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CSD eyes alternative energy

By: Philip Wood, The Telegraph

El Dorado Hills Community Services District officials have started exploring the possibility of either forming their own electric utility service or contracting out to SMUD for cheaper power.

"There's been kind of a push to see what alternative energy sources may be available to us in El Dorado Hills," said CSD Board Member David Trapani.

El Dorado Hills receives power from PG&E.

Trapani said that after the 100-degree plus heat wave earlier this summer, there had been an outcry by people over their electric bills.

"The CSD has the power to go out and potentially create its own independent utility district, or to create an agreement with SMUD," Trapani said.

Finding an alternative power source isn't the only thing on the minds of CSD officials.

SMUD is in negotiations over a 50-year agreement with El Dorado County over the Upper American River Project, which is where SMUD gets some of its power from.

The CSD board voted last week to file a motion to intervene with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission so the CSD can take part in negotiations going on between SMUD and El Dorado County over the Upper American River Project.

"It's an important step to get a place at the table to negotiate some benefits to El Dorado Hills," Trapani said. "They're basically coming in, taking our resources and carrying them off to other parts."

The next step, Trapani said, is to hire a consultant or a firm that can work for the CSD that understands the complexity of energy utilities.

"We're just exploring things right now," said CSD Board Member Larry Brilliant.

The options the CSD could look at are being powered by SMUD or creating their own utility district and supplying El Dorado Hills with electricity.

Trapani said the latter would be pretty ambitious.

SMUD Supervisor Susan Patterson said that if El Dorado Hills wanted to be serviced by the power district, they would need to file a formal request, but she did say that El Dorado Hills does fall into the criteria that they use to adopt areas under.

Patterson said no one has talked to her about it, but she has heard from her staff that there is an interest from El Dorado Hills into looking at SMUD.

In 1983, El Dorado Hills voters gave the CSD the authority to get into the electric business, said CSD General Manger Wayne Lowery.

SMUD representatives said they can provide power at a cheaper cost because they are customer owned and don't have to answer to shareholders.

SMUD recently started servicing parts of Yolo County that PG&E provided power to.

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