



By Steve McShane

LAUNCHING MONTEREY BAY COMMUNITY POWER

The Central Coast, in general, and Monterey County communities can celebrate the arrival of Monterey Bay Community Power. This new agency has launched a regional source for carbon free electricity at a cost equivalent to PG&E.

Commercial accounts for Monterey Bay Community Power went live March 1. Residential accounts go live July 1. While most folks will not see much of a difference in the monthly billing, there will be an impressive impact to the community. Ultimately, this new agency creates local jobs, funds renewable energy projects and reduces carbon-based emissions.

I'm delighted to celebrate the fact that our region has embraced this opportunity. By launching Monterey Bay Community Power, our residents have prioritized carbon free energy sources at the same cost of PG&E power to our residents. Best of all, the profits from Monterey Bay Community Power are reinvested back into the community. No longer would our hard-earned dollars be sent off to corporate headquarters elsewhere in California.

Communities across California are benefiting from similar opportunities. Marin County, Sonoma County, San Mateo

County, San Francisco and Lancaster have all established their own community choice energy agencies, reducing carbon footprints in those communities while offering energy at comparable prices to the big utilities.

Community choice energy works. Here on the Central Coast, our effort is governed by a joint powers agency overseen by a publicly accountable 11-member board. Following exhaustive studies and dozens of public meetings over the last several years, this agreement covers local governments in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties.

The power-sharing agreement fosters collaboration by giving no county the ability to dictate to others – the kind of collaboration so desperately missing from our national political scene. Ultimately, the governing structure gives Monterey Bay Community Power a clean slate from which to make decisions that benefit our local residents – from which types of renewable energy we should pursue to where important green jobs should be located within the community.

Monterey Bay Community Power is a good deal for our region. It positions us to create green

jobs to support renewable energy generation. It puts decision making in the hands of locals. It gives customers the choice to opt out and stay with PG&E if desired. It keeps electricity rates on par with PG&E for all customers, even factoring in all PG&E fees, while still giving us the choice to potentially reduce electricity rates. Sonoma Clean Power recently announced it would drop electricity rates 10 percent for residential customers due to falling prices for solar energy.

Thanks to the visionary state legislation that makes Monterey Bay Community Power possible, PG&E will still provide line maintenance and customer service. So we'll continue seeing those blue and white trucks carrying crews

who work hard to maintain the transmission lines and keep the power on throughout the county.

At the state level, we have great leadership on climate change. We don't know yet what President Trump's administration will do on climate change, or how it would impact the state's ability to act, but the early signs aren't good. But we can act locally.

Over and over, the voters of Monterey County have sided with self-determination and environmental protection. Local governments across the Monterey Bay region stand united in support of Monterey Bay Community Power and we hope you will too.

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