



Bolinas Fire Protection District

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June 28, 2005

The regular meeting of the Bolinas Fire Protection District was called to order at 7:30 PM by Pres. Sands. Vice Pres. Binley, Dir. Aitken, Dir. Phillips, Chief Tyrrell-Brown, Kim Bender and at least forty community members were present. Dir. Currey was absent.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Bill Lyons asked if there was a contingency plan in the case of insufficient funds being raised. Pres. Sands answered that a Contingency Committee was formed to look at all options possible. The Committee determined that construction should proceed as planned as there are options in place such as a bridge loan if needed. Approximately 4 million has been raised and between 1 and 1.5 million is needed for completion of the Project. Pres. Sands assured everyone that insufficient funds at the beginning of a large construction project are typical.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Citizens Group Report

Mary Beth Brangan gave the report for the Citizens Group. She began by appreciating the work that the Board has already done regarding developing a tower proposal and expressed her support for the Project and the needs of Mesa Park, the Coastal Health Alliance and the Bolinas Fire Department. On behalf of the Group, she made a recommendation that the Board choose the Martinelli site for a MERA tower and leave the existing cell sites at the station adding no additional sites. She also requested that the Board negotiate for annual monitoring of RFs paid for by the cell companies to insure the RFs emissions are truly below the limits set by the Board.

Mary Beth said that Sup. Kinsey stated that the Firehouse would not be forced to house the MERA site if it was unwanted by the Community.

Mary Beth spoke of a petition that is currently circulating the Community that requests the Fire Board to move the MERA tower to the Martinelli site and that no additional cell sites be added at the station.

Mary Beth stated that Sup. Kinsey has budgeted \$350,000 for the Martinelli site and \$300,000 for the Fire Station site leaving a \$50,000 difference.

Pres. Sands stated that there are many costs not included in these estimates.

Mary Beth answered that any additional costs are well worth a healthy alternative.

Pres. Sands asked Mary Beth if the Citizen's Group would be supportive of a taller tower with the same number of cell sites. Mary Beth answered that a taller tower would allow possibilities for more sites in the future and added that it would be visually appalling.

Rachel Johnson presented an option to buy out leases with cell companies now and/or to refuse renewal of contracts in five years when they expire.

Pres. Sands reminded everyone that the District does need the income generated from the cell companies. She suggested that the Advisory Committee create a written proposal and present it at the next July Board meeting on the 18th.

Pres. Sands described the Crown Castle "COW", the Communication-on-Wheels, temporary tower on a truck that will be used once construction of the new firehouse begins. Pres. Sands went on to say that negotiations with Crown Castle are still underway and that they are discussing a new 40 year lease. She reported that the Crown Castle proposal that the Board approved for submittal to the County was retained by CC as they are waiting for further resolution of the tower issue.

Chief Brown reminded everyone that the proposed MERA tower is the missing link for radio communications for all of West Marin. The present system for communication is faulty and hard to maintain. Under the current system, calls are being missed and response time is sometimes increased.

Chief Brown also reported that she reviewed the Minutes since 2000 and learned that indeed the Board promised the Bolinas Community four years ago that they would not approve of raising emission levels of electro-magnetic frequencies higher than what is currently emitted, as opposed to never adding additional cell antennas or MERA antennas.

Dr. Robert Shaw expressed his strong opinion that there is no medical evidence that he has found that states electro-magnetic emissions are dangerous to human health. He also stated that, in his opinion, the Board is wasting time on the issue and should go ahead and approve of the proposed tower configuration.

David Kimball suggested that perhaps another site besides the Martinelli land could be used. He also asked if the MERA technology is a long term solution or a temporary technology. He suggested that everyone use what he calls the "precautionary principle", and look at what is most beneficiary for the whole community including rapid response time to emergency situations and long term health concerns. He suggested that the community stop using cell phones to diminish demand for cell sites.

Vivian Roe reported that she had talked with various members of the Martinelli family and learned that it has been a difficult decision for all involved as they are concerned about their own exposure to RFs and exposure to the plants and animals on their land.

Pres. Sands reiterated that if there was less demand for cell sites in West Marin (diminished use of cell phones), than the cell companies would be out of business. She warned that if the District buys out the present leases, then the District will have to raise existing taxes to make up for lost revenue from the cell companies.

Arian Dar suggested that a community vote would determine the amount of actual concern in the Community.

Chief Brown highly recommended that the District not ask MERA to leave the firehouse site again as it would be highly costly and time consuming. Any member agency, which the District is, is responsible for 2/3 of the cost to develop an alternative site. Also, the additional time taken to develop an alternate site would be cause for great concern. She said we need to be concerned with real health risks present due to the antiquated emergency radio system. She reiterated that we need to be up on the MERA system ASAP.

Vic Amoroso suggested a different proposal that included MERA at the Martinelli site, leaving the existing cell sites at the station, and putting a measure on the ballot to raise the fire tax. The additional money would allow the District not to add any additional cell sites. Vic doubted the feasibility of the 100 foot proposed tower being approved by the Coastal Commission.

Two members from the Stinson Beach Communications Adhoc Committee related how they had successfully urged the Stinson Beach Fire Board to reject proposed cell sites from both Sprint and Nextel. They added that the public has a right to know about potential RF exposure before decisions are made and that the public also has a right to know when they are exposed to RFs and at what levels. Marion Weber suggested installing a monitoring device for public use.

FF Pete Smith suggested that the Advisory Committee have members with opposing view points in order to create a more balanced alternative proposal.

Vice Pres. Binley asked the Citizen Advisory Group if they believed that the proposed 100 foot tower would drop the level of RFs by 50% as measured in the two studies done by SiteSafe and Hatfield & Dawson. He also made two economic points of concern for the Advisory Group to consider. The first point was that the numbers that Crown Castle has given in negotiations are based on future income from additional sites. If there are no additional sites, than the income will be significantly lower. Secondly, that MERA costs will increase significantly at the Martinelli site due to site development costs.

Jim Fox, Fire Chief of Inverness, expressed his concern that by delaying MERA, Bolinas could risk cutting itself off and the rest of West Marin from a greater and superior communication system in Marin. Rescue time and efficiency would suffer. He also stated that if Bolinas refused MERA they could be perceived as isolationists and lose credibility in the rest of Marin and beyond.

Pamela of Stinson Beach refuted Jim Fox saying the Board was not alone in their concern about potential health risks of cell towers. She stated that the cell tower issue concerns all of West Marin.

Mary Beth Brangan asked if the "COW" could accommodate MERA temporarily.

Vice Pres. Binley stated that the COW would not be able to house MERA in addition to the cell sites.

Judith Shaw challenged the Board to move ahead with their original proposal and to not compromise their agenda for such a small representation from the Community.

Jenny Pfeiffer thanked the Board for being willing to hear all points of view and for all of their time spent on the tower issue.

Bill Lyons asked for clarification regarding a light on top of the proposed 100 foot tower. The Board answered that a light is unnecessary.

There was a break at this point in the meeting.

Capital Campaign Update

MSC, Aitken/Phillips (unan) to authorize Pres. Sands to sign CHA lease. David Burnett prepared and presented the lease to the Board for review at the May Board meeting.

Building and Grounds Report

Don Smith presented a Firehouse/Clinic Solar Electric Proposal to the Board which included demand for electricity, potential capacity of the new buildings for solar equipment, costs, financing, and outstanding questions. A small committee formed to continue to research open questions and possibilities. Chief Brown thanked Don for his excellent work and presentation.

MSC, Aitken/Binley (unan) to authorize firehouse to move to temporary facilities. An action to authorize demolishing the existing building was tabled to a later date pending sequencing issues with radios and resolution of the location of the communication towers.

MSC, Aitken/Binley (unan) to authorize Richard Hinman to go out to bid on the new buildings.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MSC, Aitken/Phillips (unan) to approve of the Consent Calendar including the Warrant List, the Financial Report, the Minutes from May 17, 2005 and May 23, 2005, the transfer of \$10,000 from Investment to Operating Accounts and Correspondence.

CHIEF'S REPORT

Communications

Chief Brown met with representatives from the County radio shop to discuss the move of the current emergency radio equipment to the Cingular tower that has to occur before demolition of the existing building begins. The application to co-locate the County equipment to the Cingular tower has been submitted and Cingular seems receptive so far.

MERA

Negotiations continue as stated earlier in the meeting. Chief Brown plans to attend the MERA meetings on June 29 and June 30. Agenda items include renewing Martin Nichols' contract, the 05/06 MERA budget, and additional funding needed to complete the MERA system. Our member costs will increase by \$650 this fiscal year. The \$60,000 cost for the West Marin paging system will also be discussed.

Cell Sites

The Crown Castle lease is still in negotiation.

Prevention

Chief Brown continues to work on hazard fuel reduction in town. She would like to secure grant monies in order to purchase a mower attachment to address accessibility issues. The Disaster Council and Chief Brown are working in neighborhood meetings to discuss defensible space as the District received grant money from the NPS to spend on this issue.

Planning

Chief Brown is working on the BCLT development.

Training

Captain Phillips continues to develop a thorough training program for Volunteers which has been difficult due to the move to temporary facilities.

Volunteers

Chief Brown continues to be thankful and impressed by a core group of Volunteers who continue to spend extra hours of hard work at the station on Building and Grounds issues. She would like to specifically thank Dir. Aitken, Pete Smith, Steve Marcotte, Matt Phillips, Ralph Camiccia, Ron Brown, and Gordon White.

Apparatus

SBFPD Asst. Chief Aaron Jarvis serviced the pump on E285. Capt. Phillips walked through every step of the service with him and will service the rest of the engines.

Disaster Council

In addition to neighborhood meetings, the Council is working on a table top session in the event of a disaster and streamlining the Council. The recent Tsunami scare revealed several issues, namely communications.

GENERAL BUSINESS

MSC, Aitken/Phillips (unan) to accept the Bunker & Co Audit Proposal FY2004/2005 with the understanding that the District will research other audit companies and prices available before the audit for FY2005/2006. Chief Brown said that they are raising their rates this year substantially.

MSC, Aitken/Phillips (unan) to accept Preliminary Budget for FY2005/2006 with the understanding that the Personnel Committee will meet prior to the July meeting to discuss a raise for Chief Brown. The Board thanked Chief Brown and Vanessa Marcotte for all their hard work creating the budget.

BOARD MEMBER REPORT

None.

PERSONNEL MATTERS

None.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Pres. Sands thanked the Board members and everyone involved with the new station for all their hard work.

ADJOURNMENT

MSC, Aitken/Binley (unan) to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Molly Brown
District Secretary

NOTE: All minutes to all Board meetings are available for review at the Bolinas Library.