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Public comments for MCE Board Meeting Feb. 19, 2026 from 350Marin

From jody timms <jodytimms@comcast.net>

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To the MCE Board of Directors, staff and concerned community members:

As a long-time MCE Deep Green ratepayer and a founding member of 350Marin, I want to first express my appreciation to MCE Directors and staff who have stepped up in the last few months to more productively engage with each other to improve communication and problem-solving. I'm encouraged by the collaboration--the openness and the assertiveness on both sides which have been missing and about which the public has been actively speaking up about as well.

There's been a lot of local news coverage in Marin about MCE (at least 18 articles- <https://www.marinij.com/tag/mce/>), much of it critiquing governance and operations and this latest article (see below) is another in that vein.

In my opinion, for the general public who mostly don't follow energy issues and may infrequently track on climate and environmental issues, their primary concerns are financial. Their utility bills are steadily increasing, and asking them to support additional staffing costs does not bode well.

I'm afraid MCE is not "reading the room," as another strong community activist mentioned to me today, and the last action we want is for many Marin residents to abandon their commitment to MCE.

I strongly encourage the Board to put any additional hiring on hold, until not just the governance evaluation is done, but the full organizational assessment as well. How do MCE staffing levels compare with sister CCAs? That's a vital question and the public needs reassurance that efficiency is at the heart of MCE's operations.

Jody D. Timms, Ph.D., (she/her)

Climate Action Now! For all of us. For the Earth. 

Co-founder 350Marin.org

MCE raises salaries while debating rate cuts

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

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As the public not-for-profit energy agency MCE continues to discuss cutting electricity rates, the chief executive officer has authorized promotions, raises and benefit increases that lock in a double-digit spike in personnel costs for its next fiscal year.

The company's fiscal year starts on April 1. But Dawn Weisz authorized the promotions and raises as of Jan. 1, MCE officials disclosed Feb. 11 during a budget workshop for MCE's directors.

Weisz and her management team defended the increase during the workshop and afterward, saying the increases are covered by budgeted but unspent funds in the current fiscal year.

The proposed personnel budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year is \$33.2 million, according to staff reports. That amounts to an average salary and benefit package of about \$277,000 for 120 full-time positions. When anticipated grant revenue is factored in, the draft budget's personnel costs will increase 14.7%.

Two MCE directors from Marin who attended the workshop — Belvedere Mayor Sally Wilkinson and Larkspur Mayor Stephanie Andre — said the raises and promotions usurp the board's delegated authority under MCE's operating rules.

"The board has no way to constrain that," Wilkinson said. "That really is a big increase in year-on-year at a time when we're telling ratepayers we can't cut their rates to compete with PG&E. And it sounds, I hate to say it, a little tone deaf to me, in terms of the priorities of the agency."

"We don't have enough money to cut rates, but we have enough money for these large increases," she said.

Andre called \$33.2 million a "huge number."

"That really is front-running the board's ability to control our compensation costs," Andre said. "At a time when we're trying to signal affordability to our ratepayers and fiscal responsibility, I think we really need to be able to control our compensation costs."

Weisz, in an email Tuesday, said "MCE follows its established compensation and budget process."

"Staffing costs for Fiscal Year 2025/26 do not exceed the Board-approved budget," she wrote. "Going forward, we have adjusted the timing of merit increases. Starting in 2027, staff will be considered for merit increases effective April 1 instead of January 1."

Maira Strauss, chief financial officer at MCE, presented and defended the increases during the workshop, where the main focus was reviewing options to cut MCE's portion of monthly electricity bills.

"We are focused on balancing affordability for our customers while also supporting our staff needs," she said.

Strauss said MCE's personnel costs were "very much under budget for the current fiscal year."

"But again, pay raises, merit increases and promotions given on January 1, 2026, didn't fit into the budget that you were given," Wilkinson said. "So you're locking in numbers for 26-27 that haven't been given board approval."

The friction over raises comes against a backdrop of recent spikes in monthly electricity bills for most Marin consumers and calls by public-interest activists for MCE to be more transparent and accountable for its energy cost decisions.

MCE, formerly known as Marin Clean Energy, procures electricity for 1.5 million people in Marin, Napa, Solano and Contra Costa counties. That power is delivered over the infrastructure of PG&E, whose charges account for two-thirds of monthly bills. Eighty-seven percent of Marin residents have MCE plans.

On Jan. 1, PG&E cut its prices for its residential consumers while raising a surcharge on its portion of MCE bills. The result is MCE's typical residential plan will be about \$30 more expensive per month than a comparable PG&E plan.

While those PG&E surcharges are expected to fall in 2027, MCE staff has been presenting its board with a range of options to reduce its portion of monthly bills.

Wholesale energy costs have been falling. That means MCE's current rates will bring in an estimated \$89 million above its approximately \$640 million in estimated energy costs for its fiscal year starting in April, according to staff reports. MCE also has a \$70 million rainy day fund and about \$420 million in reserves.

Currently, MCE's portion of typical monthly electricity bills is about \$64. For MCE to match PG&E's current price, it would have to offset its current energy contract spending by half, upwards of \$300 million.

Even though no formal decision has been made, most MCE directors don't want to go that far. In numerous 2026 committee meetings and budget workshops, most appeared to endorse reducing rates to reflect the current wholesale energy cost drops and allocating perhaps two-thirds of the \$70 million rainy day fund. That combination could reduce MCE's portion of monthly bills by upwards of \$20, staff reports estimate.

Public-interest advocates have urged MCE to look elsewhere for sizeable savings.

The Marin Conservation League, for example, said MCE spent \$202 million in its last fiscal year for renewable energy credits that boost its power content figures reported to the state but reflect little or no new clean energy generation.

MCE's two recent budget workshops barely mentioned energy "attribute" contracts in its current fiscal year or next year's budget. Strauss' draft budget for the upcoming fiscal year estimated spending \$54 million on contracts that could include attributes.

Like the staff promotions and salary increases that took effect in January, the \$200 million in attribute contracts were executed by Weisz with little board involvement, MCE counsel Catalina Murphy told its technical committee on Feb. 6.