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## City works with PG&E to keep lights on at resource center during power shutoffs

By Pippa Fisher



Lafayette is finalizing a contract that would keep the lights on as a resource center at the Lafayette Community Center in the case of a PSPS during the 2020 fire season. Photo Pippa Fisher

The council voted unanimously to work in partnership with Pacific Gas and Electric Co. to provide a community resource center for use by residents in any upcoming Public Safety Power Shutoff events during this year's fire season, subject to further negotiation on the length of the contract.

Parks, Trails and Recreation Director Jonathan Katayanagi presented his report at the June 22 city council meeting, explaining that during the 2019 fire season PSPS events, the city provided power to the public at the Jennifer Russell Building with a rented generator that was temporarily wired into the building.

PG&E is now proposing partnering with the city to provide power to residents for almost the whole Community Center as part of its plans to have several indoor CRC sites in the county during PSPS events. The draft contract before the council was worded to run until 2030.

Katayanagi explained the benefits to the city: the ability to offer places for residents to charge their devices or cool off in air conditioning in the case of an outage that might run for several days again like last year; the ability to keep recreation programs running including full-day care for kindergarten to fifth-grade students if a hybrid learning schedule is implemented by the schools in the fall; and an income from PG&E's daily license fee of \$1,200 for days when the CRC is activated.

All council members recognized the benefit to the community, as did Lafayette resident Michael Dawson who joined the virtual meeting to make a public comment. He also sounded a warning note about signing any contract that runs for 10 years with PG&E, without at least an annual review.

Prompted by this caution, the council asked PG&E representatives during the meeting if there would be room for negotiation on the length of the commitment with a utility company that, said Council Member Cam Burks, doesn't demonstrate integrity. With indication from PG&E's public affairs representative Tom Guarino that there would be, and mindful of the need to move expediently to get things in place in time for fire season, the council authorized the city manager to move ahead, reducing the term of the contract to five years, for review at that point to decide if a further five-year contract should be continued and with an annual review of the project.

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