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Town Council Meetings:
 Wed., Sept. 11, 5:30 p.m.
 Wed., Sept. 25, 5:30 p.m.
Planning Commission:
 Tuesday, Sept. 17,
 6:30 p.m.
Parks and Recreation Commission:
 Mon., Oct. 14, 6:30 p.m.



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LINDA EHRICH



Town Facilities Energy Generation Project update

By Vera Kochan

Over the last few years various portions of Moraga have been hit with power outages either from unknown causes or Pacific Gas & Electric Company's Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS). Residents and businesses were not alone in their frustrations, as the Town Offices experienced the same episodes.

In January 2022, the Town Council authorized a professional services agreement with Natural Capitalism Solutions, Inc. (Clean

Coalition) to proceed with a Town Facilities Energy Generation Study in order to analyze the potential use of a microgrid energy generation system composed of solar panels, battery storage, and small back-up generators at the Town Hall, Council Chambers, Moraga Library, and Hacienda de Las Flores properties.

Clean Coalition offered three options to the Town Council during a May 2022 meeting. The first option was to stay with PG&E and MCE Clean Energy which involves no change to current services. A second option was a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), which would involve entering into an agreement with a third-party provider to install and operate power systems using a combination of alternative energy sources and diesel back-up generators for the town's facilities. The third option would be for the Town to self-finance, build, and operate its own energy generation systems to power Town facilities.

The recommendation from Clean Coalition was for Moraga to pursue a PPA due to the Town's limited financial resources. It was also pointed out that the clock was ticking in order to take advantage of PG&E's Net Energy Metering (NEM2) program in order to achieve an

aggregate savings of \$1.7 million amortized over a 25-year period (approximately \$68,000 per year). The Town decided to put the project on hold while directing Clean Coalition and staff to perform further analysis.

One month later, Clean Coalition maintained that a PPA option was still in the Town's best interests, however the Hacienda property was no longer included in the study due to its physical and financial constraints.

Director of Public Works/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp's Aug. 28, 2024 staff report stated, "Unfortunately, the delay in the project's analysis significantly reduced the projected savings for the three remaining sites over a 25-year period from \$1.7 million to \$295,000. This was primarily due to the shift in PG&E Net Energy Metering from NEM2 to NEM3 rates which notably reduced the economic benefits of using the solar power sell-back option."

While the Town was preparing a PPA Request for Proposals (RFP), the US Department of Transportation Community Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Program awarded Contra Costa County a \$15 million grant which they developed into the "EV-4-All" Program. This would involve installation of six Electric Vehi-

cle Charger stations at the Moraga Library by fall 2026. Before this happens, the Town must complete planned parking lot improvements.

"Due to other capital improvement project priorities (including the extensive street pavement projects currently taking place throughout town), the energy generation project was delayed for a few months during late 2023," stated the staff report. "In an effort to help move this project forward, the Town entered into an on-call civil engineering contract with Concord-based Theis Engineering and Associates. This firm worked with energy resiliency industry experts to obtain additional feedback on Clean Coalition's risk management and economic analysis. This firm also worked with Clean Coalition on the RFP's scope and preparation cost."

On Aug. 28, the Town Council voted 4-0 (Council Member David Shapiro was absent) to approve a Professional Services Agreement Amendment No.1 with Clean Coalition in the amount of \$75,000 to prepare an RFP document to solicit proposals from firms to develop a PPA to design and install microgrid energy systems at three town facilities. They also authorized a 15% contingency of \$11,250 to augment the Clean Coalition con-

tract amount for potential additional professional services.

Once a PPA firm is approved, several tasks will need to be completed before any microgrid systems are installed, including design/build submittals, construction installation inspections, energy generation verifications, and recommendations for acceptance of a constructed project. The Town's multi-year Fiscal Year 2023-24 to Fiscal Year 2027-28 Capital Improvement Program included all of the Town Facilities Energy Reliability Projects with staggered project start and completion dates. According to Knapp, "Staff is recommending combining the three projects into one for economy of scale benefits."

The estimated cost of a PPA microgrid project is \$6,200,000 and would result in a net cost (after discounting the \$5,350,000 in energy savings) estimated at approximately \$850,000 over a 25-year period, but these costs are largely associated with staff and legal fees along with facility and parking lot improvements beyond the scope of the PPA. The energy savings was estimated at \$295,000 (over PG&E/MCE costs), based on PPA and energy cost assumptions.

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Planning Department provides Town Council with helpful Rheem Park Illustrative Design Standards document

By Vera Kochan

Discussing design standards is one thing, but to be able to look at a colored document loaded with pictorial possibilities relating to Rheem Park's future visual appeal is quite another.

The Planning Department provided the



Aerial of Rheem Valley shopping area.

Photo courtesy Moraga Planning Department

Town Council with the Draft Rheem Park Illustrative Design Standards as part of Community Development Director Afshan Hamid and Consultant Barry Miller's Aug. 28 staff report. "The document is a graphically formatted version of the Moraga Municipal Code (MMC) Objective Design Standards adopted by the Town

Council in 2023. It does not modify any of the previously adopted standards and is intended primarily as a user-friendly guide to illustrate the standards with real world examples."

The Rheem Park area includes the shopping center, the Saint Mary's College off-campus site, the Town Hall, 7-11 shopping cen-

ter and vacant property, and others. The Objective Design Standards for this area is in response to state mandates with regards to mixed-use development and is meant to expedite housing production, increase certainty in the development review process, and reduce development costs.

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