

## **SECTION I**

### **REGIONAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

#### **Summary Report & Recommendations**

### **Background**

Formed in 2013, the Monterey Bay Community Power project is a region-wide collaborative partnership comprised of all 21 local governments within the greater Monterey Bay area, including the Counties of Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito and all 18 cities located within. The partnership also includes Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority, and Monterey Regional Waste Management District. The purpose of the project has been to investigate the viability of establishing a local community choice energy (CCE) joint powers agency (JPA) within the region. Authorized by California legislation (AB 117 in 2001, amended by SB 790 in 2011), CCE allows counties and cities to pool their electricity load in order to purchase electricity or invest in energy projects and programs for local residents and businesses as an alternative to the existing utility provider, (PG&E.) Formal resolutions to participate in the project were passed by every jurisdiction during 2013, with each given the option of appointing a representative to the Project Development Advisory Committee overseeing the investigation.

### **Regional Project Development Advisory Committee (PDAC) Work and Process**

After initial formation, the PDAC approved the County of Santa Cruz as the lead agency on behalf of the partnership to raise the funds and provide staffing. The 15-member PDAC hosted 26 public meetings from December 2012 through June 2016, providing guidance and making key decisions with input from the Project Team and consultants. To ensure that the entire region had access to PDAC deliberations, the meetings have been rotated between the Monterey Regional Waste Management District Board Chambers in Marina and the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Chambers in Santa Cruz, with one special session in San Benito County. A project website was established in early 2013 to provide information, answers to frequently asked questions and post PDAC meeting materials and updates, [MBCommunityPower.org](http://MBCommunityPower.org).

By the middle of 2014, \$404,846 had been raised to conduct a Phase 1 Technical Feasibility Study, an analysis of the benefits and risks associated with creating a local CCE agency and a comparison of that information with the current rates and services provided by PGE. The study and an independent peer review were completed by April, 2016 and are included here in Section III and Appendix 4 of this information packet. The study reveals several favorable environmental and economic outcomes. These include local control over electricity rates and complimentary programs, a significant increase in procuring and generating renewable electricity for the region and the potential value of redirected revenue to benefit the local economy and create green jobs.

It is worth noting that the project funds raised were from private community and state resources, not from local government general budgets. The project's non-profit partner, the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County (CFSCC), graciously accepted private donations for the project totaling \$25,607. The PDAC worked collaboratively with the CFSCC to provide oversight and accountability regarding how these funds have been spent. The remaining funds came from grants procured and managed by Santa Cruz County as the lead project partner. The grants awarded were from the California Strategic Growth Council (\$344,239), the World Wildlife Fund (\$30,000), and the UC Santa Cruz Carbon Fund (\$5,000).

The PDAC has collaborated with the Project Team on all elements of Phase 1 investigative work as outlined below. Members of the PDAC and Project Team and their affiliations are listed under "Acknowledgements" at the end of this report.

- Provided regular public meeting opportunities for community members to learn about CCE and have input into PDAC discussions and decisions;
- Developed a Phase 1 work and Project Team plan with goals and objectives;
- Assisted with the development of grant proposals and oversaw the CFSCC budget and expenditures;
- Tracked State legislative and regulatory activities affecting CCE investigation;
- Created the content, goals and objectives of the project website, community group educational presentations and regular update reports to county and city partners;
- Developed the scope and assumptions of the Technical Feasibility Study, the independent peer review and the qualifications and criteria for hiring the appropriate consultants;
- Gathered expert information, options and best practices regarding the phased formation work tasks, governance, executive staffing, and start-up financing;

- Scoped the qualifications and criteria for a professional consultant to develop a region-wide outreach communications program and designed the plan with the firm hired;
- Reviewed the contents of the Technical Feasibility Study and all other information and recommendations contained in this packet; and
- Guided the next steps to complete Phase 1 work and assisted the MBCP county and city partners in their deliberations regarding CCE-JPA formation.

This comprehensive information packet has been assembled as a culmination of the PDAC's work over the past few years, providing each county and city partner the information needed to decide whether to participate with partners in the next steps toward forming a regional CCE-JPA. The PDAC has assembled a complete public record of all committee deliberations, which are posted on the website, [MBCommunityPower.org](http://MBCommunityPower.org). The PDAC will continue to meet during 2016 until Phase 1 work is concluded and a CCE ordinance has been considered or approved by interested county and city partners.

## **Phase 1 Project Status, Next Steps and Phase 2 Formation Work**

### Phase 1 Project Status and Next Steps:

To recap, in this first phase, the PDAC has conducted an initial exploration of CCE program viability and has overseen the development of a technical study and assembled related resource information. Community engagement strategies have been implemented, and will continue, to educate the affected energy customers and lay the foundation for Phase 2 formation work. Over the next 6 months, the PDAC will steer completion of Phase 1 that will include hosting a series of public workshops and special study sessions to be attended by PDAC representatives, elected officials, county and city executive staff, project staff and CCE experts from around the State. The PDAC has also formed two subcommittees that will meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss governance, executive staff and start-up financing options. The end result of Phase 1 will be the decision to form a CCE-JPA governing Board after start-up financing has been determined and recruitment has begun to hire a chief executive to manage Phase 2 work. The next steps and timeframe to complete Phase 1 work are:

- May 13, 2016: All MBCP county and city partners will receive this information packet with PDAC recommendations regarding best practices and next steps.
- May 24 and June 9th: The PDAC will host three special public study sessions for county and city electeds and executive staff to review and discuss the technical study with the consultants as well as options regarding governance, start-up financing, and formation:
  - May 24- 9:30 am to noon – Monterey County Board Chambers- Salinas
  - June 9- 9:30am to noon – Santa Cruz County Board Chambers – Santa Cruz
  - June 9- 3:00 pm to 5:30pm- San Benito County Board Chambers- Hollister
- County and cities interested in forming a CCE-JPA may join an ad hoc subcommittee comprised of executive staff who will develop a formation proposal for Board of

Supervisors and City Councils' consideration on or before September 15, 2016, (target date.) Professionals who have experience in retail electricity services, program design, finance, wholesale purchasing and renewable resource development will assist this work.

- May through October: A comprehensive regional outreach and communications program to engage and educate the community at large will be implemented by a professional consulting firm.
- August through October: County and city governing Boards will consider the ad hoc subcommittee formation proposal and adopt ordinances and agreements with other early adoptive partners.
- October 31, 2016: A regional CCE agency joint powers governing Board will be seated and a final selection for the CEO position is made. The CEO hires staff and Phase 2 begins.

#### Phase 2 Formation Work:

This phase involves program design, soliciting energy procurement services, seeking CPUC approval of an implementation plan, executing a service agreement with PG&E, and expanding community engagement. Agency staff will also complete all remaining legal requirements, enroll customers and prepare to launch an independent operation. Appendix 5 has a more detailed proposed formation work plan for the Monterey Bay Community Power partnership. The end result of Phase 2 work will be to launch (i.e., provide power to customers) no later than September/October, 2017. Note that all start-up costs are reimbursable with interest after program launch through ratepayer revenues.

### **PDAC Recommendations- Feasibility, Formation and CCE Best Practices**

#### Feasibility Recommendation:

The prospects for CCE programs in California have improved significantly in recent years as a result of many factors:

- The success of Marin Clean Energy and Sonoma Clean Power in providing their communities with greener power at prices competitive with PG&E while investing considerable surplus funds into local renewable energy and energy efficiency projects that created local jobs;
- Favorable wholesale energy market conditions, resulting in relatively low cost power;

- Recognition that a CCE program can be self-supporting for meeting climate action plan objectives and other local public policy goals;
- The reduced market costs of renewable power and improvements in renewable technologies; and
- The development of expertise, best practices and an expanded vendor base to serve CCE programs.

The Monterey Bay Community Power (MBCP) partnership formed in 2013 as the first tri-county/18 city effort in the State. Since then, two CCE agencies have launched (Sonoma Clean Power and the City of Lancaster) and many more communities are actively pursuing CCE formation, including the counties of Alameda, Butte, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Lake, Los Angeles, Mendocino, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Venture and Yolo, as well as the cities of Davis and San Diego.

The analysis and outcomes from the technical feasibility study as well as all of the Phase 1 investigative work undertaken for the past three years indicate that establishing a successful CCE agency within the Monterey Bay Region is highly feasible with a wide range of options.

#### Formation Recommendations:

(1) Next Steps – All MBCP counties and cities are strongly encouraged to participate in one or more of these next steps to determine their interest in becoming an early adoptive partner in forming a regional CCE-JPA agency:

- Attend the public special study sessions hosted by the PDAC starting in May and continuing through June that will focus on the technical study results, governance, executive staffing and start-up financing options and best practices. At these meetings, executive staff from successful CCE agencies and other experts will be in attendance to assist interested county and city representatives. (See page 3 of this report for the schedule.)
- Request a Board or Council general presentation to determine further interest. For more information or to schedule a meeting, contact Gine Johnson, Office of Santa Cruz Supervisor Bruce McPherson, at (831) 454-2200, [gine.johnson@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:gine.johnson@santacruzcounty.us).
- Send a Board representative and/or executive staff member to the PDAC's ad hoc subcommittee meetings. Two subcommittees, Governance and Finance, will meet in parallel with the public special study sessions to develop a formation proposal. Recommendations to the governing Boards of early adoptive county and city partners will be forwarded on or before September 15. To attend these meetings, contact the PDAC Chair, Nancy Gordon at (831) 454-2714, [nancy.gordon@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:nancy.gordon@santacruzcounty.us).

(2) Decision Deadline: Once a formation determination has been made, the PDAC recommends that the CCE-JPA agency be established on or before October 31, 2016 for several important reasons:

- The best window of opportunity to launch a CCE agency (i.e., actually provide power to customers) has proven to be between April and October as a “best practice.” Even after a CCE-JPA is established, additional formation tasks must ensue which may take up to 12 months, so to make the recommended “launch window”, interested partners should form no later than one year in advance.
- Efforts to undermine the ability of local governments to justify forming CCE agencies are continual through the legislative and regulatory processes. Even though these efforts have not succeeded so far, it may just be a matter of time. If these efforts are eventually successful, CCE agencies that have already been formed will be able to continue unimpeded.
- In order to form a CCE agency, county and city partners must first agree on governance, start-up financing and executive staff recruitment. This process typically took California’s established CCE agencies three to four months to accomplish. The deadline of October 31 gives early adoptive partners up to six months to make a final decision. County and city partners that do not make a decision by October will still have the option to join the CCE-JPA at a later date.

CCE Best Practices Recommendations: New CCEs can mitigate risk and ensure best practices by learning from the experiences of operational CCE agencies. In addition to the technical study, Section III of this information packet includes an overview of regulations as well as information and lessons learned from other multi-jurisdictional CCE agencies regarding structure, governance, financing and program phasing. The PDAC spent countless hours reviewing and discussing this information with statewide CCE experts and recommends the following best practices be considered by MBCP county and city partners as they contemplate formation:

- Structure – The PDAC recommends a regional agency that includes as many of the MBCP county and city partners as possible. The economy of scale relative to procurement buying power, start-up and long-term financing and other operational considerations makes a compelling case for a regional agency. Given the nature and technical complexity of running the business of a CCE program, the PDAC also recommends that the agency not be embedded in an existing government entity, but be formed as a stand-alone joint powers agency. Further, the PDAC does not recommended that an existing CCE-JPA be joined for a fee as the economic and job creation benefits to the Monterey region would be considerably diminished. However, “back-end” turn- key administrative services that have a proven operational track record are readily available to newly formed CCEs and should be accessed to streamline start-up and operational tasks and costs.

- **Governance** – To meet the diverse needs of the Monterey Bay region, the PDAC recommends a governance structure that aligns with these principles:
  - Consistent with the best practices learned from the success and challenges of established CCE governing boards as outlined in Section III of the information packet.
  - Equitably representative and aligned with population density and electricity usage within the region;
  - A manageable number of board members with the ability to scale to accommodate later members;
  - Primary members and alternates should be elected officials;
  - Industry technical experts without a conflict of interest should be advisory to the Board;
  - Structured similarly to an existing and well-accepted Monterey regional JPA board that has been serving the same partner counties and cities successfully for many years, the Monterey Bay Air Resources District.
  - Section III, page 20 of the information packet outlines the specific governance board and technical expert advisory committee structure recommendation.
  
- **Start-up Financing & Payback Period** – There are many options to providing the capital for Phase 2 formation work, but the most straight forward path is for one of the main partners to provide all of the funding, or guarantee a private loan, which can be paid back with interest once the CCE agency begins to generate revenue from ratepayers. Although a cost-share strategy is often used in starting a joint powers agency, this requires additional time and contractual work in what is already a complex formation process. However the start-up is financed, the CCE governing Board should aim to pay it back as soon as it is financially feasible.
  
- **Guiding Principles**– The PDAC recommends strategic and operational alignment with these principles:
  - Serve community goals and local policy objectives, including greenhouse gas reductions and increased statewide and local renewable energy supply.
  - Control and safeguard customer revenues to ensure long-term financial viability and local government ownership, even when power supply costs fluctuate.

- Offer competitive rates and choice in customer electricity services that does not include the use of unbundled renewable energy credits, coal or nuclear resources and prioritizes in-state renewable contracts as is financially viable and available.
- Support the rapid investment in local renewable energy generation to the maximum extent feasible while ensuring fiscal stability, rate parity and carbon reduction goals are met.
- Pursue long-term power procurement strategies and local power ownerships that hedge future market risk and incorporate diversity of energy suppliers, technologies and products.
- Plan for long-term financial viability through integrated resource planning, in-house fiscal management, transparent rate setting and policies that build program reserves. Building robust reserves enhances the agency's credit rating, lowers the cost of procurement and increases the viability of issuing future bonds for projects.
- Maintain a firewall between the assets and liabilities of the CCE agency and those of municipal general funds.
- Adhere to applicable statutory and regulatory compliance requirements.
- Implement effective risk management practices and ensure transparency and accountability to the local community and oversight agencies.
- Offer complementary programs that serve community interests such as feed and tariff, net-metering, comprehensive energy efficiency retrofits, demand response, community solar, electric vehicle charging, battery storage, as well as support for local training programs in both the private and public sectors and research/development of emerging technologies.
- Establish criteria for the use of surplus revenues that ensures geographic equity and adheres to economic justice principles.
- Define criteria for selecting energy procurement vendor(s) that aligns with the region's sustainability and economic vitality goals.
- Develop a long-term strategic goal of regional energy self-sufficiency by building out local renewable generation projects using local workers making prevailing wages with benefits. Establish a definition of "the use of local workers" and adhere to established local government definitions of "prevailing wages."



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Project Development Advisory Committee would like express tremendous gratitude to the respective County Boards, City Councils and Joint Powers Agencies within the Monterey tri-county region for participating in this project and embracing regional collaboration on an initiative that holds such significant potential for meeting economic and environmental goals.

Thank you to the PDAC members, lead partner Santa Cruz County, the Project Team and Ambassadors as well as the professional consultants who worked tirelessly for more than three years to investigate community choice energy and provide education to stakeholder groups. We express our thanks and appreciation as well to the two working groups of local volunteer experts and stakeholders who assisted the Project Team (see Appendix 1.)

This project would not have been possible without the fiscal sponsorship of the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County (CFSCC) accepting donations from generous members of the community. Our sincere thanks to the CFSCC Board and executive staff, and especially to all of the *Monterey Bay CCA Fund* donors (see Appendix 1.)

Grant support from the California Strategic Growth Council, the World Wildlife Fund, and the UC Santa Cruz Carbon Fund was critical to completing this project, for which the committee is sincerely appreciative.

Finally, to the staff of Marin Clean Energy and Sonoma Clean Power, thank you for your technical assistance, generosity and for paving the way for the rest of the California to follow in your footsteps.

### **Project Development Advisory Committee Members**

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