NGEN Executive Board Minutes
October 12, 2023

Participants	Agency	Representing	Present
David Sargenti (Chair)	Monterey County Regional Fire	District Fire Chiefs	X
Steve Adams (Vice Chair)	City of King	South County City Managers	
Sonia De La Rosa	County of Monterey	County of Monterey	X
Tina Nieto	Monterey County Sheriff	Monterey County Sheriff	X
John Guertin	City of Pacific Grove	City Managers South Peninsula	X
Vibeke Norgaard	City of Sand City	North Peninsula Cities	X
Jim Pia	City of Salinas	City of Salinas	X
Non-Voting Advisors	**Agency**	**Representing**	**Present**
Eric Chatham or Designee	Information Technology Dept.	Chief Information Officer	X
Lee Ann Magoski or Designee	Emergency Communications Dept.	Director of Emergency Communications	X
Gaudenz Panholzer – Ops Board Chair	City of Monterey – Fire Department	Emergency Communications Operations Board	X

Agenda Items:

1. **Call to Order and Introductions –** The meeting was called to order by Chair David Sargenti at 1416 hours.
   Roll Call of BOARD Members and Advisors –
   - Rollcall taken by Leslie Madrigal and attendees marked present above.
2. **Additions and Corrections to Agenda:** Alex Zheng – Yes, added Jim Pia to the Board Members list representing the City of Salinas.
3. **Public Comment for items not on the agenda:** None
4. **Approval of Minutes**
   - September 14, 2023 – Attachment 1 – **Action Item** – **David Sargenti**

ACTION/MOTION: John Guertin made a motion to approve September 14, 2023 minutes. Sonia De La Rosa seconded. Roll call taken. All members were in favor of approving minutes.

5. **UASI Grant Application Submission Update**
   Alex Zheng presented the following:
   - He mentioned that Radio Shop will have a permanent manager before the next NGEN Executive Board meeting.
   - As suggested on the September 14, 2023 meeting, updates regarding the UASI Grant Application would be added to the agenda. UASI stands for Urban Area Security Initiative.
   - The Bay area UASI is ran by the City and County of San Francisco. UASI improves the regional capacity to prevent, protect against, respond, and recover from terrorism incidents and catastrophic events. The program utilized federal grant money from Homeland Security. Alex Zheng submitted two UASI applications.
   - The first application is for FY 24-25 NGEN radio coverage improvement using Motorola SmartConnect and broadband in the amount of $2.64 million (with tax and shipping). The NGEN system was introduced over 10 years ago. However, the system does have serious in building coverage issues, as well as outdoor coverage issues in areas such as Big Sur, North and South County, and certain unincorporated areas. The Sheriff's office is suffering from the coverage issue the most because they are responsible for these areas. The application submitted will not only benefit the Sheriffs office, but also 61% of the other NGEN radio users, because they use the Motorola radios including mobiles and portables that are supported by SmartConnect such as Motorola APX-8000 and APX-NEXT.

- The second application is for FY 25-26 NGEN system core upgrade in the amount of $1.83 million (with tax and shipping). The system was introduced over 10 years ago, and the system has aged. Part of the system already reached end of life and end of support. The system is due for a hardware and software upgrade. Alex submitted the application and hopefully some funding will be received from the UASI program.
- Chair opened for questions and Jim Pia asked the locale issue for the in-building coverage and the building issue from what he remembered from years ago, based on the depth of where you are in the concrete, or what is the building issue? Alex – Yes, so the radio system utilizes VHF frequency and 700-MHz frequency. Those frequencies they do not penetrate building very well as compared to the LTE signal that we use out of our iPhone or cell phone, and Wi-Fi. They can penetrate the building and then provide better coverage. You know, if we have this Motorola SmartConnect solution in place, the first responders should be able to utilize their Motorola radios to utilize in building Wi-Fi and LTE. They can also leverage their vehicle Cradle Point device. All PDs have a cradle point device to be able to receive the signal from LTE and convert that signal to an ethernet-based Wi-Fi connection, so that their mobile and portables can utilize LTE and Wi-Fi. As such, it is going to benefit the in-building coverage and the outdoor coverage as well for the first responders. Jim Pia - Thank you, Alex. Good explanation for a non techie.

6. Project Report

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- Update on NGEN Phase II Upgrade (Capacity Upgrade). This upgrade is not a hardware upgrade and unrelated to the systems end of life and support resolutions. The project is going extremely well. As of yesterday, October 11, 2023, the project implementation and ATP test was completed. Alex is very impressed by the project execution, versus seven to eight years ago when we initially executed the NGEN project. The project team includes ITD Network team, Radio team and ECD, especially Don Clark and Leslie Ragghianti. Together they all did a wonderful and very thorough job. Per our ask, the vendor and the project team executed the entire ATP plan very thoroughly, even though initially they had concerns regarding the field operations being impacted. Luckily, we do have a parallel system of the Analog Overlay. We moved all the users from the digital system to the analog system, which allowed us to do a thorough ATP test.
- Out of the ATP test, the three punch list items below were discovered:
    - System-wide console call – L3Harris does not have that feature properly implemented as of this point. Even though ECD does not use the system-wide console call, Alex and the team are pushing the vendor to fix that issue.
    - Implicit versus explicit frequency mode issue for 700 MHz system – This is like the network environment. We have the static IP assignment (like explicit frequency mode) versus dynamic IP assignment (similar to implicit frequency mode). These are also the issues the vendor must resolve or explain.
    - Network Service Center (NSC) WAR router issue and redundancy – this WAR router redundancy issue was discovered at ECD NSC during the ATP test.
- Aside from L3Harris responsibility area, it was also discovered that the Higher Ground recording system was not set up optimally, so every time the ATP test was carried out there were disruptions to the Higher Ground system. Lee Ann Magoski added that the Higher Ground system was introduced in September 2020. Recording has always taken place by 911 equipment using 911 funds. When ECD upgraded our phone system, we needed to get off the NICE (the previous recording solution before Higher Ground) and so we went with Higher Ground and AT&T was going to provide the maintenance. So, we did that, and we included the radio, and ECD absorbed the cost as the 911 center with the phone. We went ahead and added the radio. Higher ground is not great for Harris, and I don't know if this is where you're going. I think that there is an opportunity here for NGEN to purchase an appropriate recording software for it and have it maintained by better experts than AT&T. Alex Zheng - I like to add that you know the initial objective of introducing the Higher Ground, is to solve that screen recording issue. Correct me if I'm wrong Lee Ann,

(Discussion continued)
the High Ground is a good solution, except that I don't believe it's set up redundantly enough to support the NGEN radio system which is a highly critical solution for all the first responders. So, the post project action item would be for us to look into a more redundant Higher Ground recorder setup before we decide to purchase a brand-new solution. We can have an off-line discussion on this resolution. Lee Ann - I thought that Higher Ground was not the recorder that Harris recommended. Alex - Higher Ground is not part of the standard portfolio that is offered by L3Harris, but it works. Lee Ann - when we upgrade our 911 phone system, we will probably be moving away from Higher Ground because of all these things. In the 911 world, there is no requirement for redundant recording. And so, the cost of NICE was three times the cost of Higher Ground. So, there are other recording solutions out there that have more features, and we did not choose Higher Ground for the screen recording. We selected Higher Ground because it was the lowest cost that we could afford within our funding to be able to implement a new system. So had we been able to only purchase it for the 911 phone system, we may have purchased a different system, but we went ahead and included NGEN at the time.

- The other issue caused by Higher Ground is that it does not follow the proper messaging protocol when interacting with L3Harris. This could potentially cause some resource exhaustion issues. The workaround for this is that every three to five days, a roll-over takes place from Network Service Center (NSC) site A to NSC site B, and from NSC site B to NSC site A to solve that issue, until Higher Ground has a permanent solution.
- Analog radio switchover training – users have become comfortable using the digital system for the last five to seven years, and probably forgot how to utilize the analog radios as a backup solution. There will be more trainings for the end users to get them familiar with switching over to the analog radio during those situations.
- Alex – overall, I'm very proud of this project. It had an almost perfect execution. And you know, again, a big shout out for ECD, for them partnering with ITD, and then the user coordination and the collaboration arrangement. Thank you so much. Chair Chief Sargenti – great, thank you, Alex.
- Lobos Ridge Site Buildout – the equipment setup is completed and tested. It's sitting at the radio shop waiting to be deployed to the Lobos Ridge site. The testing of the solution is part of the NGEN acceptance test. It's fully functional in the Phase II mode. This is a UASI grant project by Carmel PD and the team is confident they will meet the grant timeline.
- Mid-coast (Glen Deven) Fire Repeater Site – Per last update, Alex was awaiting the site lease agreement finalization. In the interim the Starlink solution is being ordered and tested as a backhaul link for the Big Sur area. Alex believes it will work but must wait until the test is completed.
- Pinball Site Relocation to Rocky Butte and Lake San Antonio – this is an analog site utilized by Park Rangers. The current lease with the Pinball is renewable at $6k yearly with the new landlord who assumed property rights as of last year. However, to secure a longer-term lease instead of renewing year by year, the landlord is requesting $70k road repair, permanent grazing rights and lease fees. They are asking for a lot and the Water Resource Board is not comfortable granting them permanent grazing rights. $70k is a lot for the NGEN project. ITD is proactively looking into an alternate plan and location. The identified site is Rocky Butte site owned by SLO county. Currently, ITD is in the process of formalizing a MOU with SLO county. Alex and the team were invited to do a site walk and once the go ahead is given, the equipment will be moved over to Rocky Butte. Lake San Antonio was the second site identified and this site is county owned. The plan is to utilize an existing tower at this site. Alex presented to the board the existing coverage map by Pinball. He also presented a projected coverage map by using both Rocky Butte and Lake San Antonio sites. Alex expects better coverage by utilizing both sites together. Currently, Alex does not have the exact cost to relocate equipment to those two sites. Once he has a firm cost, he will bring the cost estimate to the board and ask for direction. Again, the Pinball site is utilized by Park Rangers only. County LAW will not be impacted. However, once the two new sites are set up, County LAW channel will be added to those sites. This will give Sheriff better analog service coverage around that area.
- Piedras Blancas (Big Sur Repeater Site) – the radio team has not had time to get to this project. The radio

(Discussion continued)

team is currently overwhelmed with many other projects as reported on this update. However, the estimated completion date would be the end of December 2023. Chair Chief Sargenti – seems like you folks are pretty busy with many different projects. Alex – yes, we are very productive.

- Jim Pia asked the following question - Once you get away from that one property or the landlord site, will all of them be public domain areas meaning publicly owned as opposed to, privately owned? Alex Zheng - That's a great question. In the radio world sites continue to be a challenge. The lesson learned is that we shall avoid those privately owned land as much as possible, because you never know when the property ownership is going to change. So, to answer your question, yes, both sites are publicly owned. Chair Chief Sargenti added - We do have quite a few sites that are on private land. And most are on longer term leases, if I remember right, Alex? Alex – Yes. Toro site is one of the critical sites on a longer-term lease. So is Fremont site. No further discussion.

7. **NGEN Operations Board Update**
   Gaudenz Panholzer stated they canceled their meeting and nothing to report.

8. **Future Agenda Items –** None

9. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 1437 hours.