

And Then There Was One

SLO County slips further behind in its lonely embrace of 20th century energy policy

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Twenty years ago, the California legislature passed AB 117, authorizing “a community choice aggregator to aggregate the electrical load of interested electricity consumers within its boundaries.” Thus began a revolution for local clean energy and against the century-old iron grip of monopoly utilities.



On Feb. 8, the Atascadero City Council adopted a resolution to request membership in Central Coast Community Energy (CCCE), and is now on the road to the reduced emissions, cost savings, [multi-million dollar incentive and rebate programs](#), and investment in local energy development. When Atascadero formally joins next year, every city in the county will be a member of CCCE.

It was an about-face more than two years in the making. Marty Brown, Atascadero community choice activist extraordinaire, assisted by Ray Weymann, Lee Perkins, John Smigelski, Susan Davison, Lina Williams, Josh Cross, Turko Semmes, Jim Patterson, Steve Martin, Ty Lewis, Fred Strong, Carol de Lisle and the Sierra Club variously got the word out and the point across.

It was an outcome in stark contrast to the summer of 2019, when the council majority spurned community choice energy based on the claim that they didn’t have enough information and therefore would not hold a public hearing – i.e. they chose not to get more information, which was available in reams of data already provided, or from the six cities in SLO County that had already studied and discussed the issue and elected to join, or from the twenty regional community choice programs that were already in existence statewide and serving more than three million customers.

As *New Times* reported on Atascadero’s stall in 2019, “Councilmembers Susan Funk and Charles Bourbeau...wanted to see the issue agendized in August for a decision. ‘Not to do so, it says we’re not willing to do the homework that we were elected to do to make decisions for our

city. That's going to be tough to defend,' Funk said."

Three years later, the presence of Funk and Bourbeau at the city council meeting that finally triggered the process to secure community choice energy underscored a vital point, as did the absence of former councilmember and climate change denier Roberta Fonzi, who led the charge against community choice in 2019: Elections matter.

Atascadero wasn't the only local government body spurning clean energy and its benefits in 2019. The majority on the SLO County Board of Supervisors also declined to discuss joining our regional program, after having decided community choice was infeasible the year before. Thanks to board members Compton, Arnold and Peschong, the residents of unincorporated SLO County missed out on all the same benefits of clean energy that the residents of Atascadero did when, on July 9, 2019, the board majority declined to agendize a vote on whether to join the regional community choice program in 2020.

And, unlike Atascadero, that is where they remain.

Operational Community Choice agencies:

1. [MCE Clean Energy](#), launched 2010, Marin, Napa, and cities in Solano and Contra Costa counties
2. [Sonoma Clean Power](#), launched May 2014, Sonoma and Mendocino Counties
3. [Lancaster Choice Energy](#), launched May 2015, City of Lancaster in L.A. County
4. [CleanPowerSF](#), launched May 2016, City and County of San Francisco
5. [Peninsula Clean Energy](#), launched October 2016, San Mateo County
6. [Silicon Valley Clean Energy](#), launched April 2017, Santa Clara County
7. [Apple Valley Choice Energy](#), launched April 2017, City of Apple Valley
8. [Redwood Coast Energy Authority](#), launched May 2017, Humboldt County
9. [Pico Rivera Innovative Municipal Energy](#) (PRIME), launched September 2017
10. [Pioneer Community Energy](#), launched February 2018, Placer County
11. [Clean Power Alliance of Southern California](#), launched February 2018, Los Angeles and Ventura Counties
12. [Central Coast Community Energy \(Formerly Monterey Bay Community Power\)](#), launched March 2018, Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito counties, cities in San Luis Obispo County, unincorporated Santa Barbara County and most of its cities except the City of Santa Barbara (setting up Santa Barbara Clean Energy), and Lompoc, which has public utility.
13. [San Jacinto Power](#), launched April 2018, City of San Jacinto
14. [Rancho Mirage Energy Authority](#) Launched May 2018
15. [Clean Energy Alliance](#), launched June 2018 by the city of Solana Beach, now a JPA
16. [Valley Clean Energy](#), launched June 2018, Yolo County
17. [East Bay Community Energy](#), launched June 2018, Alameda County
18. [San Jose Clean Energy](#) (Launched Sept. 2018)
19. [King City Community Power](#) Launched July 2018, Monterey County
20. [Desert Community Energy](#) Launched April 2020, Central and Eastern Riverside County
21. [Western Community Energy](#) Launched April 2020, Western Riverside County
22. [BProud](#) – Baldwin Park, Launched October 2020
23. [Pomona Choice Energy](#), Launched October 2020