

Marin Emergency Radio Authority

Next Generation System – Outreach Plan

Draft Update – August 1, 2012

S.P. Joint Meeting 9/8/12 Agenda Item E-1

Goal, Objectives & Strategy:

1. **Goal** – Achieve next generation system funding through the successful passage of a parcel tax bond measure.
2. **Objectives:**
 - a. Create and implement a membership and community education and outreach effort
 - b. Obtain the unanimous support and involvement of all MERA representatives for the project
 - c. Obtain the unanimous support from member organizations
 - d. To the extent possible, educate Marin citizens to garner positive support for the project
3. **Strategy:**
 - a. Finalize project cost, funding, financing, next generation technology and all other related details – to properly explain and promote the project and prepare a public opinion survey
 - b. Organize MERA’s members and committees into a structure that can best implement the outreach plan
 - c. Identify key roles and responsibilities and assign to MERA representatives
 - d. Educate members (especially new members) about MERA and the project and solicit their involvement
 - e. Educate city, town and agency managers about the project and the outreach plan
 - f. Conduct public opinion polling to assist with finalizing the project funding and financing decisions
 - g. Make presentations to, and hold meetings with, county, city, town and agency governing boards
 - h. Conduct a public education effort to inform residents and various stakeholders about the urgent need for upgrading Marin’s emergency communications system

Management & Coordination of Outreach Effort:

1. **Roles & Responsibilities** – As a member organization with limited staff, it is essential that MERA’s members be organized and motivated to forward with the outreach plan. Each of the standing committees will have specific responsibilities and tasks. In addition, a special oversight committee needs to be formed to ensure proper and timely implementation across this vast network of members.
2. **MERA Standing Subcommittees are responsible for the Outreach Effort as follows:**
 - a. Finance Committee – Provides information on the budget and financing of the project. Responsibilities include providing all the financial facts about the project,

- bond financing and parcel tax measure specifics (amounts, definitions, exceptions, etc.)
 - b. Outreach Committee – Oversees the implementation of the Outreach Section of the Strategic Plan, budgeting of outreach activities and supervision of the outreach consultants.
 - c. Technology (Marin County Staff) – Provides information on all aspects of the next generation system upgrade, including permitting, design, system capability and compatibility, procurement process, etc.
3. **Project Oversight Subcommittee** (or “Next Gen Project Team”) – The creation of a new Committee specifically to oversee the community outreach and education effort.
- a. **Membership** –Project Oversight Committee members will be as follows:
 - i. All members of the Outreach Committee
 - ii. Chairs of the Executive Board and Finance Committee
 - iii. MERA’s bond counsel
 - iv. MERA’s general counsel
 - v. Fiscal Expert
 - vi. Marin County Public Works Director
 - vii. Marin County CAO (if not already included above)
 - viii. Select Ex Officio member(s) as “Elder Statesmen”
 - ix. MMA (Marin Managers Association) representative
 - b. **Responsibilities:**
 - i. Oversee all activities of the Outreach Effort
 - ii. Assist with implementation of the Outreach Plan
 - iii. Monitor progress of outreach effort and provide guidance where needed
 - iv. Review and approve all communications, including FAQ, Fact sheet, and presentation material – this function will be delegated to a three person “Sign-Off” committee confirmed by the Oversight Committee
4. **Consultant Responsibilities:**
- a. **Indie Politics (Dan Mullen) and Price Campaign Solutions (Terry Price)** – Focus on helping MERA and its various subcommittees coalesce around a broader communications strategy, including:
 - i. Manage and implement deliverables and a timeline (detailed below)
 - ii. Advise and Attend Subcommittee Meetings for Outreach, EC Documents Review, Governance, Finance and Joint Meetings of these Groups, as needed
 - iii. Work with MERA’s Executive Officer and other public agency consultants (CBG Communications, Inc.), as needed
 - iv. Verbal and ad-hoc consulting and advice
 - v. Consultants will still answer to the Outreach Subcommittee, but when determined it is appropriate, they would work with MERA’s other subcommittees to ensure MERA’s various parts were moving in a coordinated fashion to reach the same communications and message goals.
5. **New Member Orientation and Education** – Due to the high turnover of MERA members, special attention needs to be given to the rapid integration of new members so they can fully participate in the outreach effort. This should include:
- a. Identify all new members since last MERA orientation
 - b. Commitment and assignment

- i. Ask for 2-year MERA commitment
- ii. Assignment to a MERA committee based on best use of skills and capabilities
- c. Training and education
 - i. Provide MERA orientation
 - ii. Provide information specific to their Committee assignment
 - iii. Provide Outreach Effort information and training specific to their involvement

Major Activities:

1. Internal Communications:

- a. **Outreach Team** – All member agencies need to be fully supportive and engaged in the passage of the parcel tax measure for us to win the broadest possible public support. The Outreach Team will be assigned the task of identifying and contacting all MERA members and their governing entity. Due to size and diversity of MERA’s membership it is recommended that we assign specific individuals to liaison with each member. Selecting each liaison will be based on the person’s familiarity, with a priority placed on peer-to-peer relationships. We expect each Outreach Team member to liaison with several MERA members.
 - i. Appoint and assign Team members – Police, Fire, City Managers, Public Works
 - ii. Provide information and training
 - iii. Set contact timeline and schedule
- b. **Spokespersons** – Similar to the liaison program (and perhaps overlapping) we’re looking at pairing up local police and fire leaders with countywide experts in technology and finance. This is designed to help us sell the Next Generation System to local governing councils and agencies with the help of known and trusted public safety leader(s), while also providing technology and finance answers from a few qualified experts.
 - i. Identify and recruit local safety leaders, plus county experts in tech and finance
 - ii. Train and orient county experts with local leaders, providing script, media presentation, materials, etc.
 - iii. Manage the scheduling of presentations
 - iv. Assess response to presentations and revise messaging and materials when called for.
- c. **Creation of Next Generation System Informational Material and Media:**
 - i. Facts Sheet and FAQs, including:
 - 1. Technology – what
 - 2. Financing – how much
 - 3. Public Safety – who, why and how
 - 4. Parcel tax specifics – who, for how much and how long, plus exceptions
 - 5. Timeline – for both project and parcel tax measure
 - ii. Presentations – Multi-media presentation (Powerpoint style multi media)
 - iii. Project and budget narrative
 - iv. Endorsements and testimonials

- v. Packaging of reports and documents (including project and budget narrative, outside independent assessment of life span of current system, related media reports, technical data)
 - vi. Instructional material for members
 - d. **Implementation of Timeline** (see below)
- 2. **MERA Member Workshop** – Late September or early October
 - a. Purpose – Formal launch of Outreach Effort. Motivate member’s involvement. Educate members to the system’s next generation upgrade, proposed parcel tax measure and outreach effort. Answer questions. Solicit input on how to improve outreach plan.
 - b. Decide date/time/location
 - c. Save the Date announcement
 - d. Final invites – Formal invitations to all members and other selected guests
 - e. Workshop Design and Content
 - i. Program Agenda
 - ii. Master of Ceremonies – Steve Kinsey
 - iii. Keynote – Steve Kinsey
 - iv. Powerpoint presentation – MERA (brief) history and project needs
 - v. Expert presentations on:
 - 1. Public Safety – (TBD)
 - 2. Technology – Craig Tackabery
 - 3. Financing and Parcel Tax explanations – Bond Counsel, Tom Gaffney and Matthew Hymel
 - vi. Next steps and call to action
 - f. Handout materials
- 3. **Member Organization Communications:**
 - a. Member representatives – contacts from liaisons (detailed above)
 - b. Council and agency – public presentations
- 4. **External Communications:**
 - a. **Voter Survey** – Knowing exactly what issues, messages and messengers are most persuasive with the public gives us the best chance of winning on this issue. Survey results will be analyzed and recommendations made to the Project Oversight Subcommittee.
 - i. Prerequisite information to conduct the poll:
 - 1. Final project costs
 - 2. Financing options (types of bonds)
 - 3. Likely ballot language (coordinate with bond counsel)
 - 4. Test of potential exception and add-ons that the bond could fund
 - 5. Bond terms (including parcel tax amount and sunset)
 - ii. Survey Design and Content – We propose to conduct 300-400 surveys of citizens living in Marin County. Each poll will be from 15-20 minutes long and will include 40 to 50 questions, including demographic information
 - iii. Survey Phases – The survey will be completed in four phases:
 - 1. Phase One – Draft polling instrument
 - 2. Phase Two – Conduct survey
 - 3. Phase Three – Data processing and cross-tabulated voter responses
 - 4. Phase Four – Analysis, recommendations, presentations

- b. **Business Community Outreach:**
 - i. Initiate conversations with local business leadership to assess reaction to proposed parcel tax measure. Address questions and concerns as appropriate.
- c. **Grassroots Outreach:**

Engage local citizens and business leaders is a well-orchestrated “word of mouth” campaign, designed to educate the uniformed, gauge reaction and overcome soft resistance. This process will help identify individual supporters and organizations to help lead the charge through a variety of activities.
- d. **Local Media and Advertising:**

Effective media and advertising requires not only a persuasive message, but disciplined and repeated delivery. We must all be on the same page, saying the same thing...consistently. Consultants Mullen and Price would oversee and manage the following coordinated media pieces:

 - i. **Local Media:**

Consultants will work with the Project Oversight Committee to craft press releases and op-eds that effectively convey our poll-tested messaging. Early ideas include releasing polling summaries, earthquake and disaster engineering reports, independent audits of need to replace aging equipment and offering tours to media of radio towers and aging equipment. We will approach reporters and media outlets to maximize our positive press coverage, including the concept of a feature story on the project.
 - ii. **Branding (Slogan – Tag Line):**

The consultants will work the Project Oversight Committee to develop a cohesive and easily digestible brand that the public will be able to recognize and appreciate.
 - iii. **Website:**

Using results from the poll and public responses to Fact and FAQ sheets, we will make various recommendations for how the website should be revamped to advance not just MERA, but to give the Next Gen project the best chance of winning needed funds.
 - iv. **Stakeholder presentations:**

Presentations to educational, neighborhood, Rotary/Lions, chambers of commerce and other similar citizens’ groups interested in the project
 - v. **OPTIONAL:**

Targeted direct mail, public access cable spots, other distribution channels like member organizations’ billings, etc.

Timeline:

We are proposing an adjustable 20-33 month timeline to develop and implement this Outreach Plan. Now that many of these recommendations have been incorporated into the broader Strategic Plan, we’ve attached dates to help keep this timeline on track:

January – September 2012 – Coordinate internal organization and communications to ‘set the stage’ for the launch of a long-term funding effort and public education campaign, specifically:

- Jan. – June Complete MERA governance transition and adopt Strategic Plan changes
- Mar. – Sept. Proceed with internal communications (i.e., fact sheets, FAQs, messaging, planning, etc.)

- July – Aug. Agree to publicly available equipment needs information and develop workable long-term funding options and planning
- July – Sept. Draft and adopt written Outreach Plan (for use in next phase), including new subcommittees and roles:
 - Project Oversight Committee
 - Outreach Team
- Aug. – Sept. Workshop preparation, as detailed above
- Early Sept. Create Next Generation System Informational Material and Media for use in Workshop:
 - Presentations – Multi-media presentation (Powerpoint)
 - Project and budget narrative
 - Endorsements and testimonials
 - Packaging of reports and documents (including project and budget narrative, outside independent assessment of life span of current system, related media reports, technical data)
 - Instructional material for members

Late September 2012 – Use MERA Project Workshop to transition from internal organization phase to Member Support Consolidation phase. Details listed above

October 2012 – June 2013 – Consolidate member support, among MERA representatives *and* their home agencies:

- Oct. – Nov. Finalize members for Project Oversight Committee and Outreach Team
- Oct. – Jan. Consultants coordinate with various MERA leaders to finalize public talking points, script, media presentation, materials, etc.
- Nov. – Dec. Identify and recruit 2-3 Outreach “Spokespersons” for variety of educational uses
- Nov. – Dec. Solicit and decide on polling firm
- Dec. Determine Outreach Team “Liaison” assignments to rest of MERA members
- Dec. – Jan. Begin Polling process by determining Polling prerequisites:
 - Final next generation project costs
 - Financing options (types of bonds)
 - Likely ballot language (coordinate with bond counsel)
 - Test of potential exception and add-ons that the bond could fund
 - Bond terms (including parcel tax amount and sunset)
- Jan. – Mar. Liaisons educate and train rest of MERA members on Next Gen Project background and need
- Jan. – Feb. Design, conduct, analyze and present poll
- Feb. – Oct. Public presentations to Member councils, boards and agencies
- Feb. – June Redesign Website, likely requiring several layers of approval from MERA committees

June 2013 – March or August 2014 – Continued member entity communications, with focus on external communications outreach and finalizing MERA actions (if proceeding) for a public vote on either a June or November 2014 ballot measure:

- June Finalize Branding / Slogan with MERA members
- June Re-launch MERA website for greater public awareness of the project

- June Begin local media outreach, with aim of reaching elected officials and key constituencies as well
- June – Nov. Request member councils, boards and agencies vote to support Next Gen project, seeking unanimous approval from each
- Nov. – Jan. Conduct Business Community Outreach
- Nov. Begin Grassroots Outreach
- Nov. – Mar/Jun Presentations to stakeholders
- Nov. – Mar/Jun OPTIONAL: Targeted direct mail, public access cable spots, social media, etc.
- Nov. – Mar/Jun Implement Bond Counsel timeline for ballot measure (usually takes 3-6 months to complete all required tasks)
- March/July MERA Board/Board of Supervisors votes to place measure on the ballot, at which point a private citizens’ committee would undertake any campaign

Budget:

As listed in the latest Strategic Plan update, we are expecting Outreach costs 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

This Outreach Budget is predicated on receiving technical, fiscal and legal expertise funded by other areas in MERA’s overall budget, such as Marin County Public Work staff time, bond counsel assistance, and financial and legal advice.