
MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chowchilla Shifts Wastewater Plant and Water Wells to Solar Power for Large Savings

Chowchilla, CA – July 11, 2017

The Chowchilla City Council has successfully concluded the sale of bonds to finance an energy efficiency program designed to create approximately \$28 million dollars in savings for the City over the next 30 years. This includes shifting 80% of the wastewater plant's power supply off of PG&E and on to solar panels, including using solar panels to power many city buildings and water wells, freeing up money to be applied toward needed infrastructure projects. These savings are guaranteed, such that if the savings are not achieved, JCI will pay the difference to the City.

In a joint effort with Johnson Controls, Inc., the City will achieve its biggest financial savings through the construction of 2,166 solar panels at the wastewater plant. Instead of the City paying PG&E an ever increasing power bill as rates go up, it will now pay a constant amount to service the construction costs of the project. Additionally, the City utilized Clean Renewable Energy Bonds (CREB), a federal program that assists in the financing of energy savings projects by reducing the interest rate costs by 50%.

The monetary savings generated by this project will be used to build a 2.5 million gallon water storage tank and upgrade the City's drinking water distribution system, including installing new wells. It will also be used to install booster pumps to the water system to assure adequate pressure throughout Chowchilla. The City also plans on using the savings to enhance external lighting at City Hall, Police and Fire Stations; install security cameras at sensitive locations around the City; convert City streetlights over to energy efficient LED systems; and install drinking water meters. At the City's Corporation Yard, money will be available for the removal of derelict buildings and construction of new facilities and upgrade heating and cooling systems on city buildings. According to City Administrator Brian Haddix, "the key to this system is that electricity costs continue to climb, yet the annual payments on the bonds stay the same. As the difference between the two widens, the City realizes increasing savings from owning its own solar panels. Plus, the CREB greatly reduced the cost of the bonds, meaning more savings to the City."

Mayor Gaumnitz stated that, “the City of Chowchilla is constantly looking for ways to drive its costs down while improving our infrastructure. By being creative in using solar power to run our wastewater plant, and by employing energy efficient equipment, we can modernize our City services without placing the burden on the backs of taxpayers.”

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