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Lamorinda mayors balk at proposed CPUC resolution

By Nick Marnell



MCE Solar One, a new 60-acre, 10.5 MW solar farm in Richmond. Photo provided

Mayors Dave Trotter of Moraga and Don Tatzin of Lafayette have urged the California Public Utilities Commission to vote against implementing a registration process for new community choice aggregators, arguing that the registration process is an improper de facto freeze on CCA implementation.

"It is inappropriate for CPUC staff to now attempt to forcibly implement a freeze," Trotter wrote in a Jan. 16 letter to Michael Picker, PUC president. "Adoption of the resolution would unreasonably delay new communities from joining or forming CCAs."

the aggregators to comply with its resource adequacy program, which ensures that the CCAs have contracted for enough power generation to meet peak customer demand, relieving the prior utility - locally, PG&E - of the cost and responsibility. According to the commission, many new CCAs are not incorporated into the resource adequacy program and the draft resolution will require their compliance.

Community choice aggregation is a nonprofit alternative to investor-owned utilities that allows government entities to purchase energy for their communities, choosing a power generating source that provides cheaper or greener energy products, or both. With the rapid emergence of CCAs, the PUC says it wants to force

Marin Clean Energy is California's first community choice aggregator, providing a basic 50 percent renewable energy service to its customers, with an option to upgrade to 100 percent renewable energy. "We are concerned that the CPUC is overreaching its authority," said Dawn Weisz, MCE chief executive officer.

Weisz and Trotter, an MCE board member, agree that the issues of expanding CCA communities and resource adequacy should be resolved transparently in a formal regulatory proceeding. "The draft is an inappropriate procedural pathway to solving a cost allocation issue," said Weisz. The commission's reliance solely on confidential data supplied by PG&E also troubled Weisz, she said.

Tatzin, an MCE board member, said that had the proposed PUC resolution been in place when his city applied to MCE, customers would have waited 15 months longer to receive electricity from the company, costing customers more money for nonrenewable PG&E energy. If Lafayette had joined a new CCA, Tatzin said the delay would have caused startup costs to go on for 15 more months, decreasing the financial viability of the new CCA and depriving consumers of a choice.

"Even if a subsidy exists, the PUC has other means to correct that situation without delaying growth and formation of CCAs," said Tatzin who presented his arguments to the commission in January.

The PUC has scheduled a Feb. 8 vote on the draft resolution.

Moraga will join MCE in April. Lafayette has been an MCE member since September 2016, while Orinda has declined to join a community choice aggregator.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

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