

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District

95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945

PHONE: (415) 878-2690 FAX: (415) 878-2660

WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG

DATE: February 15, 2017

TO: Executive Officer Work Plan Committee

FROM: Maureen Cassingham, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: PENDING DISCUSSION ITEMS RE:
DRAFT EXECUTIVE OFFICER/SECRETARY SUCCESSION PLAN AND
STAFF SUPPORT

Recommended Action: Continued discussion of Draft Succession Plan dated 10/24/16 for final draft presentation to Executive and Governing Boards and recommendation of staff support option(s) for inclusion in the Preliminary FY17-18 Operating Budget.

Background: On October 31, 2016, the Committee met to review the status of the Executive Officer's 2016 goals, proposed 2017 goals, draft Succession Plan and work hours. The Committee recommended the 2016 and 2017 Work Plans, hours summary, and annual CPI hourly rate adjustment to the Executive Board on November 9, 2016, which were subsequently approved by the Governing Board on December 14, 2016.

The Committee agreed to meet again in early 2017 to further discuss the attached draft Succession Plan, cross-training, more administrative support for the Executive Officer, the Executive Officer's hours and effective hourly rate.

Since the Plan and cross-training are referential, who with and when the latter should commence should be reviewed with the Committee. I have initially explored the subject of staff succession and related cross-training with Deputy Executive Officer Jeffries with more discussion to follow. Regarding more Executive Officer administrative support, a significant amount of time brainstorming has been expended looking at a host of options that might work best at this point in terms of the Executive Officer's and MERA's needs. More non-dedicated, or even dedicated, contract staff support requiring constant oversight/direction due to contract staff competing assignments/commitments, timely availability, and turnover is not a solution at this time. What could be helpful is contracting for professional minutes taking services. Estimated annual cost is \$10,000 for these services.

Regarding Executive Officer hours, the contracted 18 hours average per week for general administration and 11 average hours per week for the Next Gen Project have been regularly exceeded due to workload spikes for some time now. The predictability of future workloads is unclear at this point given current system administrative support and special projects, Next Gen Project implementation through June 2019 and parallel systems operations. That said, hours going forward should be regularly revisited as to where and how much time is being expended for each category.

In response to the Executive Officer's hourly rate, the RGS hourly rate is \$130.62 and the Executive Officer's effective rate is \$103.53. Per RGS's latest salary survey and my own recent review of Marin manager hourly rates, the current MERA effective rate is competitive and should continue to be so with regular annual CPI adjustments.

ATTACHMENTS:

Report of October 24, 2016 and Attachments

DRAFT: 10/24/16

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DATE: October 31, 2016

TO: MERA Executive Officer Work Plan Committee – President Pearce,
Executive Board Chair Hymel and Executive Board Member Gray

FROM: Maureen Cassingham, Executive Officer

**SUBJECT: DRAFT SUCCESSION PLAN:
MERA EXECUTIVE OFFICER/SECRETARY**

Recommended Action: Provide input to the Draft Succession Plan and facilitate an Executive Board discussion of same in early 2017.

Background: As you know, the Marin Emergency Radio Authority is a 25-member agency governed by a Governing Board, Executive Board with input from standing and ad hoc committees. The Authority is currently staffed by 3-part time contractors headed by a non-shared Executive Officer, the latter of which is a model which has served MERA well.

The addition of the part-time positions of Deputy Executive Officer and Administrative Assistant have been dedicated solely to the Next Gen System Project and have likewise well served MERA by making Next Gen Project outreach and implementation possible.

The most important reason to engage in succession planning, especially with small organizations, is to ensure continuity of the support of governance in carrying out its mission, providing services and meeting goals. Further, effective planning also supports organizational stability and sustainability by having strategies in place to address staff transitions. Finally, producing a plan will demonstrate to MERA's members the Governing Board's commitment to addressing this critical issue in advance of transitions.

There is a significant challenge in succession planning with MERA given it has no employees, thus making it difficult to do the usual development of staff through promotions, lateral moves, assignments to special projects and provision of internal and external training opportunities to assure leadership continuity. Before approval of a succession plan for the Authority, MERA should revisit its short and long-term goals from recent strategic planning efforts to plan future staff workload and to help identify the best Executive Officer succession options. This will result in a better understanding of the needs of a more maintenance focused operation, subsequent to the completion of

DRAFT SUCCESSION PLAN: MERA EXECUTIVE OFFICER/SECRETARY

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the Next Gen Project, as well as how the Executive Officer's duties are currently being performed and how they might be performed in the future.

Attached is the Scope of Services for the Executive Officer. The Novato Fire Protection District also provides eight hours per week accounting and audit support services and four hours per week of Administrative Assistant services. Current E.O. services have been delivered with expediency when needed, which has translated into the "look and feel" of a full-time MERA office, albeit with one part-time administrator. This approach, along with member expectations, may need to be revisited.

Possible short-term and long-term transition options are as follows:

- 1) Other current RGS contract staff
- 2) Retiring/Retired MERA Board or Committee Members or Senior Member Agency Staff
- 3) Other RGS contractors

These options can be applied to unplanned or planned transitions.

Recommended key succession preparation activities include:

- (1) Knowledge transfer via cross-training and/or shadowing
- (2) Effective documentation of the variety and breadth of tasks

Suggested Executive Officer qualifications include:

- Public sector administration preferably in local government
- Familiarity with public safety organizations and operations
- Ability to work independently on a range of duties from high-level project administration to meeting logistics
- Experience in working "hands on" in small organizations
- Flexibility in dealing with a myriad of time-sensitive tasks and last-minute changes

Finally, based on 9+ years of experience with MERA, the Authority would benefit from additional hours and more consistent administrative assistant support which may entail restructuring the agreement with NFPD and/or adding a part-time, dedicated contract position to perform these services. Either of these recommendations would have additional operating cost implications for MERA.

ATTACHMENTS:

Position Description: Executive Officer – Scope of Services

MERA – Next Gen System Project Organization Chart

Exhibit B

Scope of Services. RGS shall assign an RGS employee or employees to perform the functions as described below:

- Perform the functions as assigned by the RGS lead advisor.
- Be reasonably available to perform the services during the normal work week.
- Meet regularly and as often as necessary for the purpose of consulting about the scope of work performed with the appropriate agency project manager and with the RGS lead.
- Perform other duties as are consistent with the services described herein and approved by the RGS lead advisor.
- Perform related work as required as approved by the RGS lead advisor.
- Such employee may perform services at the Agency offices available or at other locations.

SCOPE OF SERVICES MERA-RGS EXECUTIVE OFFICER CONTRACT

Under the direction of the Executive Board, the Executive Officer will perform the full duties of a chief executive officer, including:

1. Manage the everyday activities of MERA, performing the duties normally the responsibility of an Executive Officer.
2. Staff the Governing Board (currently twelve meetings per year) and the Executive Board (normally six meetings per year), Finance, Citizens Oversight and any other Committees which includes but is not limited to, the provision of agendas and staff reports and minutes, anticipating issues as they evolve and providing recommendations for such.
3. Supervise and coordinate with contract, special project and administrative staff.
4. Monitor, oversee and evaluate all service contracts and leases, upon direction from the Executive Board, renegotiate service contracts and leases as necessary.
5. Coordinate with the General Counsel and others on the various issues and responsibilities related to MERA activities.
6. Work closely with other agencies, to include but not limited to County of Marin and member and non-member agencies.
7. Prepare, recommend and administer MERA's annual budgets; coordinate the annual audits.
8. Stay current with legal and programmatic changes that affect MERA programs.
9. Coordinate records retention and public records archives for MERA through the maintenance of appropriate records and files.
10. Represent the MERA Governing Board and Executive Board in dealings with media, member agencies, other governmental agencies, professional associations, community organizations and residents.
11. Coordinate the timely filing of all required Fair Political Practices Commission filings.
12. Implementation oversight of the Next Gen System and any other special MERA projects as directed by the Executive and Governing Boards.
13. Perform other duties as assigned or required.

Marin Emergency Radio Authority Next Gen System Project ORGANIZATION CHART

