

**NGEN Executive Board Minutes  
December 14, 2023**

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

**Agenda Items:**

1. **Call to Order and Introductions** – The meeting was called to order by Chair David Sargenti at 1330 hours.
  - Roll Call of BOARD Members and Advisors** –
    - Rollcall taken by Leslie Madrigal and attendees marked present above.
2. **Additions and Corrections to Agenda:** None
3. **Public Comment for items not on the agenda:** None
4. **Approval of Minutes**
  - October 12, 2023 – Attachment 1 – **Action Item** – **David Sargenti**

**ACTION/MOTION: Steve Adams made a motion to approve October 12, 2023 minutes. Sonia De La Rosa seconded. Roll call taken. All members were in favor of approving minutes.**

**5. Staff Update**

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- Introduction of the new radio manager Thomas Montoya to the executive board. Thomas graduated from San Jose State with a degree in the Civil Engineering. Thomas worked for ITD for 10 years before he left to work for PWF. He is an engineering professional with 15 years of experience working alongside the radio shop. Thomas also worked with Alex about 10 years ago on large scale projects, including NGEN itself, analog overlay, microwave, and site readiness upgrade. Alex added the team is lucky to have him. Thomas shared his contact information is always available should anyone have questions or concerns.

**6. NGEN Mutual-aid and Interoperability Agency Radio Use Agreement - **Action Item 23-004****

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- This action item is brought to this board for review, approval, and to recommend the Board of Supervisors to approve the NGEN Mutual-aid Radio Use Agreement template. This action item was approved unanimously by the NGEN Operations Board during the November meeting.
- During large scale events both planned and unplanned, the need for support from other first

responder agencies is a common practice. Communication between the NGEN hosting agency and other external supporting agency is generally supported by the use of mutual-aid radio channels. Those supporting agencies are being referred commonly as the mutual aid or radio partners who are usually located outside of Monterey County and outside the NGEN user community.

- The agreement template was deemed necessary when the NGEN Operations Board discussed Dept. of Homeland Security Investigation Unit (HSI)'s request to join NGEN as a mutual-aid partner. NGEN has a process in place to introduce the mutual-aid radios which usually involves County ECD/dispatch, Radio Shop and agencies who own the channels/talkgroups that mutual-aid partners want to access. However, they are not very well documented. Neither did we require mutual-aid agencies to sign a Radio Use agreement that other radio authorities do. Such agreement template is the best practice by other radio authorities such as EBRCSA (East Bay Regional Communications System Authority), San Diego RCS and SVRIA.
- The agreement template was modeled after similar documents by SVRIA, San Diego RCS and reviewed by County Counsel. The purpose of this Radio Use agreement is to introduce a well-documented process. Once the agreement template is approved, County CIO will sign future mutual-aid agreement after NGEN Operations Board approval, on behalf of NGEN and Radio Shop.
- In addition to this document, an administrative procedure is being developed by laying out step by step process to introduce a mutual-aid partner to NGEN system. In doing this, we are going to clean up mutual-aid radios on the system.

*Board discussion:*

Operations Board chair Gaudenz Panholzer reported that Ops supports it. Lee Ann Magoski added it would be a good idea to add in that they must participate in our radio fundamentals and etiquette to ensure the best interoperability practices. Alex Zheng agreed. David Sargenti added that most of these agencies have their own radio programming skills, and they should be allowed to do radio programming and upgrade except for UAS. Alex Zheng responded that he could modify the agreement to allow them to do the programming. Tina Nieto added radio programming should always be overseen by Radio Shop. Alex Zheng confirmed it is under the supervision of the Radio Shop. Tina Nieto made the motion, and it was seconded by Jim Pia. Roll call taken and all voting members agreed.

**ACTION/MOTION: Tina Nieto made a motion to approve **Action Item 23-004** - NGEN Mutual-aid and Interoperability Agency Radio Use Agreement. Jim Pia seconded. Roll call taken. All members were in favor with the following additions:**

- 1. Mutual-aid partners must attend Radio Fundamentals and Etiquette training hosted by the County of Monterey.**
- 2. Adding language to section 8 – Radio Programming stating mutual-aid partner should be allowed to perform radio maintenance and upgrades if capable under the supervision of the Radio Shop.**

**7. NGEN Capital Fee – **Action Item 23-005****

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- This action item is for this board to review, approve and recommend the Board of Supervisors to approve a recurring capital fee in the amount of \$850,981 starting fiscal year 24-25. This amount is the same everyone has been paying towards the debt service, which was used to pay off the initial system build up for the last 10 years. The debt service collection to pay off the loan to fund the initial build up will end again this fiscal year. This request is about continuing the payments everyone has been making towards funding a NGEN reserve by collecting NGEN capital fee in

this amount. This fee is to fund the future of the system. The fee would be paid into NGEN reserve account that belongs to NGEN and currently managed by ECD.

- Action item was unanimously approved and supported by the NGEN Operations Board during the October 2023 meeting. They support the proposal in principle. They did require NGEN capital project to be approved prior to executing any of the capital project.
- Neighboring radio agencies such as East Bay Regional (EBRCA) and Silicon Valley have similar arrangements. For example, EBRCA they are paying into their reserve by utilizing 50% of their operating budget. Silicon Valley is paying 10% of their operating budget into that reserve account and will be increasing to 50%.
- If approved, the NGEN capital fee would be about 36% of the overall NGEN operating budget based on fiscal year 22-23 budget. Cost allocation will follow weighed formula in the NGEN agreement. This means the fire agencies have 75% of the weight of their radio account versus law agencies will have 100%.
- By approving this fee, the NGEN system will be sustainable, and first responders will not suffer from unplanned system outages due to system age or failure.
- Alex presented to the board a list of CIP projects suggested by county staff and the Radio Shop for the next 10 years. Adding all the project costs together, the total cost for those capital projects estimates \$8.35 million. This is assuming the payment will be by cash for all the projects listed. However, both vendors Motorola and Harris are open to offer multi-year payment plans, so not everything has to be paid at once. They are also offering competitive interest rates.
- Alex also presented to the board the proposed NGEN capital fee allocation by city. This will also be determined by following the weighted formula as laid out in the NGEN agreement.

*Board discussion:*

Alex Zheng concluded his presentation and opened for discussion of this proposal and other alternatives. Gaudenz Panholzer reported that NGEN Ops Board supported this. It is important that we start putting money away for future upgrades and repairs. Steve Adams related that he is supportive of the concept, and it's a good presentation. He asked if Alex has an exact spreadsheet comparing projected cost and revenue, and if the \$8.3 million is escalated for inflation, or those are all present-day dollars. Alex Zheng responded that those are based on present day dollars with budgetary quotes. Eric Chatham added those projects are phased over multiple years and depending on whether they're paid in cash upfront or whether they're done in a payment plan. Balancing out which projects we do first, and when they start will then add up to what is that specific dollar amount needed per year and overtime.

Sonia De La Rosa asked about the increases for the County departments, and the awareness of those departments of these increases. She asked about the existing debt services cost by department. She questioned why we don't have the cost per County department, instead only a total of \$268K for the County. Budget Office should include it into their plan, as we're heading into the preparation for the next year. Alex Zheng responded that the CAO's office has been paying the debt service payment for the last 10 years (for County departments). And regarding that capital fee collection from various departments, we will be involving all the relevant County departments that can benefit from this capital fee collection and NGEN system. Sonia De La Rosa asked ITD to have a conversation with these departments and confirm with Budget Office whether this would continue to be paid out of the same bucket or we are anticipating the departments are going to pay. Alex Zheng responded yes.

Tina Nieto said she talked to the Ops board from their last meeting. And the Sheriff's department supports this.

Chair David said from his perspective, he is not opposed to it. He thinks it's a good idea. He just would like to see some alternatives. He has not spoken to the folks that he represents. He asked if there is a 50% option where we can pay as we go 50% of the time, and then maybe finance the rest as we've

done in the past with NGEN. He is a little concerned about the actual projects themselves. Larger agencies are really leveraging to get this first item - the SmartConnect, but not all agencies are in a position to utilize that service. And it just seems like it's a big chunk of money going towards just maybe a few users. So maybe that needs to get pushed down. The Ops folks need to weigh in the core benefits everybody. And analog overlay is that redundant system for everybody. Today he is not willing to vote for it. He asked Alex if Board needs to move this item today. Alex Zheng responded that the NGEN as a system is a complicated system, utilized by all first responder agencies. The current balances of the NGEN system after we complete the two CIP projects would be, around \$300,000. He would encourage us to do something regarding the collection of this capital fee. So that NGEN is prepared. David Sargenti asked if this can be pushed to a meeting in February where we might be able to see some alternatives. Alex Zheng responded that when we bring our NGEN budget to this board in Feb., we can bring back our budget together with the collection of the capital fee together. And this board can review both and then make a determination. Sonia De La Rosa responded that would be her request also. Vibeke Norgaard wanted those who represent other jurisdictions, probably also should talk to those jurisdictions about it. It makes sense to bring it back if it's possible. Sonia De La Rosa said that she would second that. David Sargenti said the best thing to do would be to provide some alternatives. And the sooner we can get those in our hands, he does not know how immediate this is because we don't have any projects this fiscal year. This could be captured in the next few meetings that we have, to get some closure on it for you. I don't think you're hearing any resistance that we need to have this. It's just how do we fund that. Eric Chatham added he agrees with what's being asked by several of the members. We can go back and get some of that clarified, bring that back to this board so that we'd have a much better idea of each organization. Chair David Sargenti asked for additional comments from the board – none. Chief Sargenti asked to bring the item back to the Ops Board.

## 8. Project Report

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- **NGEN Phase II Upgrade** – the purpose of this project is to increase the capacity, especially for the South County area. The punch list issues have been cleared. The next steps are for the radio team to program all the radios and the agencies are to purchase the phase II feature licenses. The agencies are aware and information was distributed to them during August Ops meeting.
- **Lobos Ridge Site Buildout** – this is a UASI funded project for Carmel PD. Installation is waiting to be deployed to Lobos Ridge as the team waits for the landlord to give us the okay. Thomas Montoya's radio shop has been proactively helping Carmel PD with filing all the necessary paperwork, so they can be reimbursed by the UASI grant.
- **Fire paging issue resolved** – appreciate Chair David Sargenti alerted Alex and Radio Shop about the issue. This issue was resolved by various efforts of the radio shop along with Don Clark from ECD. The root cause was the volume level was not set up correctly. The volume has been adjusted, and headsets replaced as well together with site PM done by the radio shop. They made sure no frequency drifting is going on.
- **Mid-coast fire** – Thomas reported on this project the team is currently tied up with leasing negotiations with Big Sur campgrounds and Point Sur. They have procured Starlink as an alternate, and currently in the process of establishing a lab to test them and ensure communications can travel through seamlessly with low latency to provide the communications that are necessary for that site. The test will run until the beginning of February.

### *Board discussion:*

Board subsequently discussed Mid-coast fire project. Lee Ann Magoski added Mid-coast was asked to sign this agreement, because there was an expectation that they would be live. Mid-coast is currently dispatched by Cal-Fire. When this is done there needs to be some thoughtfulness in this, because then they're going to have to sign a contract with ECD to take over their dispatch services. She wants to make

sure it's safe and correct. She definitely would like to see an update in this possibly in January to see a realistic timeframe. Alex Zheng responded we will include that report. Thomas Montoya mentioned Cal Fire is pushing for a six-month contract with Mid-Coast.

Thomas Montoya added – completion date for Lobos Ridge that was an estimate. SBA, the landowner has since reached out Monday this week, and they have some internal documentation they're trying to straighten away before they give the greenlight, the NTP (notice to proceed).

Chair Sargenti asked about the next steps on with regards to Phase II upgrade, and whether a plan with a cut-off date be announced for the radios that are not ready for phase-II. Alex Zheng responded that it's been discussed multiple times at the NGEN Ops board. A comprehensive plan with all the remaining dependencies to complete the phase II upgrade will be reported to the January 18<sup>th</sup> NGEN Ops board meeting and subsequent Executive Board meeting.

#### **9. NGEN Operations Board Update**

Gaudenz Panholzer reported all issues discussed in the Ops last meeting have been addressed. He also reported he will be retiring at the end of this year and will no longer be chairing the Ops boards. Chief Panholzer added Chief Hober was recommended to take over the gavel. The Ops Board will pick the next chair.

#### **10. Future Agenda Items**

Chair Sargenti asked about the cost allocation from the county. Eric Chatham responded the first draft of COWCAP has not holistically been gone through. Last year's plan has already been approved by the State and approved by the ACO's office, so we don't expect anything to be changed or different from last year. ITD is monitoring that and will be able to update as we get closer.

#### **11. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 1416 hours.