

*ANTIOCH HERALD: CONTRA COSTA COUNTY GOES SOLAR POWER, COULD SAVE RESIDENTS 55% ON MONTHLY BILLS*



*By Daniel Borsuk*

Feeling the heat from environmentalists, residents, and politicians, Contra Costa County supervisors took the big step Tuesday of picking a solar power plant developer that could potentially help consumers on average cut monthly bills up to 55 percent.

“Our customers pay less than PG&E for our supply, and our supply contains more renewable content,” said Dawn Weisz, chief executive officer of MCE Clean Energy.

On a 4-1 vote, with supervisor Karen Mitchoff of Pleasant Hill casting the lone dissenting vote, Contra Costa supervisors selected San Rafael-based MCE Clean Energy to develop solar power plants preferably in the county’s sprawling northern waterfront area to lower PG&E electric rates for residential and commercial electricity customers.

Mitchoff favored a competing proposal submitted from a freshly minted company called EBCE that Alameda County officials have recently adopted as their solar power plant developer. “I think that the EBCE program is better for our long-term growth,” Mitchoff said.

Other supervisors were more impressed with MCE’s seven-year track record, financial stability and \$25 million in reserves and capability of generating good paying union jobs.

Some 285,000 residents residing in unincorporated Contra Costa County could see electricity rates decline in comparison to PG&E rates. For a large solar power project generating 5 megawatts per hour, the average monthly bills could potentially decline from \$105 per Megawatt Hour (MWH) to \$85 per MWH

For Board Chair Federal Glover the selection of MCE Clean Energy could mean the potential development of solar power plants in the Northern Waterfront Area. He is overseeing a planning study of the 28,000-acre area stretching from Hercules to Oakley that can potentially generate 18,000 jobs in a variety of technical fields by the year 2035.

Glover said he already envisions the development of a battery storage and a call center in parts of the northern waterfront, especially Pittsburg.

“With MCE we will be able to lower rates for consumers and bring jobs and growth to the Northern waterfront area,” Glover said.

Supervisor John Gioia of Richmond said he felt comfortable with the MCE program because of its seven years of experience. “There is less risk with the MCE choice,” he said.

“This is an historic day,” said Supervisor Candace Andersen of Danville. “MCE has the established credit rating and reserves.”

Supervisor Diane Burgis of Brentwood favored the MCE proposal based on how it will create “long term jobs” for county residents. Fifty percent of the jobs created must go to county residents.

“I also hope in the next five to 10 years we’ll become self-sufficient,” Burgis added.

Supervisors listened to a majority of the more than 30 speakers urge them to approve the MCE Clean Energy program over the EBCE program.

Elected officials from Lafayette, Richmond, Walnut Creek, Orinda, San Pablo and Moraga encourage supervisors to approve the MCE program over the EBCE program. Those cities have already approved the MCE program over the EBCE program, with Moraga most recently inking a contract with the company.

Richmond Mayor Tom Butt encouraged supervisors to approve MCE as its solar power provider based on the city of Richmond’s experience with the company. “It’s been a very good move for Richmond. Our residents have been saving millions of dollars,” he said. MCE has developed two solar power projects worth more than \$12 million for the residents of Richmond, he said.

“Join MCE,” urged Moraga City Councilman Dave Trotter. “It’s a better choice.”

Byron resident Steen Larson encouraged supervisors to approve MCE as the solar power contractor. “MCE is the best choice,” he said. “This company will fulfill the need for job training and providing the best paying jobs.”