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## Town Opts Out of Community Electricity - For Now

*By Sophie Braccini*

The Town of Moraga decided not to join the Marin Clean Energy (MCE) cooperative electricity acquisition group, a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) program, before its March 31 open enrollment deadline, which would have included an \$18,000 reduction in cost of the program. According to information on the Contra Costa County website, CCA, also referred to as Community Choice Energy (CCE), is "the practice of pooling consumer electricity demand within a region for the purpose of procuring energy and selling it to customers. The existing energy utility remains responsible for transmission, distribution, and billing. The most common reason for jurisdictions to pursue CCA is to promote electricity generation from renewable energy sources and offer consumers a choice in purchasing electricity with potential opportunities for cost savings."

Not wanting to be pressured into making a fast decision, the council members asked for more time, hoping to keep their options open if Contra Costa County decides to create a CCA of its own. "I'm feeling a lot of pressure with this March 31 deadline and I don't react well to pressure," said councilmember Phil Arth at the Feb. 24 council meeting.

Vice Mayor Dave Trotter suggested to Marin Clean Energy CEO Dawn Weisz, who was at the meeting, that her company extend its deadline to the end of June to give Moraga more time to decide. Weisz responded that her board would have to make that decision.

"Why wouldn't we want to keep our options (with the county) open?" asked Mayor Mike Metcalf. The law prohibits a city from joining two different CCAs. If Moraga joined MCE, it would preclude later joining the county's own CCA.

Town Assistant Planner Coleman Frick noted the drawbacks of waiting for the county to create its own collective. "The county is in the preliminary stages of creating a CCA," said Frick. "The county has asked for communities to share the cost of a feasibility study. There are other unknowns for the county program; one of their options is to join MCE."

Frick noted that it took Alameda county two years to go through such a process, and that the cost to participating agencies could be much higher than what MCE is currently asking. Because of all these uncertainties, staff's recommendation was to join MCE.

The Board of Supervisor's Internal Operations Committee Feb. 29 directed Jason Crapo of the County Department of Conservation and Development to bring to the next board meeting on March 15 a recommendation to start a study to either join MCE or engage in creating a Contra Costa CCA. Crapo anticipates the feasibility study will be complete by the end of 2016. Alameda County voted to create a CCA in June of 2014, but it has not launched yet.

Moraga residents came to the council meeting to support the idea of joining a CCA, but not necessarily MCE. Former mayor Lynda Deschambault recommended keeping control, investments and jobs local, and supporting the county's efforts. The Contra Costa Clean Energy Alliance says that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated 40,887 acres of land in Contra Costa County (mostly former industrial sites) as suitable for renewable energy generation. This means that the county's local renewable production potential could power 1.27 million homes. There are 406,772 households in Contra Costa County.

The council's final decision was to ask PG&E to share Moraga electricity data with MCE for potential membership, while MCE decides whether or not to extend the joining open enrollment period for three months. Staff will continue monitoring the CCA efforts of Contra Costa County as an alternative to MCE.

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[back](#)

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