



MCE Clerk <clerk@mcecleanenergy.org>

IMPORTANT READING

Mimi Willard <coalitiontaxpayers@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 25, 2025 at 6:56 PM

To: Mimi Willard <coalitiontaxpayers@gmail.com>, "clerk@mcecleanenergy.org" <clerk@mcecleanenergy.org>

Dear MCE Board Member and Clerk -

The article below, recently published in the Marin IJ, is important reading for elected officials serving on MCE's board as well as MCE's management. I urge you all to read it. I ask that the clerk please enter it into the public record and attach it to the Executive Committee board packet.

Sincerely,

Mimi Willard, CFA
 President
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 SensibleTaxpayers.org

Divided MCE board creates finance committee

By [STEVEN ROSENFELD](#) | srosenfeld@marinij.com

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Amid internal [strife](#) over spending and oversight, the board of MCE has voted to create a standing finance committee and conduct a full governance review.

The not-for-profit electricity agency announced the moves after a five-hour meeting on Thursday. The meeting included accounts of Dawn Weisz, the chief executive officer, signing contracts last year that committed ratepayers to hundreds of millions of dollars in ongoing energy payments — at four to six times today's market prices — without seeking input from the board.

Weisz's defenders accused her board critics of disloyalty. Shannelle Scales-Preston, the board chair, said she is "really disheartened and saddened how the board direction is going."

"We should be proud of the board that we serve on ... (or) we shouldn't be a part of that board," said Scales-Preston, a Contra Costa County supervisor.

Mathew Salter, a Ross Town Council member who is an alternate MCE director, said, "We are not doing our job."

"You just have to look in the mirror at the end of the day and say, why did we spend \$200 million more in cost and nobody even knew about it?" Salter said.

The finance committee vote capped a fractious meeting and hinged on an arcane voting system.

In addition to a simple majority where one vote is assigned to each of MCE's 34 directors from four counties — Marin, Contra Costa, Napa and Solano — the motion also passed by a second majority in a weighted count. For the second vote, each jurisdiction is assigned a vote share based on its membership and annual energy consumption.

Marin County's collective vote share in the weighted system is 23.4%.

MCE directors were asked to vote for one of two motions: the first approving a new finance committee, or a second proposed by Fairfax Councilmember Barbara Coler. She suggested renaming MCE's executive committee as an executive and finance committee, and requiring quarterly financial reviews.

Initially, MCE staff said the finance committee passed by a simple majority of MCE directors but did not garner the weighted majority.

Larkspur Vice Mayor Stephanie Andre, a former investment banker who is on the board, noted that the bylaws require the weighed count be allocated among the jurisdictions present — and a half-dozen directors were absent. After MCE counsel Catalina Murphy agreed, the results were recalculated.

The finance committee passed with 54.1% of the weighted vote. Every Marin director present supported it except Coler.

The other jurisdictions in favor were Napa County, Napa, Richmond, Vallejo, Danville and Lafayette.

A second vote, which was unanimous, instructed the executive committee to divide areas of financial oversight between MCE committees and report back to the full board. MCE also has a technical committee that reviews a range of contracts to buy power and renewable energy credits.

Digging into details

The vote followed several hours of discussion in which a handful of Marin MCE directors and public interest groups used various agenda items to raise financial oversight issues, question management's priorities and results and ask why the board was not consulted at key decision-making points.

In MCE's last fiscal year, which ended in March, operating expenses increased \$200 million compared to the prior fiscal year, resulting in a \$12 million operating loss. The operating losses compounded into the current fiscal year's first quarter.

"This is an agency with significant losses and serious underperformance versus its peers on numerous metrics," said Mimi Willard, president of the Coalition of Sensible Taxpayers, which prepared an analysis comparing MCE to other large public energy agencies.

"Management has failed to provide a detailed explanation of their core results and instead

seem to be provoking efforts to have conflict within the board and undermine the board's authority."

"This has all of the appearance of an agency that's battened down the hatches rather than sunlighting and addressing its problems," she said at the meeting. "We also call on the board to prioritize standing up for the ratepayers that they represent. That at times will require standing up to management."

Andre pulled an item off the consent calendar to accept more than \$100 million in recent short-term energy contracts, including \$60 million signed by Weisz that locked in payments for up to five years. She asked if those medium-term contracts were properly authorized, as MCE's bylaws say, "after consultation with the appropriate committee of the board of directors."

Weisz said yes, that appropriate body was MCE's technical committee. Its chair, Pinole Councilmember Devin Murphy, was not at the meeting Thursday.

Andre continued and said she wanted to provide background for MCE directors who might have missed recent meetings.

"I actually went through and pulled off of consent all of the reports going back to January 2023, and what I found was in fiscal 2025, almost \$400 million in short-term contracts were signed and passed through consent," she said. "About 45% of these contracts, \$178 million were approved unilaterally by the CEO."

Murphy, MCE's counsel, tried to cut off Andre, but she continued. "I'm almost finished, and if you look at these contracts by month, 60% of these short-term contracts were executed in two months, (between) August 2024 and October 2024."

The timeframe is significant. During late summer and early fall of 2024, wholesale energy prices were four to six times today's market prices. In other words, these contracts were bought at the peak of the most expensive energy market in years and commit MCE to those costs into the near future.

The meeting continued with MCE's energy market strategist, John Dalessi, reviewing his projections. He said MCE would end this year in the black.

During questioning, Belvedere Vice Mayor Sally Wilkinson returned to the short-term contracts that comprise 60% of MCE's energy portfolio. She asked him to correct her if she misstated something.

Wilkinson said many of the contracts were for gas-generated power, whose emissions contribute to climate change. They also were for renewable energy credits — called attributes — to reach MCE's renewable energy targets.

"We appear to have paid \$178 million for that choice last year," she said, "so we can say that we are cleaner than most of the other CCAs."

CCA stands for community choice aggregation, the kind of service MCE provides.

“Why did nobody come back to our board and say, hey, this is really expensive this year?” Wilkinson said. “Instead of buying at the peak of the market, can you guys maybe give us a range? The floor for the state is 44%. We want to target 60%. Maybe it’s not such a good idea to have a target on our back.”

Dalessi replied that MCE’s goals of bringing as much renewable power as possible to the state’s grid did mean paying more for power contracts. If instructed, he said he could operate with more “flexibility ... to manage the cost.”

Coler, who is MCE’s longest-serving director, said she wanted to address the newer board members.

“The board made decisions many years ago on where we wanted our targets to be,” she said. “We wanted to be higher than state targets. It’s not just about money and I’m a little disturbed at what we’re kind of moving away from when I joined this board.”

“The market is a seller’s market under the existing regulatory rules, and we are a buyer,” said Vicken Kasarjian, the chief operating officer. “And we are a buyer with very high values of mission. ... But it’s not cheap.”

Andre, citing the Coalition of Sensible Taxpayers analysis among peer not-for-profit CCAs, said MCE’s energy expenses equate to a “30% increase year over year. The average for the entire peer group is an increase of 4%.”

During a break, Kasarjian said he did not know the basis of the Coalition of Sensible Taxpayers analysis. He also said MCE’s peers sell dirtier power.

Weisz, who was on a video link to the meeting, did not comment.

These disclosures and figures, which MCE staff did not correct, were followed by more public comments calling for a finance committee.

Dan Segedin of the Marin Conservation League said many of MCE’s short-term power purchases and renewable attribute contracts were not based on recently created renewable energy sources, despite MCE’s mission and its 2024 power content label that said its light-green plan was 69% renewables.

“Here’s what we know for certain. We buy these from Morgan Stanley, Shell Oil, BP, other large energy providers and traders,” he said. “Everyone is asserting, because the regulatory rules are currently written like this, that that’s the equivalent of getting renewable energy. It’s not.”

“They’re selling out of their portfolio of current assets,” he said. “There’s no additionality there.”

Robert Miller of the Marin Conservation League said that in late 2023, when wholesale energy prices started rising, the staff at Silicon Valley Clean Energy warned its board about potential multi-million-dollar losses and asked for guidance, including pulling back on its renewable targets to save ratepayers money.

“The big difference between Silicon Valley Clean Energy and MCE was that in late '23, the SVCE board was given a choice on what to do and MCE's board was not,” he said.

The finance committee

These technical issues, which translate into how much people pay for MCE's share of their electricity bill and their actual carbon footprint, were the most pointed backdrop to the ensuing vote on forming a finance committee.

The scheduled presentations by MCE staff and consultants touted a successful operation in a volatile industry. Their statements, even Dalessi's energy market and cost projections, did not discuss the details of energy contracts as raised by the handful of Marin directors and public interest groups.

During the board discussion of the two finance committee motions, several East Bay directors said that creating a finance committee would be redundant and take up too much staff time. But Max Perrey, the MCE executive committee chair and Mill Valley's vice mayor, said that panel did not have the time to delve into the policy questions presented by fellow directors and public interest groups.

“Let's acknowledge that the agency is more complex than when it first started,” he said. “This is why we need a standing committee focused on financial matters. ... Not a controversial or novel idea. This is a best practice.”