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Moraga Town Council votes to join MCE

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In 2018 all of Moraga residents can choose to get up to 100 percent of their electricity from renewable sources.



Graphic provided

The town council decided on April 26 to pursue an application to join MCE - Marin Clean Energy - that is already providing alternatively sourced electricity to Marin County and several Contra Costa cities such as Lafayette, Benicia, El Cerrito, Richmond, San Pablo and Walnut Creek. PG&E will continue to deliver and bill the electricity as it does now, and residents who desire can retain PG&E as their sole provider, but to do so they will have to opt out of MCE.

MCE is what is called a Community Choice Aggregation. It is a nonprofit made of cities and counties that get together to buy and/or generate electricity for residents and businesses within their areas. MCE started in Marin County in 2010. Residents have the choice between two

plans: A light green plan where 50 percent of the electricity originates from renewable energy sources - solar, wind, geothermal, etc., and a deep green plan that is 100 percent from renewable sources.

Lafayette joined MCE a year ago, but at the same time the town of Moraga declined to join because the county was reviewing several CCA options, including the creation of a Contra Costa CCA. The Board of Supervisors indicated recently that they would not pursue an independent option but would rather recommend the county join either MCE or the Alameda CCA called EBCE, still in the planning phase. It was time for Moraga to review its decision.

Since last year the council members in Moraga have had the opportunity to contemplate what has been done in Lafayette. Mayor Teresa Onoda said that she had talked to Lafayette Vice Mayor Don Tatzin, who had not been a supporter of his city joining MCE. Onoda stated that now Tatzin only had good things to say about MCE.

The council members asked many questions of Dawn Weisz, CEO of MCE who attended the meeting. The first pertained to charges. Weisz produced sample data for residential costs. She showed that a PG&E client paying \$98.03 monthly would pay \$97.76 on a light green program and \$102.21 for 100 percent renewable program.

Council member Kymberleigh Korpus said she was supporting the idea, but added that she was concerned that in the agreement signed by members a possibility is listed that MCE would have the right to use eminent domain to acquire electricity-generating facilities. The town attorney did not share Korpus' concern and Weisz said that MCE procures electricity but is not in the business of generating it.

Several residents spoke in favor of joining MCE, including Jonathan Kinney, who represented the local activist group Indivisible Moraga, stating that the members, mostly progressives, were all in favor of giving people a choice. Larry Beans, who installed solar panel on his roof years ago, also supported MCE, explaining that MCE would pay twice of what PG&E pays for the extra electricity generated by his panels.

Weisz said that there were probably not a lot of places in Moraga itself to generate much electricity, but she noted that schools that have solar panels could make money with it, especially in summer when their needs are low.

EBCE also made a presentation to the council, but the project is still far from operability and was not considered by the members.

City staff will come back to council with an ordinance in May and Moraga should apply to join MCE in June. The following months will be dedicated to outreach from MCE to inform the residents of their options. The green electricity should start to flow mid-2018. Residents will continue to receive and pay their bills through PG&E.

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