

Our Community Choice Energy Program Dodges Nuclear Bullet

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Plan to close Diablo Canyon: PG&E announces phasing out nuclear power in California by 2025

By KCBX NEWSROOM • 1 HOUR AGO



PG&E VIDEO STILL

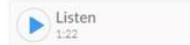
Effective immediately, PG&E said Tuesday it will cease any efforts on its part to renew the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant operating licenses.

Community Choice Energy plan gets potential funding in Santa Barbara County

By KCBX NEWSROOM • 16 HOURS AGO



Flickr member ANDREW SHAWKA



Santa Barbara County is moving forward with a plan to give residents and businesses the option of choosing sustainable energy when picking a power provider.

We've got to stop meeting like this The decline of nuclear power and rise of Community Choice energy have been intertwined.

At its March meeting, the Policy Board of Monterey Bay Clean Power, the regional Community Choice Energy program that almost every city in SLO County has joined over the past year, decided to accept an offer

by PG&E to accept “nuclear attributes” from the operation of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, a dubious (and, as it was eventually realized, rather minimal) method of reducing the costs involved in the operation of Community Choice program.

The agenda item for the meeting was obscure, poorly described, and not publicly circulated in any meaningful fashion. In the days and weeks that followed, SLO residents slowly grasped the fact that they

were about to see “20% nuclear” emblazoned on their energy bills as part of their power content label, after having been assured that leaving PG&E and joining MBCP meant they were breaking with the past – coal, oil, gas, and nukes – and stepping into the future of promised “clean energy and local control” – i.e. locally generated renewable energy and a focus on energy efficiency and conservation programs. (The MBCP staff report noted that “...it’s been staff practice not to acquire energy that’s generated from coal or nuclear power plants. Staff has shared this practice with the new jurisdictions from San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara and some, have partially, based their decision to join MBCP on the assumption that we’ll continue that practice.”)

The Sierra Club joined with SLO Mothers for Peace and many others in urging the MBCP board to hold a special meeting and reconsider that vote. To their credit, MBCP eventually held that meeting, on June 10. Even more to their credit, they reversed their previous decision.

One of those logging on to that Zoom meeting was Bill Powers, a director of the San Diego-based Protect Our Communities Foundation, which has [developed a strategy](#) for San Diego Community Power to rapidly reach the city’s 100 percent clean energy target with local solar power (rooftop and parking lots) and battery storage. Powers pointed out that this plan is exportable to all of the state’s clean energy programs that want to focus on local energy sources. Last May, he wrote that “the 100 percent clean, local energy target is readily achievable. In fact, reaching 100 percent clean energy with local resources will save money and improve the health of area residents.”

Powers’ testimony played a part in buying us a reprieve from Diablo Canyon's nuclear "attributes." He has also been vocal in

pointing out the real problem underlying the desperation of some Community Choice programs to obtain nuclear credits to offset costs: The money charged by the state's utilities as "exit fees" as their customers flee to Community Choice programs.

Utilities are allowed to charge this fee "to cover investments in high-cost gas-fired power plants and remotely located renewable energy contracts," Powers wrote. "This [exit fee is large](#), imposing nearly a 50 percent premium on the cost of power, and forces community choice energy providers like San Diego Community Power to scramble to offer less expensive power than SDG&E."

Powers points out that "Community Choice customers forced "to pay for legacy electricity investments that were far above reasonable cost to begin with" and "cover the entirety of these bloated exit fee costs creates a major disincentive to the expansion of local rooftop solar power,"

The California Public Utilities Commission must ensure that any exit fee is reasonable and conforms to state law. "A reasonable fee will open the door to equitable treatment" of renewable energy programs for Community Choice customers, writes Powers. "The stakes are high."

Community Choice programs need to be making their voices heard in Sacramento to demand legislation to end the exit-fee gravy train currently borne on the back of Community Choice. And first, they need to get off their knees and walk away when offered "nuclear attributes" by one of the entities causing the problem.

Fortunately, ours has done so.
