

A dozen companies submit bids to Marin Energy Authority

Richard Halstead

Posted: 07/23/2009 06:22:15 PM PDT

Updated: 07/24/2009 02:06:31 PM PDT



Dawn Weisz of Marin Energy Authority. (IJ archive)

A dozen companies have submitted bids to the Marin Energy Authority to supply electricity and compete with Pacific Gas and Electric Co. to boost usage of renewable energy in the county.

The joint powers authority was formed in November to explore projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Chief among those projects would be the Marin Clean Energy initiative, which calls for the authority to compete with PG&E as the retailer of electricity.

"We got an extraordinarily strong response from the market," said Marin County Supervisor Charles McGlashan, who has championed the Marin Energy Authority effort. "In the midst of a rough economy, it is very encouraging that the market took this so seriously. We got more bids than we expected."

In May, the authority sent out requests for proposals to 130 potential energy suppliers. The authority is looking for one or more companies to provide approximately 900 gigawatts of electricity per year to about 80,000 customers.

The authority's staff and technical consultants will review the bids and make recommendations to the authority's board when it meets Aug. 20, said Dawn Weisz, the authority's interim director. A draft contract will be negotiated with the selected energy supplier or suppliers between August and November.

Sometime in late fall, the authority's members, which include the county of Marin and every municipality in Marin except for Novato, Larkspur and Corte Madera, will get two chances to decide whether or not to remain in the authority. If a jurisdiction remains in at that point, residents who live there will have to opt out to avoid having their energy supplier switched from PG&E to the new supplier.

Prior to receiving the bids, the authority's consultants estimated that customers who join Marin Clean Energy would have a choice of using 100 percent renewable power by paying 8 percent to 10 percent more than what PG&E is charging for electricity. The authority also plans to offer customers a "light green" option, which would maximize the percentage of renewable power used while matching PG&E's rate.

Weisz said several of the companies who submitted bids are well-known names.

"Constellation Commodities Group has been in the power business for many, many years. They're a well-known player in the energy field," Weisz said.

"The Northern California Power Authority is a municipal entity," Weisz said, "They provide power to a lot of municipal utilities around California, and they've been around for a very long time. Sacramento Municipal Utility District gets some of its power from them."

Weisz said, "Next Era Energy Resources used to be Florida Power and Light. They changed their name this year because they're expanding far beyond the bounds of Florida and wanted their new name to reflect that. Next Era owns a lot of wind power in Solano County.

"Shell Energy, North America is a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell," she said. "BP North American Gas & Power is a part of British Petroleum."

Bids also were submitted by Power Choice LLC, Kamehameha Environmental LLC, Local Power Inc., Cleantech American Inc., LightBeam Energy and Energy Able. The twelfth company asked that its name not be immediately released, Weisz said.

Katie Romans, a spokeswoman for PG&E, said, "We along with the rest of the public are familiar with many of the bidding companies on this list, and we look forward to seeing what they put forth."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com