

# Indie Politics

## Marin Emergency Radio Authority (MERA) Preparing MERA to Pursue Long-Term Funding

**To:** MERA Outreach Subcommittee and Executive Officer Maureen Cassingham  
**From:** Dan Mullen & Terry Price  
**Date:** January 12, 2012  
**Re:** Helping MERA Prepare for a Possible Election or Other Long-Term Funding

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### **Introduction & Recap:**

In our first period of work in 2011, Indie Politics and its consultants examined the Marin Emergency Radio Authority's internal and external communications strategies, and then made recommendations based on what we found. Specifically, we provided to MERA these services and recommendations:

- A. Interviews of Key Members
- B. A Strategic Plan assessment
- C. Recommended revisions to the Public Outreach portion of MERA's Strategic Plan to bring the plan into conformity with MERA's current organization and political realities
- D. Recommended improvements to MERA's internal communications and the decision making process in the areas of governance restructuring, sign-off process and organizational fragmentation
- E. Produced two documents: a Fact Sheet (draft) and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Sheet (Draft)

Now moving into 2012, we are proposing to help implement the strategic and communications recommendations we made last year. As outlined in the recently updated Strategic Plan, the Public Outreach and Education Campaign is multi-faceted, relies on coordinating various subcommittees and pieces within MERA, and may take another 20-33 months to complete effectively.

This is a critical transition period for MERA to reach the final steps in the long process needed to secure the funding needed to pay for the next generation technology, which could last 10-20 years after that. Given our deep knowledge about MERA and its members gained over the past year, and our roots in Marin's public affairs and emergency services, we are positioned to assist MERA make this transition.

### **General Consulting:**

This transition period is more about navigating rocky shores than setting a new course. Whereas in 2011 we could predict and propose specific phases of an investigative scope of work, we see our work in this new period focusing more on helping MERA and its various subcommittees coalesce around a broader communications message and strategy. There will be deliverables and a timeline (next section), but we're expecting fewer written reports, and more verbal and ad-hoc consulting and advice.

The aspects of this general consulting scope of work would include:

1. Advising and Attending Subcommittee Meetings for Outreach, EC Documents Review, Governance, Finance and Joint Meetings of these Groups, as needed

2. Working with MERA's Executive Officer and other public agency consultants (CBG Communications, Inc.), as needed

We will still answer to the Outreach Subcommittee, but when determined it was appropriate, we would work with MERA's other subcommittees listed above to ensure MERA's various parts were moving in a coordinated fashion to reach the same communications and message goals.

### **Deliverables and Timeline:**

As stated in our Phase 2 Memo from July 2011, we are proposing an 20-33 month timeline to develop and implement a Public Education and Outreach Campaign. Now that those recommendations have been broadly incorporated into the Strategic Plan, we would like to help MERA move forward with this timeline:

**First 6-9 Months** – Coordinate internal communications to 'set the stage' for the launch of a long-term funding effort and public education campaign, specifically:

- Achieve 'needed actions' for resolution on governance, understanding equipment needs, and financing
- Proceed with internal communications (i.e., fact sheets, FAQs, messaging, planning, etc.)
- Develop workable long-term funding options and planning
- Create materials and presentations for use with MERA members, including helping to develop Website(s) for Outreach
- Create detailed external education and outreach plan (for use in next phase)

**Next 8-12 Months** – Launch and run external public education campaign, to include:

- Development of messaging (story telling)
- Development of presentations and presentation materials
- Preparation of education materials and visual media
- Media relations
- Training and coaching of presenters
- Community presentations, including video/audio options
- Direct mail, social media and other outreach methods
- Polling of Community awareness of MERA and project
- On-going consultation on elements of the funding plan

**Final 6-12 Months** – If appropriate, prepare for a ballot measure to go before the voters, which would include:

- Retaining financial/bond advisors and election attorneys
- Lay the groundwork with MERA members, and eventually seek their approval for moving to an election
- Prepare ballot measure language
- MERA Board votes to place on the ballot, at which point a private citizens' committee would undertake any campaign

### **Terms of Work:**

Similar to how we contracted with MERA in 2011, we would look to be retained on an hourly basis for work provided. Work would begin immediately, include the same two consultants (Dan Mullen and Terry

Price) for time billed again at \$175 per hour, and would follow similar contractual provisions to the 2011 agreement. The difference now, however, is that we would be seeking advance approval for more hours and services, and thus a larger budget amount. Invoices would also be submitted after each month, instead of after each phase as was done in 2011.

As listed in the latest Strategic Plan update, we are seeking approval for these projected amounts:

a. Consulting	\$30,000 in 2012
b. Website Vendor	\$5,000
c. Media Production & Airing	\$10,000
d. <u>Public Survey (Poll)</u>	<u>\$30,000</u>
TOTAL	\$75,000

If we need more funding than listed above to meet our goals, we will make a written request to the Outreach Subcommittee for their review and possible recommendation to the Executive Board for approval.

**Closing:**

We look forward to the opportunity to work more closely with Outreach and MERA in general to help achieve this long-term goal of funding next generation technology. It's a complicated process, with many moving parts and seemingly never-ending changes in personnel among stakeholders, but we believe this goal is achievable if the core stakeholders remain persistent in their pursuit. We hope to be part of that core team.

Thank you. We look forward to your feedback at the next Outreach meeting.