

G.B. 3/27/19 Agenda Item A-1

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

DRAFT: 3/20/19

GOVERNING BOARD

Minutes of February 27, 2019 Regular Meeting

Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by President Pearce on February 27, 2019 at 3:38 p.m. at the Novato Fire Protection District Administration Office; Heritage Conference Room, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945. Self-introductions followed.

Governing Board Members & Alternates Present:

Town of Corte Madera	Todd Cusimano
City of Larkspur	Scott Schurtz
City of Novato	Pam Drew
Town of Ross	Tom Gaffney
Town of San Anselmo	Doug Kelly
City of San Rafael	Robert Sinnott (Alternate)
County of Marin	Matthew Hymel
City of Sausalito	Bill Fraass (Alternate)
Bolinas Fire Protection District	Anita Tyrrell-Brown
Kentfield Fire Protection District	Mark Pomi, Ron Naso (Alternate)
Marin Community College District	Martin Langeveld (Alternate)
Marin Municipal Water District	Don Wick (Alternate)
Marinwood Community Services District	Jeff Naylor
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	Hamid Khalili (Alternate)

Governing Board Member Agencies Absent:

City of Belvedere
Town of Fairfax
City of Mill Valley
Town of Tiburon
Inverness Public Utility 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 Operations Officer	Ernest Klock
Senior Communications Technician (County DPW)	Ethan Simpson
Recording Secretary	Jeanne Villa

Guests Present:

Federal Engineering	David Mortimer
Novato Fire Protection District	Bill Tyler
Novato Fire Protection District	Dan Hom

**Special Acknowledgement for Professional Contributions to MERA –
Dan Hom, Retiring Finance Director - Novato Fire Protection District**

Pearce expressed great appreciation and gratitude to Hom for his 10 years of service to MERA. He wished him well in retirement and thanked him for his commitment to helping MERA with the transition of its financial services to a new host agency. Hom said it was a pleasure to serve MERA over the last 10 years of his 15 years of service with the District. He will continue helping MERA through the transition.

Jeffries introduced Maura Griffin, the new Next Gen Project Administrative Assistant, replacing Alex Anderson. Pearce and the members welcomed her to MERA.

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) Minutes from January 23, 2019 Governing Board Regular Meeting
- 2) Report No. 77 on Strategic Plan Implementation

Kelly noted the reference in the January 23 minutes to his and Gaffney's attendance by phone. Pearce said Cassingham will work with Kelly on this citation.

M/S/P Hillard/Metcho to approve Consent Calendar Items 1 through 2 as presented.

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

B. Executive Officer's Report – (Cassingham)

1) Report on Termination of MERA/NFPD Office and Staff Services Agreement

Cassingham provided an update to her report since being notified of the District's termination of the Services Agreement on February 1. She said Chief Tyler reached out to the Southern Marin Fire Protection District (SMFPD) to explore a hosting agreement with them. Subsequent to the February meeting with SMFPD, the District determined that a service and space agreement would not be a good fit for either organization at this time. MERA has reached out to all its Members to identify a new host. The Town of Corte Madera was the only Member interested in exploring an agreement with MERA and a meeting was held on February 25 with the Corte Madera Team. Considerable information was exchanged to determine whether this relationship was a fit given Corte Madera's other workload.

Cusimano expressed appreciation for all NFPD has done for MERA over the last 10 years, much of which may have been taken for granted by the Members. From a transition standpoint, the Agreement calls for 90 days' notice, which is a challenging timeline to complete relocation. He said there are questions of Chief Tyler as we work on a transition plan given the shortness of the timeline, which is not ideal for Corte Madera. He feels a responsibility to MERA and believes the Town can assume these responsibilities. He will take this matter to the Town Council on March 5 to explain a possible agreement and what is being recommended for support.

Cusimano said this will be a challenge he is confident the Town can meet, especially if Hom can continue contractually with MERA to handle financial tasks and staff training. He asked Tyler what the MERA service relationship looks like for the rest of this fiscal year. With NFPD's assistance with the transition, Cusimano feels his Council will support an agreement with MERA. His staff is excited to take on this challenge and do what it takes to make it a success.

Cassingham added her thanks to NFPD for all their support for MERA over the years. MERA is a unique organization from a staffing standpoint which relies on the interdependency of our part-time contractors to conduct its operations and special projects. She praised Hom, Villa, Pallas and Wade for their very professional work and flexibility on MERA's behalf.

Kelly said he would be willing to reach out to the Ross Valley Sanitary District to assist MERA, noting the District's pending acquisition of the Comcast building to better serve its operations with more office space, conference rooms and parking. Gaffney asked if it was possible to sever some of the MERA services and provide for them with separate agreements. Cassingham said this has been considered as MERA has weighed its options, including reaching out to her colleagues, our Auditor and Webmaster for support service ideas. Obtaining all the services from one provider is ideal and more easily managed, but may not be possible.

Cassingham reported that Maher Accountancy has a division that could provide financial services as they do for several other small public agencies, but they could not continue auditing MERA due to the need for separation of those functions. However, administrative support and meeting space could not be provided. Cusimano said the best option is to keep all the services together. He added that meeting space could be accommodated in the Town Chambers or, if needed, the Community Center.

Tyler addressed the Board to provide context for NFPD's decision to terminate the Agreement to permit its exploration of other operating opportunities. The District has enjoyed being MERA's host for the last 10 years, which has been a mutually beneficial arrangement. With Hom's retirement and a new Finance Director coming aboard during a short transition time, it was determined that the extent of tasks needed to be reevaluated. He said SMFPD came forward and was excited about taking the MERA Agreement on. This afforded the opportunity to make a quick transition while Hom was still here. The intent was to transition all the services at the same time.

Due to the essence of time, Tyler contacted Cassingham to put the transition in motion. Had he known SMFPD was not an option, another arrangement would have been put forward. He apologized to Pearce for not contacting him early on to inform him about the Termination. He added that Hom's services cannot be continued by the District after his retirement. The District will continue the admin functions until the end of the Agreement period on July 1. If necessary, these functions could be continued, but it is the District's intent to cease services at the end of the Contract.

Tyler noted Hom is willing to continue his services under contract with MERA for the rest of the transition through the Audit. He said the District could continue providing meeting rooms. Cassingham said she is working with RGS to contract with Hom. She said this approach is beneficial to all parties versus an independent contractor agreement with Hom. Pearce added his thanks to NFPD for their 10 years support of MERA.

2) Report No. 51 on Next Gen System Project – (Jeffries)

Jeffries said Motorola meetings were restarted after the holidays. Follow-up is ongoing to Governing Board actions in December. Some work is waiting on the CEQA process. He was contacted by the Sonoma County Public Safety Consortium in early-February about the MERA Joint Powers Authority and current and Next Gen Radio Systems. He and Griffin are working on the Measure A Low-Income Senior Exemption Media Advisories. He will distribute copies of the Media Advisories and exemption application at the March meeting. He also distributed a one-page Next Gen Update handout for Board members to take back to their Councils and Boards.

3) Proposed Second Amendment to Personal/Professional Services Contract for General Counsel Between MERA and Richards, Watson & Gershon, LLC (RWG)

Cassingham reported on the Amendment which modifies RWG fees effective 1-1-19, which have not been adjusted since 2013. She feels the increase is in the best interest of our professional relationship with RWG. The proposed increase reflects CPI adjustments over the last six years of 18% since the last Amendment.

M/S/P Kelly/Cusimano to approve the Proposed Second Amendment to the Personal/Professional Services Contract for General Counsel between MERA and Richard, Watson & Gerson, LLC and authorize the Executive Officer to execute same.

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

4) Other Information Items

None.

C. Operations Reports – (Klock)

1) CEQA Process and Schedule Update – Next Gen Project

Klock reported all the CEQA special studies are done. Stakeholder outreach is complete. The EIR Sections are being aggressively finalized. We expect to be finished drafting with the MERA internal review team by the middle of March. Thereafter, all the documents will be forwarded to MERA Counsel for review and comment. Portions are being forwarded as they are available. Draft release will depend on the back and forth with Counsel.

Pearce noted his concerns about the SEIR timeline, which began with the Consultants engagement a year ago. Projected release was for Fall 2018, then December 2018. Since then, release was scheduled for early-2019 and now is scheduled for mid-2019. He asked if the delays were due to the Consultants or our support or management of them. Klock said delays were due to the complexity and uniqueness of the Project and Consultants' unfamiliarity with it. They underestimated the schedule because they thought this would be a standard supplemental EIR. Also, more time has been needed to take great care in its preparation to make it as defensible as possible.

Pearce said all these delays extend pressure on current System operations. We need to make it clear to Motorola that their commitment to supporting the current system extends through Next Gen cutover. Klock confirmed that right now we are looking at 2023 for Next Gen completion. Klock said the SEIR work being done now is to insure its completeness so as to avoid delays that could arise during its final review. He is hoping to release the draft in April or May. The drafts provided to Counsel to date have not resulted in a lot of comments, which speaks to its completeness at this point.

Klock discussed the extensiveness of the Alternate Sites Analysis which reflects biological, cultural, aesthetics and RF comparisons to the proposed sites. Once this section is completed and reviewed, the 45-day comment period will commence on SEIR release followed by a public hearing for comments. Pearce said John Roberto initially thought the SEIR process would go quickly. Klock said Roberto has regularly conveyed the importance of thoroughness and taking the time necessary for completeness, especially with the Alternate Sites Analysis.

Gaffney asked if the 45-day comment period is followed by responses to those comments and whether there is a time limit on responses. Ortiz said the time involved in responding to comments, which identifies where the public interest is, will be a weighty part of the legal review of the document. Pearce said hopefully public comments will reflect interest in improving emergency response. Hilliard inquired about where system technology will be four years from now and expressed concern over obsolescence. Klock said it is definitely a risk for certain components of Next Gen but not the whole system. Backbone technology of the system has been around for a long time and is robust where frequencies are concerned.

Hilliard asked Klock about being behind due to a learning curve of the Consultants. Klock said the complexity of the SEIR was more extensive than they first thought. They know CEQA and the process, but once they got into the uniqueness of each site, and all the special studies required, it has taken more time to analyze than was anticipated. In response to Hilliard, Klock said a public scoping meeting was held last May, which garnered little response. He anticipates with this very defensible document, the second half of CEQA will generate the

same interest.

Jeffries said, regarding Next Gen equipment, nothing has been ordered or built yet, which will happen closer to the “go live” date. Once through CEQA and design review, mountaintop equipment will be assembled and tested. Pearce said Next Gen equipment will be more “plug and play” and software driven. Jeffries said the schedule unknowns after CEQA and system design will be better understood allowing the final Project schedule to be confirmed. Gaffney said after 19 years, the current System is still working well, even in the face of rapidly changing technology.

2) MERA System Operations Update – January – (Simpson)

Simpson noted the busy count was slightly higher than usual in January, likely due to weather. Higher System utilization may have also contributed. While it was not excessive, we should take note of it. Next month may reflect similar. Gaffney asked if call time was up. Simpson said due to weather, Public Works use was up, plus their busy counts were up. He might be able to compare prior years’ reporting. He added that Motorola reporting software could easily track this information; however, the estimated cost for it is \$100K. What we should really focus on is the number of busies which do not require this extra expense. The return on investment in the software being so close to Next Gen is also a consideration.

Simpson said LeAnn Magroski with County Dispatch had questions about how the System was reporting. Chuck determined data may have been affected by the changes in patching from Dispatch. Talk group reporting has likewise been affected by patching. Control group comparisons from the prior month are being used to identify sources of problems. Talk groups that are patched will be compared to those that are not patched. Simpson reported on a coverage issue in Tiburon due to a channel bank failure. No field units noticed problems. The problem was resolved in 4 hours. Weather caused issues with the microwave from Mill Valley to Mt. Tam. Supports were added to the link to preserve connectivity. Weather and brownouts have also contributed to Fire Station Alerting (FSA) issues. Corrective action was taken with the primary server.

Simpson said, along with Mill Valley, the Radio Shop has been getting reports of coverage issues in the area. Technicians have been troubleshooting, but he is requesting Member information on areas where radios are not working but have worked in the past. He is unsure if it is a coverage or availability issue. Pearce asked if any of these maintenance issues are related to System aging. Simpson said the age of FSA is a concern and there are more failures as time goes on. Some new replacement modules have been found, so this can be addressed. Many issues have been weather-related. Degraded components at Sonoma Mt. have been identified, which required action to deal with a failed connector. Simpson is working with Motorola on locating spare parts, including controllers, which are critical to the System. Khalili inquired about Comm Center simulcasting. Simpson said all

statistics go to the first Talk Group when patching. The ones selected after the first reflect lower usage. Unpatched Talk Groups for a portion of the day are not effectively reporting.

3) Other Information Items

Klock reported he is working with Motorola on revising their Legacy System Support Letter that addresses on-call technical support, which was limited to one-year from the letter date. They are aware of the issue and will be working on a solution to that. Simpson and the Radio Shop have been committed to locating spares and boards. Motorola will solder on new chips to make the boards compatible for our use. DPW is actively seeking parts to repair the aging System.

Klock encouraged members to send their representatives to the Ops Group meeting next Wednesday. Ops will be discussing next radio aliases and a current System radio return policy for Governing Board action. Current System radios must have their radio I.D.s turned off. A determination also needs to be made if they are Member assets or should be given to the Shop. Jeffries added that encryption needs to be removed before surplusing. Klock said code plugs must also be removed.

Pearce stressed the importance of keeping the Ops Group populated and engaged. By doing so, we may be able to reduce the Project timeline with their timely input. Jeffries added the criticality of Member input on aliases, knobology and templates as it is needed versus after the fact, when it can lead to potentially significant customizations. Cassingham suggested an email to all the Chiefs to push Ops attendance.

D. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

Cassingham announced the April 2 deadline for Form 700s and the March 27 New Member Orientation at 2:00 p.m., preceding the Governing Board meeting.

In response to Naso about System performance during the latest storms, Simpson said utilization was up and the Mill Valley microwave link required bracing. Performance was good otherwise.

Hilliard inquired about the status of the Next Gen Communications Manager. Klock said interviews were conducted and final selection is underway. He will announce the decision to the Board when it is made.

Simpson thanked Sinnott for his assistance in dealing with BDA interference with the MERA System. This is a Bay RICs issue affecting many counties. The idea is to better track BDA installations in private businesses. Sinnott confirmed these installations are Fire Code requirements.

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maureen Cassingham
MERA Executive Officer
and Secretary