

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Town of Corte Madera
300 Tamalpais Drive, Corte Madera, CA 94925
PHONE: (415) 927-5050
WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG

DRAFT: 6/21/21

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Minutes of March 10, 2021 Regular Meeting

Call to Order

The videoconference meeting was called to order by Chair Cusimano on March 10, 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 – Next Gen Project	Dave Jeffries
County Public Works Department Communications Manager	Andrew LeBlanc
Recording Secretary	Lorena Barrera

Guests:

Federal Engineering	David Mortimer
AECOM	Jonathan Sprague

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 January 13, 2021, Executive Board Regular Meeting
- 2) Report No. 107 on Strategic Plan Implementation
- 3) Bi-Monthly Report on MERA Reserve Fund Balances

M/S/P Doyle/Eilerman 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) Proposed **PRELIMINARY** FY21-22 MERA Operating and New Project Financing (2007 Note) Budgets – (Board Action)

Cassingham reported that earlier today the Finance Committee reviewed the Proposed Preliminary FY21-22 Budget and recommended Executive Board approval of those budgets for immediate distribution to the member agencies. The next step after distribution will be Executive Board and Governing Board approval of the final budgets, occurring at their May meetings. She said there will be a 14.2% increase in Operating costs over prior year for a proposed total budget of \$2,391,490, as detailed in the Staff Report. She said the preponderance of the increase is due to site rent changes with certain existing site leases and licenses, plus the addition of new sites rents and related increased utility costs. She said that these changes represent an approximately \$87,000 increase for next fiscal year. She said there will be rent savings with decommissioning of three sites, two of which are fairly consequential (approximately \$214K) in rent reduction in FY23/24. Until then, members will have to shoulder additional rent costs. Other Operating Budget line item variances as well as the detailed exhibits were included in the Staff Report.

Cassingham said that the Finance Committee wanted to revisit a proposal with the Governing Board that was postponed last year due to COVID impacts on a number of member agency budgets. The proposal was to repurpose the \$2.1M savings to the member agencies with the retirement of the 2010 Bonds for a set-aside for either a Gen 3 replacement fund or to offset future operating increases. She noted a recommendation will be presented to the Governing Board at their March 24 meeting.

Pearce said the full impact of COVID on member budgets has not yet been fully realized. He suggested postponing further consideration. He asked if the proposed increased Operating costs are relatively short-term to be offset by site decommissioning. Cassingham said site rent increases will be experienced over the next two years but offset in FY23-24 with decommissioning.

Cusimano said that timing is critical for the use of 2010 Bond savings. He said he would like the Executive Board to have a discussion before presenting the Replacement Fund concept to the Governing Board. He said when this discussion occurred last year, the Marin Managers were open to doing something with Bond savings and were open to a plan for part of them. He added timing is critical to set aside monies for the long-term now. He said however, he is not sure this matter will be fully vetted in time for the March 24 meeting.

Eilerman said Hymel and Gaffney described the concept of an annual replacement fund. He said rather than members receiving full relief from Bond Debt Service of \$2.1M, perhaps \$1M should be set aside to address increased member Operating costs, like the \$297K increase in the FY21-22 Budget. Rather than experiencing a 14% increase like this year, members could establish a fund to offset these increases going into next year. He said that this presents a more contextual review of what Operating Budget impacts look like going forward so funds could be set aside accordingly.

Cusimano suggested spending some time before March 24, perhaps starting with the MMA Group again by bringing in Gaffney and Hymel, to provide a presentation on funding the Replacement Fund and reminding them of prior discussions and thereafter going to member agencies to provide this background to make sure everyone is on the same page. Eilerman agreed that was a good idea.

Cassingham said that, coming off the relief from the 2010 Bond Debt Service, this would be in essence creation of a member replacement assessment for this replacement fund as described. She said the Finance Committee has discussed a \$1M set aside after member relief from \$2.1M 2010 Bond Annual Debt Service.

Eilerman shared the spreadsheet Hymel prepared showing the option of contributing to an annual replacement fund.

Cassingham noted that the last member payment for the Project Note is on February 15, 2022, which will mean all member Debt Service is retired. MERA will be, in essence, debt free and able to focus on addressing future operating expenses, along with funding a Replacement Fund with the savings.

Cusimano said review of debt service now seems like a great opportunity for a win-win. Pearce suggested that, if there is to be further discussion, it should include District Chiefs and Special District Managers. Cusimano agreed, starting with MMA, followed by the Fire Chiefs and other Special Districts. He said he wants to make sure all of the member agencies have background on this matter before the March 24 Governing Board meeting.

M/S/P Doyle/Wick to approve the Proposed Preliminary FY21-22 MERA

Operating and New Project Financing (2007 Note) Budgets as presented.

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

2) Report No. 81 on Next Gen System Project – (Jeffries-Discussion)

Jeffries presented his staff report which outlined recent project meetings, conference calls, FCC License update, Key Project Summary Details, a Marin IJ news article, MERA Newsletter, Budget Review and Project Summary.

Jeffries said that Fidato, which was awarded Bid Package #1, has submitted the last of the documentation for contract finalization. He said four contractors joined the site walks for Bid Package #1A.

Jeffries said Project cash flow analysis is still being worked on. The Budget has been reformatted into three categories – active line items, closed line items, and costs that will occur beginning in 2028 associated with the Service Upgrade Agreement (SUA) after system warranty. He said they are looking at alternatives to fund non-public safety radio expenditures and current System repairs so they have what is necessary to deal with Gen 1 issues that will come up prior to cutover. He said the replacement fund being discussed would be a big assistance with that.

Jeffries described the System Staging process with Nokia and Motorola. A team will fly to Chicago where all of the equipment being made for MERA will be staged and tested. Thereafter, it will be shipped to MERA.

Pearce said he understands this has been more than Jeffries and Cassingham signed up for and is sure the workload is absolutely incredible at this point. He commended them for their exceptional efforts. He reminded members to continue to refer media inquiries to Jeffries. Jeffries said he regularly reminds members to do this in his report. He noted, depending on the question asked by the media, a Board Member may not be fully prepared with all the background to answer.

Eilerman expressed appreciation to Jeffries for his assistance to the Finance Committee on the Next Gen Project Budget.

3) Other Information Items

None.

C. Operations Reports – (LeBlanc)

1) Update on Gen I Risk Mitigation Initiatives (Discussion)

LeBlanc reported that Motorola was on-site this week to complete the current System Audit. He assessed the System appears to be in good shape given its age. He said Sacramento donated much needed parts, made specifically for a T-Band network. He said he is now more confident System life can be extended through cutover, barring a disaster. He said staff is working to make sure System maintenance is up to date. Staff is also securing some additional channel bank spare equipment to add to System life.

2) MERA Systems Operations Update – January and February (Discussion)

LeBlanc reported that all RF Sites are performing well. He detailed System maintenance performed in January and February, as noted in his staff report. He said the West Main Site Controller was flipping to the redundant side due to a 25-year-old battery. It was replaced with a custom-made battery and it is now stable. Several extended power failures were experienced in January but there was generator capacity to handle it.

In January 2021, there were 201,000 calls with 567 hours of talk time and 1 second of busy time. In February 2021 there were 190,000 calls with 535 hours of talk time and 1 second of busy.

3) Other Information Items

None.

D. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

None.

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Maureen Cassingham
MERA Executive Officer
and Secretary