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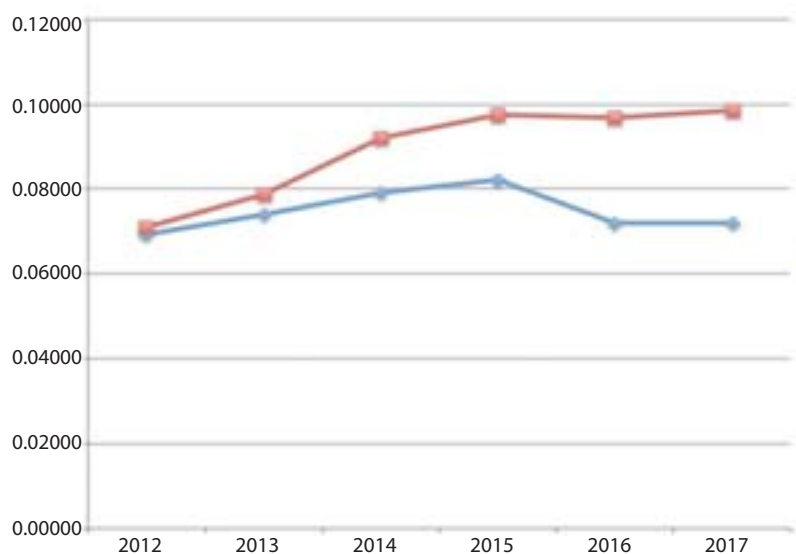
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Moraga will have access to more renewable energy in 2018

By Sophie Braccini



Evolution of MCE and PG&E all usages residential rates between 2012 and 2017, figures provided by MCE.

The Moraga town council voted in 2017 to join Marin Clean Energy, and 2018 will be the year residents become a part of this large local energy provider. By April of 2018, MCE will produce the electricity needed for all residents who will not have opted out, while PG&E will continue to deliver the energy and bill everyone. The beginning of the year will mark the start of MCE's outreach campaign in Moraga and the other communities that have recently decided to join MCE as well. Lafayette has been part of MCE for one year, while Orinda declined the move.

In Contra Costa County, in addition to Moraga, the cities of Concord, Danville, Martinez, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg and San Ramon, as well as unincorporated Contra Costa County, will join MCE in April; El

Cerrito, Lafayette, San Pablo, Richmond and Walnut Creek are already enrolled. A little over two thirds of the 19 cities will have joined the community energy provider by April of 2018.

MCE's arguments to convince the different decision makers are that residents will not be charged more than what PG&E costs them if they choose the Light Green program – 50 percent renewable in the electricity mix – and that they will be charged only a few dollars more for 100 percent renewable energy. Residents can also opt for Local Solar, a program that supports solar electricity produced in the Bay Area.

The electricity customers of the eight cities will automatically become a part of MCE, but can opt out of the program to stay with PG&E. It is therefore crucial that every-

one is fully informed.

Coleman Frick, the Moraga planner that worked most closely with MCE, explains that each resident will receive four mailers before April 1 to inform them about the program and their rights. The young planner who will leave Moraga soon to join the Concord planning team explains that joining MCE represented a lot of work for staff, but that it is one of his most significant achievements during his three-year tenure in Moraga.

Jamie Tuckey, the director of public affairs for MCE, explains that three Community Leadership Advisory Groups will be formed within the nine new cities to work on an outreach plan, and that MCE needs local volunteers. Interested people can sign up to be on the CLAG at www.mcecleanenergy.org/clag/. Alexandra McGee, who is in charge of the outreach for Moraga, says that the town is part of the South CLAG with San Ramon and Danville. This CLAG will meet three times and is open to the public. The first meeting was in Danville on Dec. 7 and there will be a second meeting in February. Interested parties can attend any CLAG meeting.

Frick adds that he and other staff members and elected officials have created a robust list of organizations to be contacted, as well as a list of events that MCE could attend. He adds that MCE will also have a person in Moraga some weekdays that will be training staff and answering questions from the public.

Tuckey says that the switch will take the entire month of April at the start of the billing cycle and that people will not see any difference. If residents do nothing they will be enrolled in the Light Green, 50 percent guaranteed renewable program. The MCE director

adds that this year Light Green included 55 percent of renewable energy, with 50 percent being the minimum.

The big question for customers is, of course, rates. Tuckey says that MCE has reduced rates two years in a row and will likely be reducing them again in April of 2018, which is the standard timeline for assessing and changing rates. The data provided by MCE shows that over the past five years the MCE's residential rate has always been less than PG&E's.

During the signup period at the beginning of the year and within 60 days of joining, opting in or out of MCE will be free. Opting out after the 60 days of the April enrollment will cost a one-time administrative fee of \$5 per residential account or \$25 per commercial account, which will be applied to the electric bill. PG&E will prohibit residents from returning to MCE for one year. In Lafayette, 10 percent of residents opted out of MCE.

MCE is a nonprofit public agency formed by the public in Marin County to buy cleaner power and invest in local economies. MCE has served Bay Area electric customers since 2010. Today, MCE provides service to more than 250,000 customers in Marin, Napa and Contra Costa counties. The new Contra Costa County entities joining will almost double that figure with over 230,000 new customers and MCE will reach a half million accounts. PG&E has 5.4 million electric customer accounts. MCGee adds that MCE is exploring opening a second office in Contra Costa County and is hiring more staff. For more information about the Contra Costa program, visit www.mcecleanenergy.org/mce-contra-costa/.

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