

# **MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY**

c/o Town of Corte Madera  
300 Tamalpais Drive, Corte Madera, CA 94925  
PHONE: (415) 927-5050  
WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG

**DRAFT: 10/26/20**

## **GOVERNING BOARD**

### **Minutes of September 23, 2020 Regular Meeting**

#### **Call to Order and Introductions**

The teleconferenced regular meeting was called to order by President Pearce on September 23, 2020 at 3:32 p.m. Pearce reviewed the teleconferencing protocol, noting roll call votes on all action items. Barrera called roll.

#### **Governing Board Members & Alternates Present:**

Town of Corte Madera	R. J. Suokko (Alternate)
City of Mill Valley	Jacqueline Graf-Reis (Alternate)
Town of San Anselmo	Doug Kelly
City of San Rafael	Bob Sinnott (Alternate)
County of Marin	Dan Eilerman (Alternate)
Inverness Fire Protection District	Jim Fox
Kentfield Fire Protection District	Mark Pomi, Ron Naso (Alternate)
Marin Community College District	Martin Langenveld (Alternate)
Marin Municipal Water District	Don Wick (Alternate)
Marinwood Community Services District	Eric Dreikosen (Alternate)
Novato Fire Protection District	Steve Metcho, L. J. Silverman (Alternate)
Southern Marin Fire Protection District	Cathryn Hilliard
Stinson Beach Fire Protection District	Kenny Stevens
Tiburon Fire Protection District	Richard Pearce
Central Marin Police Authority	Michael Norton

#### **Governing Board Member Agencies Absent:**

City of Belvedere  
Town of Fairfax  
City of Larkspur  
City of Novato  
Town of Ross  
City of Sausalito  
Town of Tiburon  
Bolin Fire Protection District  
Marin Transit  
Ross Valley Fire Department

**Staff Present:**

MERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
MERA General Counsel	Trisha Ortiz
MERA Deputy Executive Officer – Next Gen Project	Dave Jeffries
MERA Administrative Assistant – Next Gen Project	Maura Griffin
MERA Acting Operations Officer Recording Secretary	Betsy Swenerton Lorena Barrera

**Guests Present:**

Federal Engineering	David Mortimer
County of Marin DPW	Pat Echols
County of Marin DPW	Mark Bleeker

A. Consent Calendar

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

- 1) Resolution of Commendation – Retired Police Chief Michael Cronin,  
Town of Tiburon, MERA Governing Board Member
- 2) Minutes from July 22, 2020 Governing Board Regular Meeting
- 3) Report No. 100 on Strategic Plan Implementation
- 4) Update on Next Gen Project Site Leases/Licenses and License Amendments
- 5) Update on 2007 Citizens Bank Note Retirement
- 6) Rescission of MERA Change Order Policy for Next Gen System Project  
Vendor Contracts
- 7) Final Report on 2010 Bonds Redemption
- 8) Report on 2016 Bonds Fitch Rating Review and Outlook

*M/S/P Stevens/Wick to approve Consent Calendar Items 1 through 8 as presented.  
Roll call vote followed.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
Motion carried.

B. Executive Officer's Report – (Cassingham)

1) Report No. 74 on Next Gen System Project and Budget – (Jeffries)

Jeffries reported on the Project calls, noting the addition of the weekly AECOM Project Team Implementation calls. He reported on MERA Next Gen System Implementation staffing which includes AECOM Program Manager Mark Chase and FE David Mortimer, who continue to oversee the Motorola Contract; AECOM James MacKenzie and Jonathan Sprague, who oversee the contractor bid process and Project site construction; and RGS Implementation Coordinator David Bettin, who serves as member agency liaison for radio delivery and installations, dispatch and fire station alerting installations and system training.

Jeffries provided an update on Customer Design review, noting AECOM's third-party review resulted in 135 comments for Motorola action. Motorola has corrected many of the items leaving the Construction Schedule and Microwave Design documentation for further discussion. AECOM has produced a draft Construction Schedule for Motorola to incorporate into the Project Schedule. Fire Station Alerting (FSA) and Jail Distributed Audio System (DAS) will be addressed later which will not affect the Project Schedule. Presentation of the CDR package to the Governing Board is planned for the October meeting. CDR approval will permit proceeding with bid package development, the bid process and construction.

Jeffries reported on September 9 Executive Board approval of expenditures for fiber pulls and two power inverters. William Bradley Electrical, a local contractor, will do the fiber pulls from the Civic Center to the Radio Shop and the EOF. He also noted the assistance for Firefighters Grant radios has been received and installation is planned for year-ending to avoid fire season. AECOM is reviewing Construction Cost estimates for final presentation at the October Governing Board meeting.

Jeffries noted Construction Bid Documents, which were prepared by the County before the transition, are under final review by AECOM before they are released for bid. The first package for three sites will be issued before the end of the calendar year. The rest will be grouped and staggered for release thereafter. Finalization of site leasing, PG&E power design connectivity and minor environmental amendments will affect construction sequencing.

Jeffries reported on the joint work being done with AT&T at the Tomales site, which would result in power trench sharing. This would eliminate the need for a second trench and would require a minor SEIR update. Additionally, it will produce some cost savings for the Next Gen Project. He reminded the Board that he continues to be the Next Gen Project PIO and encouraged members to refer media and other inquiries to him.

Jeffries referred to his report's Summary Table, which lists Project tasks completed,

in progress or upcoming for a quick snapshot of its progress. He recapped the Project Budget, which was last revised on June 3, 2020. Expenditures have been updated through 4-30-20. He, with Cassingham, will be updating the Funding Source Table and Motorola Milestones for the October meeting. For example, the \$1M estimate for non-safety radios will be revised based on recently completed field survey counts.

2) Proposed NGP Professional Services Contracts for Third-Party Plan Checks, Geotech Site Borings and Soils Testing

Jeffries presented backgrounds on proposed expenditures for Third-Party Plan Review and Geotech Services. Third-Party Plan Review provides for site review for compliance with State Building Codes since MERA is exempt from local permitting. Phillips Seabrook, a Sonoma-County based consulting firm, is recommended to provide these services for 15 Project sites at a cost not to exceed \$20,000. Cassingham administratively approved plan checks for the first three sites – Civic Center, EOF and Mt. Barnabe – to expedite those bid packages.

Jeffries presented the Geotech Services, which include borings and soils tests at 15 Next Gen sites at a cost of \$75,400. The proposed vendor is Herzog Geotechnical Consulting Engineers, Mill Valley. Motorola, in their Contract, was required to provide some subcontractor Geotech work. That Irvine-based firm's work required more local reference and greater detail and accuracy to guide construction contractors to effectively bid their work and avoid costly change orders and delays. Engaging Harzog, which is familiar with a number of MERA sites, will also involve more extensive borings, which is particularly important for sites like Coyote Peak, with a lengthy access road along with extensive trenching.

*M/S/P Kelly/Fox to approve contracts for Third-Party Review and Geotech Services with Phillips Seabrook Associates and Herzog Geotechnical Consulting Engineers, respectively, as presented and authorize the Executive Officer to execute.  
Roll call vote followed.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
Motion carried.

3) Other Information Items

Pearce reminded the Members to distribute to their respective elected and appointed officials the September 2020 Next Gen Project Update included in the packet.

C. Operations Reports (Swenerton)

1) Report on MERA Operations Officer Replacement and DPW Current System Staffing

Swenerton noted Rojas' retirement at the end of December. He named her Acting MERA Operations Officer on August 23 until such time as the new DPW Director is appointed and makes long-term staffing assignments in January.

Regarding the Telecommunications Manager, which oversees the day-to-day MERA technical operations, more than 10 applications were received for this vacant position and first round interviews were conducted today. Recruitment for the Network System Analyst position is on hold. Tucker Evans, who has been serving with Mark Bleeker as Interim Supervising Communications Tech, will likely go back to the Analyst position once the new Communications Manager is in place. Thereafter, there will be a new recruitment for the Supervising Communications Tech position.

2) Microwave Channel Bank Hardware Failure – Prime Site

Swenerton noted two Options for pricing on Page 2 of her report with three sub-options, which should be 1a, 1b and 1c, and 2a, 2b and 2c, respectively. She reported in early August that staff noticed a network interface card had failed at the Prime Site. Failure required temporary disablement of the San Pedro site to make the repair. Signal was lost from China Camp to McNears Beach for a few days while Techs assessed the issue. The CPU card onboard batteries had failed. These batteries are usually good for 8 to 10 years. These batteries were 15 years old.

Swenerton said the manufacturer recommended card replacement, which led to the development of the options presented along with costs. Staff feels that it is likely other network cards could fail, which is the basis for the development of the options and sub-options. Kelly said the cost seems expensive. He asked if chassis were computers. Swenerton said Bleeker could assist with a response and further noted Option 1 was replacement of CPU/Network cards only and Option 2 was both chassis and CPU/Network card replacement. Both options were vetted with the manufacturer and deemed acceptable. She added the chassis includes the network cards and additional components in a housing. Chassis replacement assures all the hardware, software and firmware versions are the same. This reduces the possibility for failure and trial and error fixes. In response, Kelly requested the Executive Officer forward proposed invoice copies so he can better understand what is being purchased.

Swenerton said she has the detailed pricing from which these costs estimates were developed, which she can share with Kelly. She recognized the amount of the investment in the current System given Next Gen is so close, but the potential for

network card failure in the meantime should be recognized. The Option costs have been presented in such a way as to give the Board sub-options to consider.

Swinerton reviewed Option 1 sub-options, noting the cost progression of each provides for more protection should failure occur, which include spare cards to proactively minimize programming downtime. Pearce said the need for proactive Legacy System maintenance speaks to its fragility and the need to implement Next Gen as soon as possible. He added Option 1 seems more piecemeal while Option 2 insures the components are speaking the same language. He asked if these replacement parts would be compatible with Next Gen.

Cassingham said she will work with Swenerton and Mortimer to assess to what extent these replacement costs could be eligible for Measure A funding as beneficial to Next Gen. Swenerton said she would review this accordingly. Swenerton added Prime Site card replacement is the most urgent at this time. Bleeker concurred with Pearce that all component parts using the same firmware, software, and hardware is optimal, recognizing the difference in Option 1 and 2 costs. He added, at minimum, Option 1 sub-options 1a and 1b are recommended now.

Pomi asked about the life cycle of the Legacy System and said if we are looking at another 36 months usage, much could fail. Option 2 at \$252K or \$225 per day is little to assure mission critical System support. Pearce confirmed Next Gen cutover in 2023, which is considerably beyond current System useful life. Langeveld asked about selecting Option 1 and if we could move to Option 2 if compatibility issues arose.

Swenerton asked Bleeker about the scalability of Option 1 to Option 2. He replied this was possible in that the CPU/Network cards would be the same for both. In response to Kelly, Bleeker clarified that the chassis is a metal enclosure for the power supply, motherboard, network card, CPU and other components. Bleeker confirmed for Langeveld that Option 2 would reduce troubleshooting and repair time with the commonality of parts, updates and more.

Jeffries said the Ops Group is focused on getting this System stable, getting Next Gen implemented as soon as possible and on refreshed user training on conventional channels use, on-site trunking and fail soft in the event of System failures. Eilerman said he appreciated cost considerations, but if we are trying to extend the System for three years, he supports Option 2 with its commonality of component interface. If desired, a subcommittee could be appointed to look more closely at scalability after approval today of Option 1, 1a and 1b.

Silverman said, looking at three more years of System useful life with a potential fourth year for the unforeseen, he supports spending more to do the prudent thing to protect the County's emergency communications. Pearce added his support for

Option 2 and Jeffries' reference to the need for refreshed training in the event of current System failure.

Kelly moved in favor of Option 1, which failed for lack of a second.

*M/S/P Eilerman/Pomi to approve Option 2 to Replace Complete Chassis including CPU Network Cards at a cost of \$252,552, as presented.*

*Roll call vote followed.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: San Anselmo  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
Motion carried.

Pearce noted the Executive Board's request for a current System evaluation. Swenerton said a report was in progress for presentation at the October meeting.

3) Update on Proposed Sonoma-Bay Hill Microwave Link Relinquishment

Swenerton reprised Sonoma County's request of MERA to relinquish its microwave link at Bay Hill when the site is decommissioned upon cutover to Next Gen. The Spectrum Group was engaged to work on the FCC license transfer reassignment from Marin to Sonoma County. This will require one agreement between the Counties and another agreement between MERA and Sonoma County for MERA's continued use of the link on Sonoma County's new microwave link at no cost.

Swenerton reported a complication with the FCC license which covers three sites, which must be separated so MERA can retain the Sonoma to Big Rock leg. Once the FCC approves the new separated license, Marin County can execute the license transfer to Sonoma County. Timeline for wrapping this up is at least one month. In response to Pearce, Cassingham noted the timing of this matter is being tracked with finalization of the MERA-Sonoma County Sonoma Mt. new site license.

Swenerton asked for clarification as to whether MERA's Bay Hill generator or antenna pole had come up in Sonoma Mt. license negotiations. Cassingham said no. Swenerton said these two matters might provide some leverage in MERA's negotiations and she will provide Cassingham more information.

4) MERA Operations System Update – July and August

Bleeker presented the two-month updates highlighting the troubleshooting for the Sheriff's Office (S.O.) Dispatch and AT&T audio issues fix, and defensible space work around tower sites, including Bolinas and Pt. Reyes.

Swenerton clarified the S.O. lack of usage statistics which is due to the receipt of calls by Southern Marin which are then transferred to the S.O. These stats are not differentiated by the reporting system.

Swenerton confirmed that the earlier approval of Channel Bank equipment will address Item 3 in the August report. Bleeker also reported on HVAC replacements.

5) Other Information Items

Swenerton noted the three-year extended warranty agreement with Aviat for the current Microwave System was in progress. The Ops Group monthly meetings have resumed via Zoom. They met on August 5 and September 2 and will meet again on October 7.

Swenerton recapped her follow-up to Governing Board approval of proposed FY20-21 capital expenditures for HVAC equipment replacement at Mill Valley City Hall, Civic Center, San Pedro and Big Rock. A contractor was selected to perform the work at Big Rock and a consultant was identified to assess heat loads to determine unit size. Work should be completed by end of October.

D. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

Hilliard inquired about the use of Zoom for MERA remote Governing Board meetings. Pearce said various remote meeting platforms were considered, along with the challenges associated with their use. Due to the 25-Member size of the Board and easier public meeting access for those without computers, the telephonic mode has been used consistently over these last months and is trouble-free, unlike other platforms, and members have gotten used to the protocol and format. Unless members felt otherwise, he supported continued use of telephonic meetings. He thanked Hilliard for her comment.

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Maureen Cassingham  
MERA Executive Officer  
and Secretary