

**NGEN Operations Board Minutes  
November 16, 2023**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Present</b>
Gaudenz Panholzer – Chair	Monterey Fire Department	Fire Protection Agency 1 of 3	
Dave Hober – Vice Chair	Monterey Police Department	Law Enforcement Agency 1 of 3	<b>x</b>
Doug McCoun	Marina Fire Department	Fire Protection Agency 2 of 3	<b>x</b>
Chris Bourquin	Del Rey Oaks PD	Law Enforcement Agency 2 of 3	<b>x</b>
Matt Harris	Big Sure Fire	Fire Protection Agency 3 of 3	
Bill Mixer	Greenfield PD	Law Enforcement Agency 3 of 3	<b>x</b>
Keith Boyd	Monterey County Sheriffs Dept.	Monterey County Undersheriff	<b>x</b>
Roberto Filice	Salinas Police Department	Salinas Police Chief	
Sam Klemek	Salinas Fire Department	Salinas Fire Chief	
Alex Zheng	Information Technology Dept	Deputy Chief Information Officer	<b>x</b>
Olivia Madrigal	Emergency Communications Dept.	Director of Emergency Communications	<b>x</b>

**Agenda Items:**

**1. Call to Order and Introductions** – The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Dave Hober at 1431 hours.

**Roll Call of Board Members and Advisors** – Rollcall taken by Leslie Madrigal and attendees marked present above.

**Additions and Corrections to Agenda:** None

**2. Approval of October 19, 2023 Minutes – Action Item – (Attachment 1) – Chairperson**

**ACTION/MOTION: Doug McCoun made motion to approve minutes. Seconded by Bill Mixer. All were in favor. None opposed.**

**3. Staff Update – Radio Manager**

Alex Zheng presented the following:

County ITD completed an open and competitive recruitment for the radio manager position and have selected Thomas Montoya as the new radio manager. Thomas was introduced to the Board.

**4. Dept. of Homeland Security Investigation (HSI) Requesting Access to NGEN System - Updated Action Item 23-001**

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- From the last meeting regarding HSI Monterey requesting access to the NGEN system, there were a list of items assigned to the Radio shop and other chiefs. Chief Mixer volunteered to take on several tasks listed:

1. Sponsoring Agency: Salinas Police Department
2. HSI is not on SVRIA’s mutual-aid partner list
3. State Law - Bill Mixer presented the following information.

Law enforcement agencies cannot share information related to the immigration status and cannot assist immigration by providing them information from our databases. State Law also established the notice process that we have to do every year, if you're in a task force working with any Federal agency. HSI has confirmed with Greenfield that they will provide the County law chiefs a letter of assurance, stating their investigations are not going to be related to immigration purposes.

They will be related to criminal materials only.

4. “Brick” Lost Radios

HSI provided us their lost or stolen property policy. The bottom line is in case their radios get lost, Radio Shop can easily disable their radios in NGEN UAS system.

Alex Zheng presented the following options regarding HSI request to join NGEN as a mutual-aid agency:

1. Grant HSI Monterey free access to interop/mutual-aid channels only
2. Grant HSI Monterey access to the law groups
3. Grant HSI Monterey access to all NGEN talk-groups, but charge them a fee

Staff recommendation is to choose option one and option two.

*Board discussion:*

Chief Mixer made a motion to allow HSI access to talk groups 3 through 9, 11 through 16 and 20 through 35 listed in the NGEN talk-group spreadsheet. Olivia Madrigal asked about County Communications role in this. It was pointed out that once the mutual-aid access request is approved then the Radio Shop is going to work with dispatch and then program both the radio system and CAD system accordingly, which will be part of our internal procedure. Board also discussed if there was ever a reason to break away from this agreement, how a city or NGEN member agency would go about doing that. Board suggested a paragraph about access to any talk group may be terminated immediately upon written request from the chief executive of the agency that controls the talk group.

**ACTION/MOTION: Bill Mixer made a motion to approve **Updated Action Item 23-001**, Dept. of Homeland Security Investigation (HSI) Requesting Access to NGEN System. Chris Bourquin seconded. Roll call taken. All members were in favor with the following:**

**Allow HSI access to talk groups 3 through 9, 11 through 16 and 20 through 35 as listed on NGEN Law-Fire-Cwide Fleetmap spreadsheet. This will be done free of charge, other than costs incurred due to radio programming. HSI will pay for that radio programming cost.**

**HSI issued a letter of intent and assurance to Greenfield Police Department. HSI is required to submit letters of intent and assurance to other County law chiefs. The letter should contain information on the purpose, requested access, and area of operations. HSI will also need to sign the NGEN Mutual-aid and Interoperability Agency Radio Use Agreement with updated termination clause, addressed in the Board Action Item 23-004.**

**5. DEA Requesting Additional Access to NGEN System**

Chief Guillermo Mixer presented the following:

- DEA is requesting access for the same mutual-aid reasons, and number of critical incidents arising throughout the county and planned operations. This would be the same type of usage.
- An official request from DEA will be coming next meeting.
- Bill presented this to the Board for discussion, since Federal partners will be more involved in the operations and wanted to see if any agency had an issue with DEA also accessing the NGEN system. Board did not have an issue with DEA coming on board. This will be a future action item.

## 6. NGEN Mutual-aid and Interoperability Radio Use Agreement

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- This agenda item was informational only. The Radio Use Agreement was distributed to the Ops meeting. The other documentation that he is working on is a policy/procedure documentation.
- Vice Chair Chief Hober made the motion to make this an action item and related that they believed that this agreement looks good to this board. He also added this will eventually go to the Executive board then the County Board of Supervisors. Chief Hober made the motion that the Operations Board reviewed this, and they believe it looks proper, and subject to the Executive Board approval. Bill Mixer seconded this motion. Dave Hober asked for further discussion by the board – none and asked for a roll call vote.

**ACTION/MOTION: Dave Hober made the motion to approve and recommend the NGEN Executive Board approve the NGEN Mutual-aid and Interoperability Agency Radio Use Agreement. Bill Mixer seconded. Roll call taken. All members were in favor.**

## 7. FY 24-25 CIP Project Motorola SmartConnect – Action Item 23-003

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- The Motorola SmartConnect project has been discussed by this board multiple times and the Radio Shop has been assigned to do additional research.
- There have been outdoor coverage issues within at least 12 areas including North Salinas, Bolsa Knolls, Prunedale, Pajaro, San Benancio, Carmel Valley Village, Green Bridge, King City, Bryson, San Ardo oil field, Bitterwater/HWY 25 Road, and the Big Sur area.
- The benefit of the SmartConnect is that it will allow the expansion of the NGEN coverage and allow for assistance to neighboring jurisdictions if needed. This will also keep everyone connected while being used indoors, because FirstNet has better indoor coverage than NGEN due to having many more radio powers than NGEN. This will also allow for a more seamless network switch from NGEN to LTE.

AT&T was contacted to discuss what their “secret” was to having better indoor coverage with LTE and FirstNet. The simple fact was that they have 101 radio sites within Monterey County versus 14 NGEN digital sites, and 20 analog sites. Also, they utilize lower frequency band such as 700Mhz, B14, etc... AT&T also reported per their FirstNet agreement, in case of a disaster happening they can light up an LTE tower (COW-cell on wings) site within seven hours. They have mobile units to quickly remedy any coverage issues.

- There are three types of radios supported by SmartConnect, one is APX-NEXT, and it is able to leverage LTE and Wi-Fi. This radio is capable of having integration with SmartConnect and consequently improve the indoor/outdoor coverage. This radio coverage can go beyond the Monterey County area. The other supported type of radios is the APX-8000/8500. Even though these are Wi-Fi only, they are able to improve indoor coverage at least in the headquarters, which usually have a Wi-Fi setup. This solution will also improve mobile coverage by connecting radios to the vehicle’s LTE modems. This has been verified with several Motorola customers including Silicon Valley Radio Authority, Collier County in Florida, and Miami-Dade County. There is also a type of L3Harris LTE radio called XL200 which can utilize the broadband as well. However, the user feedback received was not good. They expressed the switch over between the LMR and LTE are not as seamless as the APX radios, and their batteries drain quickly.
- The presentation was turned over to Thomas Montoya and Jeff Ackerman who talked about the countywide coverage projections. In these slides, Thomas Montoya presented a coverage comparison summary between NGEN digital system, NGEN analog and AT&T LTE FirstNet. Thomas provided examples of the coverage in Salinas with NGEN digital for both indoor and

outdoor portables and comparing them with AT&T FirstNet, which seems to have better coverage. Thomas also presented comparisons on the mobile coverage, which was significantly better as there are better antenna systems on the cars. One thing to note is the radio techs did some sample testing in Salinas. The radio team had LTE radios on hand for testing. They conducted a walk through the shopping mall and Northridge as well as through Target and Walmart. This was a small sample and found that generally where there was poor LMR coverage, there was decent or good coverage from LTE.

- Thomas provided more examples of current problematic areas and their projected coverage. A few of these areas Thomas presented on were Salinas Bolsa Knolls, Prunedale, North Prunedale, Pajaro, Marina, Seaside, Monterey, and Carmel Valley. In the slides presented, the board was able to see the comparisons between NGEN digital portables and both digital and analog mobiles as well as AT&T FirstNet (complete PowerPoint presentation available on secure NGEN site).
- Board understood that without FirstNet, the coverage needed was not met. Thomas and his team went out and did field checks in Marina and Salinas and found good supplementary coverage. They also went down to the oil field in the San Ardo area where they had full signal throughout that oil field area.

### *Board Discussion*

Board subsequently discussed not all the radios will benefit from the project, unless they are LTE capable. Chief McCoun added that the APX-8000 portables are not going to really benefit. It will benefit the mobile because you could put a data modem on your mobile vehicles. Agencies without APX-Next radios will not benefit unless they buy new radios. If they're all purchasing new radios that will work but if they're not, especially with portables it's only going to be wherever they can get to a Wi-F signal, which isn't going to be inside all these buildings. APX-Next radio is the radio that's going to be benefiting the most from the SmartConnect solution.

Alex presented that Motorola reduced their APX-Next radio price drastically to around \$8,826 without shipping and tax versus APX 8,000/8,500 radios, now it's getting more expensive than the APX-Next, the price is about \$9,000 and the SmartConnect annual subscription is about \$144 a year per radio. Two SmartConnect implementation options were presented:

- On-prem core of about \$2.74 million.
- Cloud hosted core of about \$1.19 million.
- Neither of those solutions have any ISSI redundancy.

Board discussed the number of LTE capable radios anticipated to benefit most from the SmartConnect is about 365. About 1,580 APX 8000/8500 radios can also benefit by connecting to their headquarter Wi-Fi. They could also leverage their in-vehicle LTE device and connect their mobiles. Board also discussed the following:

- Recommendation from Radio Shop if we should choose on-prem core or Cloud-based core solution. On-prem core will require periodical system upgrade and replacement while Cloud requires an \$100K annual subscription cost.
- Direct costs to agencies regarding the SmartConnect solution, and per radio SmartConnect subscription cost.
- SmartConnect O&M cost sharing amongst agencies. There will be an O&M cost of about \$100K if using Cloud-hosted core, versus \$150K if using on-prem core.
- Timeline when the Executive Board makes their decision on NGEN capital fee. NGEN capital fee will be discussed in the Dec. 14, 2023, Executive Board meeting. Undersheriff Boyd suggested we should wait until Executive Board authorizes the NGEN capital fee.
- Board briefly discussed UASI grant application for the SmartConnect project.

- This action item is tabled until further discussion between chiefs and the next Ops board meeting. Board wants to see a detailed cost break-down on O&M fee increase due to SmartConnect, for both Cloud and on-prem core options.

**ACTION/MOTION: NO ACTION. – Action Item 23-003 FY 24-25 CIP Project Motorola SmartConnect will be tabled until January 18, 2024 meeting.**

#### **8. NGEN L3Harris Core Upgrade**

Vice Chair David Hober asked if this item needed to be discussed. Per Alex Zheng, this item can be tabled.

#### **9. NGEN Project and Operations Report**

Alex Zheng presented the following:

- The NGEN Phase II Upgrade is going well. The radio team has resolved the punch list items below except for the implicit versus explicit frequency mode issue which they are working with the vendor.
  - System-wide console call – resolved
  - NSC WAR router redundancy issue at ECD – resolved
- **Higher Ground recorder issue and redundancy** - the Recorder issue, ECD is working with the vendor on that one. They would like to do some additional tests before we apply this patch to the system.
- **Lobos Ridge Site Buildout (Carmel PD)** - This is part of the Phase II program and is already set up and programmed ready to go. The radio software is waiting for lease modification, and Thomas is diligently leading this project.
- **Fire paging issues and resolutions** - The issue seems to be resolved. Alex invited Thomas and Jeff to talk about it and share feedback. Thomas Montoya added – overall they received good feedback from Marina and Regional fire. At this point, the radio team will work with communications to monitor and address issues as they come forward.
- **Mid-coast (Glen Deven) Fire Repeater Site** – The radio team is testing the Starlink equipment, but currently waiting for some additional equipment to arrive to complete the testing. Also, they are still waiting for the approval of the two site leases from the landlords. No progress on that one.
- **Pinball site relocation to Rocky Butte and Lake San Antonio** – Expecting a MOU signed with SLO County.

Board briefly discussed EMS ambulance RFP, and that the radios need to be Phase II compliant and ready. Police Association and Fire Chiefs Association will each send a letter to EMS.

**10. Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 1601 hours.