

# THE TRIBUNE

[Letters to the Editor](#), October 23, 2013

## **There is an answer to the Diablo question**

*By Greg McMillan, Victoria Carranza, Lindi Doud, Patrick McGibney, Linda Seeley, Pat Veasart and Michael Jencks — The executive committee of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club*

On Oct. 15, as they did this past February, county supervisors again grappled with the economic issues presented by the inevitable closure of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. As they did last time, they again decided that the county needs a contingency plan for life post-Diablo.

As the headlines on the front page of both The Tribune's Oct. 16 and 17 editions made clear — [“Diablo Canyon faces costly decisions.”](#) [“County considers future without Diablo”](#) — the serious issues from February have only gotten more serious. At the Oct. 15 meeting, supervisors directed staff to look into increasing the county's reserve funds, adjusting taxes or fees, suggesting a short-term approach to the economic hit of plant closure and enhancing the partnership with the Economic Vitality Corporation. Supervisors agreed that strengthening our local economy now is the only way we can plan for a major loss of jobs in the future.

It was not a particularly focused discussion, but focus was readily available. The ability of Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) to create jobs, diversify and strengthen the economy and otherwise avoid the economic hit of Diablo's inevitable closure — sans taxes and fees — was pointed out to the supervisors at the meeting.

They didn't seem to hear it. Nor did they seem to recall that after their discussion of the same issue in February, the SLO Clean Energy Economy Coalition responded with a Tribune Viewpoint that commended the board on its decision to “start planning for the day when, sooner or later, the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant will no longer be with us” and pointed to the same solution to that economic problem, writing that CCA “can provide longterm electrical rate stability, local reinvestment of electricity revenues, local renewable energy and local jobs.”

The ultimate goal of a CCA program — clean, safe power produced and consumed locally —

is the model of local “distributed generation” of energy, in contrast to energy generated elsewhere and transported over long transmission lines, sucking ratepayer funds out of the community and into the coffers of a private utility. The distributed generation model is widely recognized as the future of energy production and the primary gateway to a green economy. In California, we can get there faster than many other states because of the state law that established Community Choice Aggregation in 2002.

We continue to look forward to a report from this board that provides specific recommendations on what the county should be doing to prepare for the day when the nuclear plant at Diablo Cove will no longer be producing power or jobs or otherwise contribute to our energy and economic destiny. The job-creating, business-incentivizing revenue generator that is Community Choice should be front and center in those recommendations.

Fortunately, the Climate Action Plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2011 includes the provision that the county “will consider developing a community choice aggregation program with the incorporated cities of San Luis Obispo County to procure up to 50 percent of the region’s electricity use from renewable sources by 2020.” One year earlier, the update of the county’s General Plan included a detailed strategy to “evaluate CCA for the ability to develop local energy resources.”

That was a smart piece of planning. As the clock ticks down on Diablo Canyon, now would be a good time to start putting the pieces together and turning those plans on paper into actions on the ground.