concept submitted by DPW staff to the Finance Committee. This is not the concept being recommended in the Outreach Plan. In fact, it is a significant change that adds \$100,000 expenditure from reserves for this position. Tackabery said this recommendation came from him and that this position could assist Outreach with all the presentations as spokesperson. Sinnott said the Project Manager could oversee the entire process and would be responsible for moving all this forward. Cusimano said he had a hard time with paying money to a spokesperson when we have people with the skill sets we need. Tackabery said he is budgeted for six hours per week for MERA, which is why we need to hire someone to do this work. Sinnott said we need technical and financial back-up for local leaders when they are making presentations.

Mullen noted we need a job description for this position since what has been described by Hymel is different than what has been described by Tackabery. A goal for the Joint Meeting should be to determine a job description for this position. Price asked how it would fit into the Outreach Plan and suggested the need for a more appropriate title since Project Manager could be construed as construction manager. Sinnott said we need a Mansourian type to fill this position to support the local leaders. He thinks we will need this position whatever the title. Mullen said administrative support will also be needed along with the services of a technical point person. Price said we need to clarify if these services are reimbursable from the bond.

Tackabery said we need to determine if the County or MERA is placing the measure on the ballot since this will affect messaging and public understanding. If MERA does the outreach and its name is not on the measure, this will create voter confusion. Price agreed that this needs to be addressed.

Price commented on the Finance Committee's discussion of funding for grant writing services and the implications grant seeking has for outreach. Voters will ask what we have applied for. Nelson said at the meeting she knew of some grant writers but said they would need supervision. Tackabery said Revere also had some grant writers in mind. DPW can identify these resources if MERA wants to proceed, but if another agency can do it for MERA, that is an option. Price suggested the Outreach Subcommittee convey its support of grant writing for MERA at the Joint Meeting. Cassingham said we need to clarify if MERA can be a grant recipient as a JPA. Tackabery said many grants are to local agencies and the County could apply on MERA's behalf. Outreach would need to clarify this in its educational materials.

I. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next Outreach Subcommittee Meeting be scheduled for Wednesday, September 12, 2012, at 2 p.m. at NFPD. Tackabery noted neither he nor Nelson will be at the August 8 Joint Meeting.

J. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

None.

K. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.