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You Can Make a Difference: Cleaner Energy

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(Editor's Note: Under state law, local governments can choose the fuels and facilities providing their electricity through a new kind of Community Choice Electricity Aggregation (CCA) "buyer's cooperative" and take charge of their own energy future by contracting with licensed "electric service providers."

On March 7 a dynamic group of local representatives and environmental experts convened at Sustainable Novato's "Town Clean Energy Forum" to discuss the opportunities available to us through CCA.

Annan Paterson, president of Sustainable Novato, served as panel moderator. Ed Mainland, secretary for Sustainable Novato, was instrumental in bringing the panel of experts together.)

By Annan Paterson and Ed Mainland, Special to the Advance

Televised on Novato Cable Channel 26 at the Board Room of Novato Unified School District, State Senator Carol Migden, Sixth District Assemblyman Jared Huffman, Marin Supervisors Judy Arnold and Charles McGlashan, and other regional experts in energy took turns discussing how green energy was crucial and that CCA offered outstanding potential to scale up renewables, efficiency and conservation.

The forum and interest it received is another sign that Novato can be a leader and "get ahead of the curve" in coping with the new challenges of energy, climate and water that coming years are sure to bring."

The event drew an audience of 60 people, and also included Novato City Manager Dan Keen, Mayor Jeanne MacLeamy, City Council Members Jim Leland and Carole Dillon- Knutson, NUSD School Board President Jennifer Treppa, NUSD Board Member Debbie Butler, and College of Marin Board Chairman Greg Brockbank.

Sen. Migden, co-author and sponsor of Assembly Bill 117 which gives California towns authority to purchase bundled clean energy independent

of monopoly utilities, celebrated the forum's goals of bringing the public and experts into discussion of CCA.

Assemblyman Jared Huffman cited new legislation he was introducing in Sacramento that would move the state ahead on alternative fuels, carbon sequestration and lighting efficiency in the wake of the state's precedent-setting AB32 capping carbon emissions. Huffman said he was particularly enthused about the potential of solar thermal, concentrating the sun's rays to heat steam and power turbines.

Supervisor Arnold emphasized how Marin businesses are increasingly "saving green by going green." She cited recent examples of economic success in growth areas of green building, green power, green financing and green business operation. Arnold served on the Community Choice Aggregation committee on behalf of the City of Novato.

"CCA's benefits are looking better and better as we study it further," reported Supervisor McGlashan, who said the County is devising a CCA business plan with cooperation from all 12 Marin cities. He said that Novato, with San Rafael, are important to make aggregated local bulk purchase of energy and locally produced renewable power feasible while assuring better management of volatility and risk and much faster growth of renewable sources, jobs, skills, and local business opportunities for installers, tradespeople and entrepreneurs.

Dawn Weisz from the County of Marin Sustainability Team outlined and discussed the County's study of Community Choice Aggregation, which is now in Phase 2 (see www.co.marin.ca.us/depts/CD/main/pdf/BEST_pdf/CCA/Overview_Marin_Feb22.pdf).

Sen. Migden and Paul Fenn, CEO Local Power Inc. and co-author of AB 117, pointed out other CCA advantages: tax-free municipal bonding authority fueled by a revenue stream from electricity bills, lowered risk by diversifying energy sources to include solar, wind, geothermal in a mix that, in Chula Vista's plan, for example, promises to reach 90-percent clean renewable power while still maintain electrical baseload stability.

Barbara George, CEO, Women's Energy Matters discussed how stepped-up energy efficiency and conservation would get a boost from CCA. George said CCAs will be able to lodge requests for full efficiency funding with California's Public Utilities Commission. Energy efficiency funds, spent directly in Marin.

John Schlag, Vice President of Sustainable Novato and a member and Novato's Strategic Planning Oversight Committee, pointed to a new generation of electric vehicles and hybrid cars, plugged into an increasingly "clean" electrical grid, that could accelerate further reduction of carbon emissions in transportation. Plug-ins could be charged at night when electricity demand is slack then serve to help generate daytime peak grid power when plugged in while parked at work or while shopping.

Ken Smokoska of the Sierra Club finished the evening with a call for local response to the "urgency" of global warming.

Novato residents will get a chance to see rebroadcasts of the Clean Energy Forum in coming weeks on Novato Public Access Television or through [www. sustainablenovato.org](http://www.sustainablenovato.org).