

**E.B. 3/10/21 Agenda Item A-1**

**MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY**

c/o Town of Corte Madera  
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**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**Minutes of January 13, 2021 Regular Meeting**

**DRAFT: 3/5/21**

**Call to Order**

The videoconference meeting was called to order by Chair Cusimano on January 13, 2021, at 3:31 p.m.

**Board Members Present:**

County of Marin	Dan Eilerman (Alternate)
Marin County Sheriff	Robert Doyle
City of San Rafael	Darin White
City of Novato	Matt McCaffrey
Fire Services	Richard Pearce
Police Departments	Mike Norton
Ross Valley Cities/Towns	Todd Cusimano
Special Districts	Don Wick

**Board Member Absent:**

Southern Marin Cities/Towns

**Staff Present:**

MERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
MERA Deputy Executive Officer	Dave Jeffries
Recording Secretary	Lorena Barrera

**Guests:**

Federal Engineering	David Mortimer
County Public Works Department, Communications Manager	Andrew LeBlanc

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 November 18, 2020, Executive Board Regular Meeting
- 2) Report No. 104 on Strategic Plan Implementation
- 3) Bi-Monthly Report on MERA Reserve Fund Balances

*M/S/P Doyle/Pearce to approve the Consent Calendar Items 1-3 as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
Motion carried by roll call vote.

B. Executive Officer's Report – (Cassingham)

1) Report No. 78 on Next Gen System Project and Budget – (Jeffries)

Jeffries said that meetings continue between the MERA team and the Implementation Project Team, including AECOM and FE. He said the Training Committee had their first meeting and will be meeting again at the end of the month, when they hope to select a Chair and Vice Chair or dual Chairs and get started on moving ahead with the Training Project. The organizational chart is included in the staff report.

Jeffries said the budget update, as detailed in the staff report, was given to the Governing Board at their last meeting. He said some challenges came up as they started reviewing the final numbers from the field survey. The Board accepted a number of recommendations, including presenting the budget to the Finance Committee to review Project cash flow from Measure A Funds as well as a more extensive look at the Replacement Fund, which is currently the funding source for the non-public safety radios. He said they hope to have the Committee meeting in February and report to the Governing Board on February 24 with a new budget summary with updated revenues and expenses, radio data and strategies. Jeffries said staff is looking for opportunities for savings like working with AT&T, who is installing a cell site at Tomales, regarding the potential of sharing a power trench. AT&T said they have to construct the trench anyway and will only charge MERA for the extra work to drop in extra conduit. He said that alone should save more than \$50K. He noted updated structural tower standards are also cost friendlier, primarily because the new wind standards are more focused and not as regional. He said this will save some costs at all of the existing sites that would have required structural upgrades. He added the reassessment of all of that is being performed now and they hope to bring some of the concepts to the Board at the February meeting.

Jeffries reported staff is working hard on finalizing site leases. Four of the five contracts have been completed with PG&E for the new site work they need to do. The only remaining site is Mill Valley. He said there are two MALT easements to be completed along with a preexisting easement at Tomales which needs to be refreshed.

Jeffries reported that Bid Package #1 should go out next week, which will include Civic Center, EOF and Mt. Barnabe. They hope to get the Bid Package #1A to the Governing Board at their January 27 meeting, which includes three more site leases. Award of bid recommendation will be presented at their February meeting.

Regarding the AFG Grant, Jeffries reported that Motorola and San Rafael are in negotiations for a lease of one of the currently unused fire stations that they will be able to use for fire engine and fire apparatus installations, with installs beginning possibly in mid-February. Staff hopes to be able to complete two engines per day or up to four ancillary vehicles. They will also try to coordinate the timing of the distribution of the new fire agency tri-band radios. Jeffries added the radio management servers will be used as part of the programming effort.

Jeffries shared the Project Summary Table, as detailed in the staff report, including the tasks completed, tasks in progress and upcoming tasks. He noted the significant milestone of Nokia building the microwave equipment. System staging is tentatively scheduled for February, which is usually a customer witnessed set of tests; however, this will be a virtual test as Nokia has shut down their facilities due to COVID. They hope to do the same with Motorola in May with all of the mountaintop equipment, hopefully live and not virtual. Once completed, the next and most significant Motorola payment milestone will be due when they ship the equipment to MERA.

Jeffries invited questions from the Board. There were none.

2) Proposed Confirmation and Ratification of First Amendment to Forbes Hill Reservoir Site Lease

Cassingham said this is an after-action request for confirmation and ratification of the Executive Officer's execution of the First Amendment to the Forbes Hill Site Lease. She said Forbes Hill is currently one of the sites to be decommissioned upon cutover to the Next Gen System. The current site lease was due to expire in mid-March 2021. She thanked MMWD for offering to extend the lease until cutover at the end of December 2023, to assure we can continue to use the site for current System operations with no increase in rent or any other changes to the provisions of the site lease. She said the District took action on the extension subsequent to Cassingham's execution of the Lease Agreement on December 3. She said transaction is completed and is awaiting ratification of the Executive Officer's action by the Executive Board.

Cusimano invited questions for Cassingham. Hearing none, Cusimano invited public comment. Hearing none, Cusimano called for a motion.

*M/S/P Eilerman/Norton to approve the Proposed Confirmation and Ratification of First Amendment to Forbes Hill Reservoir Site Lease, as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
ABSTENTIONS: None  
Motion carried by roll call vote.

3) Other Information Items

None.

C. Operations Reports – (LeBlanc)

1) DPW Operations Organization Chart

LeBlanc reviewed the Marin County DPW Telecommunications Division Organization Chart, as detailed in his staff report. He said the County's Communication Team currently supports the First Gen network and local conventional networks within the County. They are currently in the process of recruiting for a Supervisor with interviews beginning in early-February and appointment by April. Reporting to the new Supervisor will be four Communication Techs and two Senior Coms Techs, who are responsible for the maintenance of the RF network, site infrastructure and subscriber equipment. He said in 2020, the County started the hiring process for the Advanced System Engineer role, who will have a broad level of technical experience with System infrastructure, applications and security. There is currently one Advanced System Engineer on the team and LeBlanc is completing the recruitment for a second one now. He said this role will be pivotal in the transition from the First Gen network to the Next Gen network. He said a Communications Network System Analyst is responsible for the overall administration of the MERA network and providing a third level of support to the County and its employees. In addition, he said Betsy Swenerton, the previous Operations Manager, is helping out as a Project Manager. He added the Communications Team is currently based at the GSA building but will be moving in February to 1600 Los Gamos, the same building as the Sheriff and IT.

2) MERA Systems Operations Update – November and December

LeBlanc provided the System Operations Update. He said November and December were relatively quiet months with no major outages. He reported there was RF interference intermittently affecting four channels in the East Simulcast Network, which turned out to be recording artists in San Rafael using equipment they shouldn't have been using. The Radio Shop has continued its efforts with FE in support of the Next Gen Project. In November, the Shop completed all of its quarterly preventative maintenance including Forbes, Dollar Hill, San Pedro, Burdell and Novato PD. He said they finalized all of the FCC renewals of the

First Generation Microwave Licenses. Two other small failures, which were addressed, included a power amplifier at Dollar Hill and a rectifier at Bolinas.

LeBlanc reported in November there were 197,000 radio calls with 533 total hours of talk time and 2 seconds of busy time. In December, the Shop completed all of preventative maintenance at EOF, Mt. Tam, Woodacre, Bolinas, Sonoma Mountain, Civic Center and Big Rock. There was an SD card failure and a hard disk drive failure on the VMS server but no data was lost. There was also an issue with the channel bank lock up at Sonoma Mountain which was corrected by reseeding the card. There was also a microwave link failure from Mt. Tam to the Barnabe link due to a failed receiver which was corrected using network spares.

LeBlanc said December usage was 196,000 radio calls, 549 hours of talk time, with no busy time. Total cumulative usage for the year was 2.3M radio calls, with 6,566 hours of talk time (equivalent to 274 days), and a total of 39 seconds of busy time. He said that overall, given the age of the network, the sites and equipment are in good health; however, the team must remain vigilant in supporting the network.

Doyle noted the chart reports that were 30,000 SO calls in November and only 142 in December, which makes it look like they took the month off. He said he understands this has something to do with simulcast but said it should be straightened out. LeBlanc responded that the problem is how their macro is set up to pull the data. He added it is intrusive for them to fix it but it is on his list of things to be corrected. Jeffries said the upper right table on showing the category totals is the one to focus on, adding patching is what is causing reporting challenges.

3) Other Information Items  
None.

D. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda  
None.

E. Adjournment  
The meeting was adjourned at 3:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Maureen Cassingham  
MERA Executive Officer  
and Secretary