

San Francisco explores alternative power deal

By Paul Jones
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San Francisco is moving forward with a plan to buy green power and create a large order of small-scale clean tech projects.

The county Board of Supervisors is slated to review a contract with electricity provider Shell Energy North America that would offer renewable energy to customers independent of investor-owned utility PG&E. The first power deliveries to customers are due to begin this summer. That contract would be a first step in creating a customer base for the city's so-called community choice aggregation program.

San Francisco's ambition is unusual. Rather than pursuing ownership of large-scale solar or wind to supply residents green power, it wants to variously build and facilitate a diverse network of small-to-medium scale projects within the city that would provide an aggregate of at least 210 megawatts of power.

According to Paul Fenn, head of consulting company Local Power Inc. who is helping the city study how to create the network, 12 requests for proposals from companies will be crafted within the next year seeking everything from rooftop solar projects to systems to skim excess heat generated from buildings' water boilers to put energy on San Francisco's grid.

The initiative would require cooperation from residents and building owners, who would have to agree to allow projects to be placed on their property. Fenn said

people living in areas with exploitable energy assets would be contacted and surveyed about their interest in such opportunities.

The advantage of San Francisco working directly with renewable energy companies is that it is actually trying to facilitate the projects, and do much of the community outreach and business planning for clean tech developers.

"We convey benefits to customers and residents, allowing bidders

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— Charles Sheehan

to just focus on doing power [projects]," Fenn said.

Charles Sheehan with CleanPowerSF, the city's community choice aggregation program, said some of the projects could be funded by bonding against the revenue stream from customers' power purchases through the community aggregation program.

"We are doing research to see what the local build-out would look like, how much it would cost, and what the financing mechanisms available are," he said.

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