

# MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District  
95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945  
PHONE: (415) 878-2690 FAX: (415) 878-2660

**APPROVED: 7/14/14**

## Executive Board

### Minutes of May 7, 2014 Meeting

#### Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hymel on May 7, 2014 at 3:34 p.m. in the Heritage Conference Room, Novato Fire Protection District Administration Office, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945. Self-introductions followed. Hymel introduced new County DPW Director Rojas.

#### **Board Members Present:**

County of Marin	Matthew Hymel
Marin County Sheriff	Robert Doyle
City of San Rafael	Chris Gray
City of Novato	Jim Berg
Fire Services	Richard Pearce
Police Departments	Todd Cusimano
Ross Valley Cities/Towns	Debra Stutsman
Special Districts	Bill Hogan

#### **Board Members Absent:**

Southern Marin Cities/Towns	Jim McCann
-----------------------------	------------

#### **Staff Present:**

MERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
MERA Operations Officer	Craig Tackabery
County Communications Engineer	Richard Chuck
Recording Secretary	Gretchen Felciano

#### **Guests Present:**

County Director of Public Works	Raul Rojas
---------------------------------	------------

#### A. Consent Calendar

All matters on the Consent Calendar are to be approved with one motion unless a Member of the Executive Board or the public requests that a separate action be taken on a specific item.

- 1) Minutes from March 12, 2014, Executive Board Regular Meeting

- 2) Proposed Agreement for FY13-14 Audit Services – Maher Accountancy
- 3) Proposed Sixth Amendment to Office and Staff Services Agreement between MERA and Novato Fire Protection District
- 4) Report #19 on Strategic Plan Implementation
- 5) Report on Round Two Presentations
- 6) Proposed Revisions to MERA Purchasing Policy and Procedures
- 7) Confirmation of Bi-monthly Regular Executive Board Meeting Dates: FY14-15

Cassingham requested separate action on Item 6.

*M/S/P Gray/Pearce to approve Consent Calendar Items 1-5 and 7 as presented.*

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

Cassingham noted a revision to Page 2 “Formal Advertising” which increases the in excess amount of \$10,000 to \$100,000. She also noted revisions to Page 3, “Public Works Projects” Section a. from \$30,000 to \$45,000, Section b. from \$125,000 to \$175,000, and Section c. from \$125,000 to \$175,000. These revisions are consistent with the County’s current Uniform Construction Cost Accounting Procedures.

*M/S/P Pearce/Cusimano to approve Consent Calendar Item 6 as revised.*

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

B. Executive Officer’s Report (Cassingham)

1. Nomination of Officers for MERA Governing Board (President and Vice President)

Cassingham said this is the time when the Executive Board recommends nominations for Governing Board President and Vice President. Pearce and Hymel expressed interest in continuing to serve in their current capacities.

*M/S/P Doyle/Berg to nominate Tiburon Fire Protection District Chief Pearce and County Administrator Hymel as Governing Board President and Vice President respectively.*

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

2. Proposed FY14-15 Technical Services Annual Agreement between MERA and County of Marin

Cassingham reviewed the types of services provided by DPW, which are the same as prior years, noting Training costs have increased 3.3% and Administrative costs are up 3.5%. The cost of the Agreement has been included in the Proposed FY14-15 Operating Budget.

Berg asked about reimbursement for Member agency staff providing training. Tackabery said the training budget covers training materials and training of trainer sessions. Materials are being updated this year, which will increase costs. Cassingham said there have been only nominal expenditures from this line item in recent years. Pearce noted the turnover and reduced ranks of the training group. Hymel confirmed with Tackabery that training was intended to help users use the system optimally. Berg asked why the County would be paid for its DPW staff training time while the member agency trainers would not. Hymel asked Tackabery if this could be reviewed by a Subcommittee since he feels reimbursement for all the trainers is appropriate if the budget is sufficient to do so. There should be a policy to clarify this which should be brought back to the Executive Board. Hogan recalled the original training committee and development of materials along with a cache of radios on which to train. Chuck commented on the reduced ranks of the original 83 TOTs and the current effort to replenish their ranks and update materials. Members originally had the option to be reimbursed for training time and few asked for it. Tackabery noted the recent formation of an Ops Subcommittee on training. Hymel asked for Berg to be invited to its meetings or otherwise give input on the training line item.

*M/S/P Doyle/Cusimano to recommend Governing Board approval of the Proposed FY14-15 Technical Services Annual Agreement between MERA and County of Marin and requested Tackabery to include Berg's input on a training policy line item for consideration at the next Executive Board meeting.*

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

Gray asked about DPW radio reprogramming charges which seem to be above cost recovery. Agencies are expressing concern about the various levels of charges. He felt this requires more explanation. Tackabery said agencies asked for these services and DPW developed costs and service options. Historically, these costs have been borne by the Member agencies. He confirmed the charges are based on cost recovery. He agreed there needs to be more communication.

3. Proposed FY14-15 Communication Engineering Services Annual Agreement between MERA and County of Marin

Cassingham summarized the proposed one-year Agreement noting the same scope of services for \$195,378 reflecting a 14.8% increase over prior year. The increase is due to Chuck's change in status from County contractor to County employee. This cost has been included in the Proposed FY14-15 Operating Budget. Hymel confirmed with Tackabery the increase reflects fringe benefit costs, not salary. Berg said this is nonetheless an increase. Hymel said Chuck is compensated like other Senior Engineers with the County. The original contractor arrangement would have been maintained but County Counsel advised otherwise based on IRS employee/employer requirements. Pearce noted these are pass-through costs over which MERA has no control.

*M/S/P Doyle/Berg to recommend Governing Board approval of the Proposed FY14-15 Communication Engineering Services Annual Agreement between MERA and County of Marin.*

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

Motion carried.

4. Proposed FY14-15 MERA Operating Budget and Zero-Rate Fee Schedule for Non-Member Users

Cassingham presented the proposed budget of \$1,707,654 which represents a 3.4% increase over prior year. Two line-item variances of significance are the \$25,178 increase for Communications Engineering Services and a \$3,000 increase in Legal Services. She noted the proposed continuation of the Zero-Rate Fee Schedule for system use by Mutual Aid and automatic backup agencies is part of the annual budget approval process. Pearce asked about the portion of the system used by non-Members. Hymel recalled a Subcommittee review of these agencies' use and their service to MERA members and the subsequent recommendation to continue the Zero-Rate. He confirmed this review occurred about three years ago. Gray asked Chuck about his chart which includes Non-Member use and confirmed EMS use was ambulance companies. He noted the greater number of calls from private companies over San Rafael Fire's calls. His point is they are using quite an amount of the radio system at no cost. Pearce clarified that this includes hospital ring-down and backup. Hymel confirmed the private companies' users are trained on radio use and are backup to MERA agencies. Pearce noted GGNRA and Parks are significant users. Chuck said the companies only use the system for 911 calls. Berg said they make profit from those calls. He suggested revisiting Non-Member usage and the Zero Rate. Gray concurred.

*M/S/P Berg/Gray to recommend Governing Board approval of the Proposed MERA FY14-15 Operating Budget and Zero-Rate Fee Schedule for non-Member Users and direct review of Non-Member System Usage by Pearce, Gray and DPW.*

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

5. Proposed FY14-15 MERA New Project Financing and Revenue Bonds Budgets  
Cassingham presented the proposed budgets for FY14-15, noting Loan Note payments have been determined by the Governing Board to be the same for the life of the Note and that there is no discretion in the Bond payment. The annual payment of the 2007 Bond Note is \$225,000 and Bond payment is \$2,121,825.

*M/S/P Pearce/Gray to recommend Governing Board approval of the proposed FY14-15 New Project Financing – 2007 Bank Note and MERA 2010 Refunding Revenue Bonds Debt Service Budgets.*

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

6. Status of FY13-14 Equipment Replacement Requests and Proposed FY14-15 Equipment Replacement Requests (Tackabery)  
Tackabery recapped FY13-14 replacement status at Bay Hill, Barnabe and Pt. Reyes. Next year DPW is recommending replacement of generators at San Pedro Ridge and Big Rock Ridge for a total of \$104,000. Also recommended is replacement/repair of four fuel tanks at San Pedro Ridge, Big Rock Ridge, Bay Hill and Pt. Reyes for a total of \$58,500. Finally, Prime Site batteries replacement is recommended in 2015 at a cost of \$46,000. Total cost of equipment replacement is \$208,500.

Cassingham said these costs would be paid from Reserves which she will address later in the meeting. Hymel confirmed these improvements will benefit the Next Gen System at these sites with exception of the batteries at the Prime Site, which will carry to 2018. Pearce asked if generators are being replaced due to emissions. Chuck said they are between 10-14 years old and the ones on the coast are deteriorated due to weather and salt air. In response to Gray, he said they have looked at housing to improve life span along with other types of generators. Rojas offered to further review this and develop cost estimates. Tackabery said before moving forward with replacement, this

information will be provided to the Executive Board. Gray confirmed with Chuck that this equipment is secured.

*M/S/P Doyle/Cusimano to recommend Governing Board approval of the proposed FY14-15 Equipment Replacement Requests with follow-up on generator housing.*

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

7. System Analysis FY13-14 Capital Projects Update and Proposed FY14-15 System Analysis Capital Projects (Tackabery)

Tackabery deferred the Tomales update to later in the agenda. The Martha Development Proposal is still in the planning stage. There is no set date for Board of Supervisors review. The Next Gen System Feasibility Study is complete and DPW is supporting the Outreach Team. Efforts on grants have been affected by timing and match. Opportunities will continue to be monitored. Proposed FY14-15 Capital Projects include continued work on Tomales Site agreements, continued monitoring of the Martha Site and support of Next Gen System outreach. Proposed budget is \$28,000.

*M/S/P Pearce/Berg to recommend Governing Board approval of the Proposed FY14-15 System Analysis Capital Projects Budget.*

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

8. Bi-monthly Report on Reserve Funds Balances

Cassingham summarized the 6/30/14 and 6/30/15 Fund balances for New Project Reserve 70032, Replacement Reserve 70036, and Emergency Reserve 70037, noting the proposed projects in FY14-15 for New Project Financing include \$10,000 for the Martha Site, \$8,000 for the Tomales Site, and \$2,000 for Legal. Noteworthy is the substantially reduced estimated Replacement Reserve Fund Balance for 6/30/15 to \$110,500 due to Next Gen System implementation-related costs. This Fund is subject to reimbursement of approximately \$800,000 of expenditures to date from parcel tax proceeds upon successful measure passage in November.

Hymel confirmed this is informational only and no action is required. Pearce said it is important to monitor these numbers.

9. Update on Forbes Reservoir Utilities Undergrounding Project

Cassingham summarized her report on this Project to date and requested an additional allocation of \$13,125 to MERA's share of the costs for a total of \$63,125. With Pearce and Hymel's intervention, a Letter Agreement was entered into with MMWD to perform the undergrounding work required of MERA on a reimbursement basis. Estimated Project

costs are \$27,000 for design, \$74,000 for construction, plus a 25% Project management fee. This new total will be 50% cost shared with the San District subleasees. Cassingham continues to be very actively involved on a daily basis with the details of this Project. These costs will be paid from MERA Fund 70032 Reserves. The Executive Board, by consensus, approved the additional allocation.

10. Other Information Items

Cassingham said the Dollar Hill Sublicense between MERA and GGBHTD, approved at the last Executive Board meeting, has been executed. Microwave dishes will be installed which will help security services at the San Rafael Transit Center. MERA's legal costs to date have been approximately \$4,000. In recognition of MERA's cooperation and partnership, the District has verbally committed to cooperate with MERA's possible future use of their sites. Within the Sublicense, MERA can annually revisit the District's use of electricity and obtain reimbursement for use over the threshold.

Cassingham said she continues to work on the reimbursement of 50% of MERA's maintenance and fuel costs from Sonoma County for the Bay Hill site. Documentation has taken extensive research assisted by Felciano. Amount being sought is an estimated \$30,000.

Cassingham reported that Executive Board Member elections and appointments are due prior to September 10, as the initial two-year terms are expiring. She will coordinate with the appointing authorities.

Finally, a special meeting of the Governing Board will need to be scheduled for July 9 to act on a Resolution to the BOS on July 22 requesting the levy of a parcel tax on MERA's behalf for the November 2014 Election.

C. Operations Reports (Tackabery)

Hymel said before the Operations Report, he is providing an overview on County Public Works support of MERA, and the County will be the project manager for the Next Gen Project. The County Board and Rojas have been discussing gearing up for this in 2015, which is a big priority. This is regardless of the outcome of the election. A presentation will be made to the Governing Board in December on the project plan and next steps.

1. Status of Tomales Communications Site Lease, MALT Agricultural Conservation Easement and Verizon Access Road Agreement

Tackabery reported that the Coastal Permit was issued two years ago and DPW is requesting a four-year administrative extension. The permit is vested by a building permit, preceding construction. The MALT easement can be issued based on a waiver for private telecommunications sites but it cannot be issued for a public telecommunications site. MALT will permit the public use via a Resolution of Necessity which will be presented to the MERA Governing Board in December. The Parks Family lease of the site has been negotiated, which needs to be preceded by a shared-access road maintenance agreement with Verizon. Lease payments would not commence until

permits are issued before construction. This lease will not be presented until MALT is acted on.

2. Request for Waiver of Radio Moratorium

- Marin County Parks
- NORCAL Ambulance

Tackabery said Parks is seeking three radios. NORCAL is seeking two radios. The recommendation is to approve these requests. Pearce asked where AMR radios are going. Chuck said their twelve radios are being picked up by FALC, the replacing provider.

*M/S/P Doyle/Hymel to approve the requests for three radios by Marin County Parks and two radios by NORCAL Ambulance.*

AYES: All

NAYS: Berg

ABSTENTIONS: None

Motion carried.

Berg clarified his vote because of the term “moratorium.” Hymel provided background on the current policy which originated from the proliferation of radios after the 2005-06 floods. He suggested that this be reviewed as a request for additional radios versus a waiver of moratorium which has never been a true moratorium. Tackabery noted the additional frequencies that permitted System expansion. Hymel asked that this Governing Board policy be revisited as a review versus a moratorium and be presented to the Governing Board in December. Cassingham requested an Ops Group review before presentation.

3. Status/Work Statistics Reports (Chuck)

Tackabery and Chuck presented the System Usage Reports for January, February and March 2014. Busies are low and the System is working well. Tackabery reported on the development of a fact sheet for users about the System and need for its replacement. Ops reviewed it and recommended changes for presentation to the Chiefs for distribution to their respective Staff.

Berg asked about the non-Member call total of 8:39 in March. He said call time for EMS represented 15+ minutes. Chuck said EMS includes hospitals which are non-Members. Berg also asked about Humane’s use at 8:27 call time. Chuck said this usage is by talk group and not the individual agency. Non-Member usage is for those who have their own talk groups on the System. Berg confirmed that the 8:39 Non-Member use is primarily Humane’s Non-Member users. Chuck said using a Member talk group does not register as a Non-Member call. The System does not track individual radios. Almost all mutual aid users do not have their own talk group. Humane Society is unique. Chuck said Transit use has been consistent even with their MDTs. He clarified for Berg that GGNRA use is under Parks. Berg noted that Non-Members then are using significantly



more than the 8:39 listed in the March report. Chuck said mutual aid use is very nominal, likely less than 3%. Doyle said Parks are on the Sheriff's channel. Chuck said it is labor intensive to track by radio but it can be done. Grey noted recently stolen Station 54 Fire radios were killed remotely so they can be tracked. They were subsequently recovered.

4. Other Information Items

None.

Open Time for Items Not On Agenda

Pearce noted his review of the Executive Officer's monthly reports and he applauds her for all her efforts and all she has been doing. The work load has significantly increased and this should be reviewed. Gray concurred.

A Round Two Member Presentation recap was requested. Gray noted San Rafael's 4-1 support and sense of cautious optimism as we are proceeding. Project costs remain a concern along with timing for his dissenting Councilmember. Cassingham said some votes against may have been due to misunderstanding about property owner cost, whether now is the time and philosophical differences on taxes in general. Hymel said we should acknowledge the ten resolutions of support to date. Bolinas is in support and Inverness and Stinson are in process.

Stutsman noted concern about competing measures. Ross Valley Paramedic and Fairfax's taxes are out there. She noted the proposed nine-county Conservation tax. Hymel said the Children's Initiative may be another measure on the ballot.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Maureen Cassingham  
Executive Officer

Next Meeting of MERA Executive Board  
**Wednesday, July 9, 2014 – 3:30 p.m.**

**AGENDA AND STAFF REPORTS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT**  
**[WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG](http://WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG)**