

AGENDA ITEM 3.F

REQUEST

PROVIDE UPDATE ON EAST BAY COMMUNITY ENERGY PUBLIC OUTREACH AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tracy's City Council voted unanimously to participate in the EBCE Community Choice Aggregation Program on August 20, 2019 and subsequently voted unanimously to adopt an ordinance joining EBCE's joint powers authority on October 1, 2019. In April 2021, all Tracy residents, business owners, and municipal electricity customer accounts will automatically begin receiving EBCE electricity. Customers may choose to continue to purchase power directly from PG&E by opting out of EBCE or select different EBCE service levels. EBCE has developed a public outreach and implementation plan to partner with the City and raise public awareness during the transition.

DISCUSSION

Background

Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) has been providing electric energy services to consumers in the City of Tracy under the existing Franchise Agreement. With few exceptions, PG&E has been the sole source for the City's electric needs. The City has been exploring possibilities for its residents and businesses to purchase electricity from other sources rather than traditional utility companies. Assembly Bill (AB) 117 authorizes any California city or county to combine electrical needs of its residents and businesses in a community-wide electricity aggregate program known as Community Choice Aggregation (CCA). CCAs operate as a partnership with PG&E wherein the CCA procures and/or generates electricity on behalf of its customers, while PG&E continues to deliver power to homes and businesses, handles customer billing, and maintains the grid.

CCAs also enable local jurisdictions to procure electricity on behalf of customers within its borders. The goals of the program are to promote renewable energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide energy at lower rates. In addition to offering customers an alternative energy choice and competitive electrical rates, CCA programs provide an opportunity for cities to achieve climate action plan goals through significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and help facilitate local economic development through jobs creation associated with the development of local power and new energy programs in the region. There are 23 operational CCAs serving more than 10 million people in California, including Marin Clean Energy (MCE), Sonoma Clean Power, CleanPowerSF (San Francisco), Lancaster Choice Energy, Central Coast Community Energy (formerly Monterey Bay Community Power), and Peninsula Clean Energy (San Mateo). In 2019, CCAs served over 40% of the electricity load within PG&E's service area, while EBCE served about 10% of that load.

On August 20, 2019, East Bay Community Energy Authority (EBCE) made a presentation to Council explaining its services. Formed in 2016, EBCE provides

alternate electric generation services to consumers under a joint powers authority agreement with Alameda County and all eligible cities within the County. EBCE procures electricity and works with PG&E, who delivers the power, maintains the grid and bills customer accounts. EBCE customer accounts are still entitled to PG&E's low-income and medical discount programs, efficiency programs, and rebates. EBCE has been interested in exploring potential services to the City of Tracy as well as further east in San Joaquin County.

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EBCE Plan Offers in Tracy

EBCE's plan options are designed to offer more choices, more renewables, and potential cost savings. With a default energy product, *Bright Choice*, priced below PG&E and set to be more renewable, customers can save money and assist climate action goals. Additionally, those that want to choose a cleaner product have the ability to do so. EBCE customers are also able to participate in EBCE programs in addition to PG&E programs. Each plan is described below.

- *Bright Choice* – default enrollment for most customers in Tracy, designed to include at least 5% more renewable energy than PG&E's standard mix at a 1% discount to PG&E's rate.
- *Brilliant 100* – 100% carbon-free power at the same price as PG&E. While this service option may close in January 2022, it will be available in the meantime to Tracy customers who enroll before the closeout.
- *Renewable 100* – 100% renewable California solar and wind power at slightly higher rates (\$0.01 per kWh more than PG&E's standard rate).

EBCE will begin serving residential, business, and municipal electricity customers throughout Tracy in April 2021. Service will begin upon the customer's April meter read date, and billing (via PG&E) for that service will commence the following month. Per AB 117, electricity customers are automatically enrolled into the EBCE default plan as of April 2021, but can change their service plan within EBCE or opt out of EBCE and continue receiving PG&E electric generation service.

EBCE Marketing, Education, and Outreach Plan for Tracy

While most customers will not notice any impact on their electric service or bill, EBCE wants to raise awareness and ensure that customers are informed about the transition. EBCE, working closely with City staff, plans to engage with the community regarding the transition to EBCE this spring. EBCE has created a marketing, education and outreach plan for Tracy, as outlined below and plans to send out four mailers to all residential, commercial, and industrial account holders explaining what EBCE is, the transition to EBCE, and their options to opt up or opt out. These mailers will go out in the two months prior to Tracy's transition to EBCE, and the two months after the transition. City

staff will bolster EBCE’s outreach efforts with additional information to the community through the City’s social media accounts and newsletters.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June
Municipal collaboration	X	X	X	X	X	X
Customer notification		X	X	X	X	
Advertising	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social media	X	X	X	X	X	X
Web landing page	X					
Partner messaging		X		X	X	
NextDoor		X		X	X	
Virtual events			X		X	
Key account outreach	X	X	X	X	X	X

- **Municipal collaboration:** EBCE is available to present to Tracy City Council and/or appropriate committee(s) to inform local constituents on the program. EBCE is also working with Economic Development Division, PIO, Communications staff, and other staff as identified to best leverage the existing relationships and communication channels that the city employs.
- **Customer notification:** EBCE is required to send each customer two pre-enrollment and two post-enrollment notices. These will occur monthly over a four-month period. EBCE will send notices by email to those with an email address on file with PG&E, and will mail hard copies to other customers.
- **Advertising:** Digital and print advertising will appear prior to, during, and following the enrollment period. Digital ads will include banner, social media, and video pre-roll. Print ads will appear in the Tracy Press.
- **Social media:** EBCE manages accounts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Social media will include organic content as well as geo-targeted advertising. The City’s communications team will share these posts as well as new city-specific content and designs prepared by EBCE.
- **Web landing page:** The landing page of [ebce.org/Tracy](#) will contain information catered to residents and businesses in Tracy.
- **Partner messaging:** EBCE will prepare content for emails, newsletters, and social media that will be suitable for sharing by the City, the Chamber of Commerce, and community organizations. These can be prepared in multiple languages.
- **NextDoor:** EBCE is obtaining an Agency account on NextDoor that will allow EBCE to post messages to NextDoor members in all neighborhoods in Tracy.
- **Virtual events:** EBCE recommends hosting a presentation at a City Council meeting, an EBCE 101 presentation pre-launch, and a session on Understand Your Bill in May.

- **Key account outreach:** EBCE's staff will contact the largest energy users and largest employers in Tracy to ensure that they are aware of the launch of EBCE service. EBCE will coordinate with the Chamber of Commerce and city economic development department.

FISCAL IMPACT

In some communities that have moved to East Bay Community Energy, customers have experienced a reduction in their overall electricity costs. The fiscal impact will vary per customer based on their selection of energy options available from the EBCE. Similarly, the City may experience some reductions in electricity costs.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This agenda item does not align with a strategic priority.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests Council receive the update on East Bay Community Energy public outreach and implementation plan.

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