

Draft: 2/17/16

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

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GOVERNING BOARD

Minutes of January 27, 2016 Regular Meeting

Call to Order and Introductions:

The meeting was called to order by President Pearce on January 27, 2016, at 3:30 p.m. at the Novato Fire Protection District's Administration Office, Heritage Conference Room, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945. Self-introductions followed. Pearce welcomed Chief Pomi, Kentfield Fire Protection District. Roach acknowledged Chief Smith's retirement after 41 years in the fire service.

Governing Board Members & Alternates Present:

City of Belvedere	Trisha Seyler (Alternate)
City of Larkspur	Scott Shurtz
Town of Ross	Tom Gaffney
Town of San Anselmo	Doug Kelly
City of San Rafael	Bob Sinnott
County of Marin	Matthew Hymel
City of Sausalito	Bill Fraass (Alternate)
Town of Tiburon	Michael Cronin
Inverness Public Utility District	James Fox
Kentfield Fire Protection District	Paul Smith, Ron Naso (Alternate)
Marin Community College District	John Adams (Alternate)
Marin Transit	Amy Van Doren
Marin Municipal Water District	Bill Hogan
Marinwood Community Services District	Tom Roach
Novato Fire Protection District	Steve Metcho, Lj Silverman (Alternate)
Ross Valley Fire Department	Tim Grasser (Representative)
Southern Marin Fire Protection District	Martin Langeveld, Chris Tubbs (Alternate)
Stinson Beach Fire Protection District	Kenny Stevens
Tiburon Fire Protection District	Richard Pearce
Central Marin Police Authority	Todd Cusimano, Michael Norton (Alternate)

Governing Board Member Agencies Absent:

Town of Corte Madera
Town of Fairfax
City of Mill Valley
City of Novato
Bolinas Fire Protection District

Staff Present:

NERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
NERA General Counsel	Trisha Ortiz
NERA Deputy Executive Officer – Next Gen Project	Dave Jeffries
NERA Operations Officer	Pat Echols
Communications Services Mgr. (DPW)	Shelly Nelson
County Communications Engineer	Richard Chuck
Recording Secretary	Jennifer Schwarz

Guests Present:

Mark Pomi	Kentfield Fire Protection District Chief
Raul Rojas	County Public Works Director
Jeremey Pierce	Marin County Fire Department
Jamie Knox	Novato Police Department
Rajit Jhaver	Federal Engineering

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 a separate action be taken on a specific item.

1. Minutes from December 9, 2015 Governing Board Regular Meeting
2. Report No 35 on Strategic Plan Implementation

Cassingham requested separate action on Item 2.

M/S/P Cusimano/Gaffney to approve Consent Calendar Item 1 as presented.

AYES: ALL

NAYS: NONE

ABSTENTIONS: City of Belvedere, City of Novato, City of San Rafael, Town of Tiburon, Marin Community College District, Marin Municipal Water District, Marinwood Community Services District, Ross Valley Fire Department and Southern Marin Fire Protection District

Motion carried.

Cassingham noted the omission in Item 2 of the “Request for Budget Adjustment for Sperry Capital, Inc., Financial Advisory Services” as an action item at the January 13 Executive Board meeting.

M/S/P Gaffney/Cusimano to approve Item 2 as revised.

AYES: ALL

NAYS: NONE

ABSTENTIONS: NONE

Motion carried.

B. Executive Officer's Report (Cassingham)

1) Report No 10 from Next Gen Project Oversight Committee – NGPOC (Jeffries)

Jeffries presented his report noting Federal Engineering's (FE) completion of their reviews of all of MERA's current sites and eight potential new sites. Four of those sites, namely Tomales, Martha, Wolfback Ridge and Muir Beach, have been recommended for inclusion in the Project with Redwood Landfill, Coyote Peak and Golden Gate Bridge Toll Plaza as additional recommendations, funding permitting. Vendors can suggest other sites of benefit to Next Gen as part of the detailed design process.

Jeffries also commented on FE's FCC Frequency Review and System Lifecycle Recommendations which are attached to his report and will be included in the vendor RFP. He introduced Jhaver who presented a PPT from the Coverage Analysis Workshop. Jhaver commented on the outstanding turnout of 60 attendees and the excellent input received. His slides showed what each new site does to enhance Next Gen coverage. A new site, known as Corda which includes an existing tower, was identified that would enhance coverage at the north end of the County, especially along the Hwy 101 corridor. This site would provide better coverage than the Landfill site. Pearce noted that these sites are not the final sites and that everything is dynamic at this point. The intent is to provide the highest level of coverage at the most effective cost within the established budget.

Jhaver reviewed the map which shows relative reliability levels including signal strength. Power levels are diminished from UHF. Jeffries added that reliability shown is not based on the radio at the users' mouth but at the hip. Jhaver said 700 MHz provides better in-building coverage due to signal characteristics. Windows are more likely areas to have coverage in such buildings as hospitals. Smith asked about Workshop comments about the lighter areas on the map and if FE drilled down in those areas to identify how to make coverage better. Jhaver said it may be possible to improve coverage at current sites by moving from directional antennas to omnis which could fill gaps. Vendors will spend time on detailed configurations. He said there are other ways to mitigate the impact of moving from UHF to 700 MHz, including additional sites.

Jhaver said what was found during the Coverage Workshop was where VHF on the maps showed at high reliability levels, 700 MHz showed as white spots. Different map colors show different reliability levels. Delivered audio quality is optimum at 3.4 and 3.0 is what the current System has in audio quality. The way to mitigate is with antennas, site selection and so forth. Jeffries added that considerable time was spent on 97% coverage and site degradation maps, but we still have holes due to topography. In response to Knox, Jeffries reviewed the development of the degradation models, noting dead spots will still be dead spots but the additional sites will dramatically improve areas like Muir Beach. Training will include work-arounds for pockets that will still need them.

Knox asked what percentage of the coverage area is dead. Jhaver said he did not have a percentage but the maps show bowls and canyons that, no matter what the technology, will remain dead spots. Jeffries said with the current System's 97% reliability in green areas, some misunderstood that this meant 97% of County coverage. Jhaver said vendors have test kits to confirm coverage at the end of implementation.

In response to a question about cost per site, Jeffries said for planning purposes, the estimate was \$2M-\$4M per site for 4 additional sites depending on whether sites are existing or new. Pearce said we have known areas where we have coverage issues; however, if the vendor proposes other sites or solutions to address coverage at those locations, we are open to that input. Jeffries said when a vendor is selected, the final coverage maps will be the ones to rely on. Jhaver will send the updated coverage maps to Echols which are in the ball park but not final since site feasibility and selection have not been completed and antenna design has not been done to address direction and interference issues. Jhaver said reliability and transmission quality at the lower quality does not affect audibility except for possible repetition of words. Jeffries said a question at the Workshop was if we were going to experience degradation with 700MHz, why leave UHF. He said we have no choice given the FCC mandate to take back the frequencies.

Pearce noted the importance of moving Next Gen ahead as a system without leaving sites behind for years and years. Jhaver said we will need to review vendor responses to possible roadblocks that could affect the construction timeframe and, if need be, reconfigure the system to accommodate site delays if necessary.

Jeffries thanked the members for the outstanding Workshop turnout. Another Project Newsletter is expected in the next few weeks. He urged participation in the Ops Group to give valuable member input to the vendor RFP and beyond. He commented on the 20-day turnaround period for the draft RFP which will be issued in early March, with the final being issued in April 2016. Governing Board action is scheduled for April 27, followed by Board of Supervisors action on May 3. Proposal reviews are tentatively scheduled to start in mid-July. Pearce added, we need multiple eyes on the proposals at all levels, especially from future users.

2) Other Information Items

Cassingham said Schwarz will be issuing the Form 700 Statements of Economic Interest shortly; deadlines for submission for e-filers is April 1 and hardcopy filers on March 25.

C. Operations Reports (Echols)

1) Other Information Items

Echols announced Ops meetings on the first Wednesdays of the month at the EOF Building in San Rafael. He encouraged attendance while acknowledging an uptick in participants to date.

Echols said the Next Gen Project RFP was originally contemplated as a turn-key design-build project including design, installation and construction site work. It has been determined that the County is prohibited from doing construction work that is not a building and that this work requires competitive bidding per the State contract code. Alternatives were reviewed by County and MERA General Counsels to use design-build, including a legislative change or working with a member agency permitted to do design-build. It was determined that it was in the Project's best interest to proceed with design-bid-build. This does not affect FE's schedule. FE would help solicit design proposals and what would be needed to implement the System improvements. Thereafter, we would seek contractor bids to construct the Project. DPW would need to oversee a separate RFP for construction and oversee the contractor.

Echols noted that there could be more DPW costs in issuing a second RFP and contract as well as overseeing and coordinating the radio and construction vendors but there should be no impact to the Project schedule. However, we might be able to get more competitive pricing for the site construction work. Jhaver said the coordination aspect between the vendors would be key. Gaffney said it could be problematic in working with two vendors. It was agreed that this matter be agendaized for more analysis, discussion and action at the February 24 Governing Board meeting.

D. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

Naso inquired about current System performance given the storms we've had. Rojas said the System has performed well to date and El Niño has not produced anticipated impacts. Naso asked if SMART had expressed interest in the MERA System. Nelson said they have their own communications system. MERA coverage is not sufficient for their path, which includes Sonoma County.

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Cassingham
Executive Officer and Secretary

NEXT: MERA Governing Board Regular Meeting
Wednesday February 24, 2016 3:30pm