

# MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District  
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**Draft: 10/2//12**

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

### **Regular Meeting Minutes**

#### **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Hymel on September 12, 2012 at 3:30 p.m. at the Novato Fire Protection District's Administration Office, Heritage Conference Room, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA.

#### **Board Members Present:**

County of Marin	Matthew Hymel
Marin County Sheriff	Robert Doyle
City of San Rafael	Chris Gray
City of Novato	Jim Berg
Fire Services	Richard Pearce
Police Departments	Todd Cusimano
Ross Valley Cities/Towns	Debra Stutsman
Southern Marin Cities/Towns	Jim McCann
Special Districts	Bill Hogan

#### **Staff Present:**

MERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
County DPW/MERA Operations Officer	Craig Tackabery
County Communications Engineer	Richard Chuck
Legal Counsel	Jim Karpiak
Recording Secretary	Denise Wade

#### **Guests Present:**

Novato Fire Protection District	Eric Nickel
Indie Politics/Price Campaign Solutions	Dan Mullen, Terry Price

#### A. **Welcome and Introductions**

Vice President Hymel welcomed the new Board members and self-introductions followed.

B. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

*M/S/P Doyle/Gray to nominate and elect Hymel as Chair.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

*M/S/P Doyle/Gray to nominate and elect Cusimano as Vice Chair.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

C. Consent Calendar

All matters on the Consent Calendar are to be approved with one motion unless a Member of the Executive Board or the public requests that a separate action be taken on a specific item.

1. Minutes from May 9, 2012, Executive Committee Regular Meeting
2. Acknowledgement of Contributions to MERA – Kreins and Rodericks
3. Confirmation of Bimonthly Regular Executive Board Meeting Dates – FY12-13
4. Report on Executive Board Tasks/Workload

*M/S/P Gray/Cusimano to approve Consent Calendar Items 1-4 as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

D. Executive Officer's Report (Cassingham)

1. Request for Direction from President Revere re: Governing Board Member Naso MERA Coverage Concerns

Cassingham presented her staff report on this matter which summarizes Board Member Naso's May 16 request for solutions for system coverage issues in Tiburon, Belvedere and Stinson Beach. She recapped MERA Board, Executive Committee and DPW efforts to address these concerns back to 2009.

President Revere has asked for Executive Board direction on how to proceed. Cassingham asked Chief Nickel to provide further input. Nickel said these issues are not just isolated to West Marin. They include the Tiburon Peninsula, northern end of the

County, as well as Novato Fire. The Operations Work Group has reviewed these matters over the years. Ops was not aware that the satellite phone issued to Stinson was not working. He recommended that these technical issues be referred back to Operations staff to work on interim solutions. He agreed with Cassingham that any actions be cost-effective. Temporary towers, for example, could require significant time to get approval and construct and thus would not be cost-effective solutions. They could, however, be part of the next gen system. Pearce said it is important to begin with what has been done to resolve these issues, from the tuning of the system to redirecting existing antennas to looking at new sites like Martha and Ft. Miley, which are expensive solutions. We need to identify what we have done with the current system and what will be addressed by the next-gen system. He asked if Chuck would join him in reviewing all that has been and is being done on coverage. Cassingham asked if the satellite phone equipment could be checked. Tackabery said this is not a MERA phone, so DPW was not aware of it. Chuck said it was issued by County Fire. Tackabery offered to assist Pearce with this review. Doyle confirmed with Cassingham that MERA's records and various reports reflect our attention to these coverage issues over the years, which could be provided to our members. She offered to provide Pearce, Chuck and Tackabery with these documents and to work with them. Gray also volunteered to assist.

2. Report #9 on Strategic Plan Implementation

Cassingham summarized the latest implementation activities in Report #9, noting the Governance Work Group sunsetted upon Board adoption of JPA Amendment #5 and the Revised Bylaws. Both the Finance Committee and Outreach Subcommittee have been very active with their respective tasks relating to planning for the next gen system. She noted the development of the draft Outreach Plan and FAQs and Fact sheet for use with member representatives and member agencies along with a December Workshop for the Governing Board.

*M/S/P Gray/McCann to receive and file Report #9 on Strategic Plan Implementation as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

3. Discussion of December Governing Board Workshop

Cassingham summarized her staff report on the Workshop which will immediately follow the Board's December 12 regular meeting. The intent of the Workshop is to bring all members up to speed on current system operations and plans for a future replacement system and get their feedback. She introduced Mullen and Price, MERA's Outreach consultants, noting they have developed the draft Outreach Plan and will be facilitating the Workshop. They asked for Executive Board input. Hymel noted for the new Executive Board members that this is all about MERA needing to go to a new generation system which will cost an estimated \$50M which cannot be borne by the members. The

Finance Committee has been reviewing a County-wide parcel tax in 2014 to provide funding. This will require broad consensus and a major effort. The Workshop begins this conversation with the members.

Gray suggested that the Workshop address where MERA is and where we are going technologically. We need to demonstrate the need and value of what we are doing, beginning with current functionality, limitations of our 15-year-old design, and that we are being driven by the national level in terms of spectrum. Mullen said the Workshop will have financial and technical components to address necessity and how to pay for it. Gray stressed the importance of the connection to 911 and assurance of a response, and a pennies-a-day approach.

4. Appointment of Police and Fire Representatives to MERA Finance Committee

Cassingham summarized her staff report which, with the requested appointment, would restore the Committee's membership to five. Hymel noted the importance of having Police and Fire representation, especially given future spending decisions and the need for public safety awareness and input.

*M/S/P Doyle/Hymel to appoint Berg and Pearce to the MERA Finance Committee.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

5. Appointment of Executive Officer Work Plan Committee Member

Cassingham presented her staff report noting the vacancy on this Committee due to Kreins' retirement.

*M/S/P Pearce/Berg to appoint Gray to the Executive Officer Work Plan Committee.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

6. Other Information Items

Cassingham reported on scheduling a New Member Orientation, possibly as a component of the December Workshop or a stand-alone event in November. Gray suggested that this might be convened at the County Communications Center to allow new members to see dispatch operations and the EOC, along with the equipment itself to assist their understanding of MERA. He offered to assist. Doyle agreed this was a good idea.

Cassingham was contacted by Standard & Poor's Bond Rating Agency regarding the recent rating of MERA's 2010 Refunding Revenue Bonds based on their new, more

conservative criteria for municipal pools. She will distribute their electronic report once received. She noted the slight downgrade in our rating from AA+ to AA-, noting this has nothing to do with MERA's operations or any payment delinquencies, of which there have been none.

Cassingham reported on the progress to-date of getting links to MERA's website on all the member agencies' websites. 13 of 25 members have been linked, with one underway. She will be in contact with those not linked, with the goal of completing this by year-end.

E. Operations Reports (Tackabery)

1. Proposed Fiscal Year 2012/13 Capital Improvement Plan

Tackabery summarized his staff report noting MERA Board approval of \$50,000 funding for work on three capital projects: Tomales Emergency Radio Project, the Martha Company Development Proposal in Tiburon and the Next Gen System Feasibility Study. Items 2 through 7 in his report are related to the Next Gen System. These items have been discussed by the Finance Committee and are presented as information at this point and will be presented for further Executive Board discussion in the future.

Tackabery said he is seeking authorization of \$22,000 for the Marin Transit/Command Mutual Aid Conventional Channel. Hymel clarified with Tackabery that this equipment was acquired with grant funding and we are required to implement it. While it was originally acquired for Marin Transit, this channel is a better deployment of it. Chuck said the original grant amount was \$350,000-\$400,000. Hymel reiterated that we do not want to jeopardize this grant so we need to take this next step. Tackabery noted this was vetted with the Operations Work Group who confirmed this as a worthy investment. Hymel confirmed with Cassingham that the source of funds would be the New Project Financing Fund.

*M/S/P Cusimano/Gray to approve \$22,000 to implement a Command Mutual Aid Conventional Channel to complement our TAC conventional channels.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

2. Requests for Waiver of Radio Moratorium

- California Department of Fish and Game
- Southern Marin Fire Protection District
- Novato Fire District

Tackabery noted MERA has limited capacity and these requests are taken very seriously and vetted through the Operations Work Group. They recommend granting Fish and Games' request for 2 radios, Southern Marin's request for 2 radios and Novato Fire's request for 4 radios.

*M/S/P Pearce/Gray to approve the requests for additional radios from California Department of Fish and Game, Southern Marin Fire Protection District and Novato Fire District as recommended.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

3. Status/Work Statistics Reports (Chuck)

Chuck presented PowerPoint slides of MERA System Activity. The Ops Group has received these updates which include the grant-funded EOF/PSB New Switch Project; New Law Template Project, including mobiles and portables programming; Microwave Modules replacement; review of system talk groups; microwave multiplex reengineering; FIRESCAD programming to add Fire Station 3; 700MHz Interop System Testing, which adds 7 CALL 50 and other call frequencies; and, Dispatch Center back-up control station testing. Nickel confirmed with Chuck that Fire would not be required to reprogram with the New Law Template.

Chuck presented a MERA site layout to update new members and pie charts of typical monthly system usage and percentage of usage by agency for July and August 2012. He will be going to quarterly versus monthly breakdowns. Chuck presented a bar chart of MERA System Call Hours from 2006 to year-to-date 2012. Reduction in call hours starting in 2009 reflected user training and technical changes to the system. There are 10,000-11,000 call hours per year. Gray asked if increased use of mobile data terminals was affecting this. Chuck said the Transit District's reduced use was somewhat of a factor. Gray asked for copies of these materials. He asked for a legend to be added to the pie charts.

Chuck reviewed the Busy Seconds chart noting the 2008 spike with the floods. Gray cited the effect of the additional frequencies to busy second reduction. Chuck said the busy seconds tell you how the system is operating and how it has improved significantly. Busy-seconds-per-year charts were also presented for East and West Simulcast, Sonoma Mountain, Bolinas and Bay Hill. Chuck confirmed for Gray that the New Law Template will not free up channels but there will be fewer talk groups. He also said we will need to monitor Bolinas since it is experiencing more activity than expected for a small site.

4. Other Information Items

Pearce asked Tackabery for a Martha update. Staff is preparing a response to public comments. He said this is a very complex project which has taken considerable time. DPW is tracking it closely.

F. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda (*limited to two minutes per speaker*)

None.

G. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

**NEXT:** MERA Executive Board Regular Meeting  
**Wednesday – November 14, 2012 – 3:30 p.m.**

**AGENDA AND STAFF REPORTS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT  
[WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG](http://WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG)**

cc: BOS (for posting)  
MERA Staff  
General Counsel