

Forget advocating for all electric building codes – go big instead and save the planet.

Tuesday night the city council is being asked to approve a letter requesting the State to mandate every new and newly remodeled home in California be all electric. It's on the consent calendar and I may be the only person who reads it. I'm pretty sure no one expects it to have any impact so it will just be approved. **What if we actually wrote a letter or took a concrete action that would have a meaningful impact on our town and our planet?**

Asking the state to impose an unpopular "all electric mandate" that does not address the energy problems that are real and current in Sebastopol is a missed opportunity.

- California citizens currently pay 2 times more than other states for a Kw of electricity. Even as we try to conserve and save money our bills go up.
- There is currently not enough grid infrastructure to supply more electricity to homeowners and businesses. The Canopy developer acknowledged at the last meeting that the biggest issue they have is getting the project connected to the grid.
- Going "all electric" does not acknowledge and probably worsens the persistent brownouts and power outages we now experience. Once upon a time it was just in the summer, now parts of Sebastopol have power outages every month.
- Our electric grid in rural areas such as Sonoma County is unreliable and fragile creating a real risk of devastating wildfires that have destroyed several rural cities. We have been fortunate, but still suffer the health effects of smoke inhalation and the increased costs of homeowners insurance and the need for a full-time fire department.

Instead of asking the government to force its constituents to go all electric, why don't we shift our focus to asking for actions that will make a difference to the citizens of Sebastopol and potentially help our fragile planet at the same time.

Rooftop solar and battery storage for every home in Sebastopol would lower demand on the grid, provide a more dependable source of energy and reduce energy costs. Under these conditions I would think people would flock to electric appliances and automobiles.

Subsidized solar on every roof in Sebastopol would be costly. Assuming \$30,000 per installation and 3,000 homes we would need \$90 Million dollars to fully subsidize the plan. This seems like a lot. But 10% of that amount(\$10MM) was spent to create housing at the Sebastopol inn for 30 people for 1 year. \$10MM in taxpayer money invested and it is now sitting empty.

A "**Solar on Every Rooftop**" investment would provide economical and more dependable power to 7,000 Sebastopol taxpayers and the solution would last 20 years or more while making a tangible and real difference in the fight to reduce climate change.

Socially, solar is unpopular because it doesn't benefit those who cannot afford it or who live in apartments. Politically solar is opposed by Unions, PG&E and Southern California Edison. Community solar is an idea that addresses the social concerns of rooftop solar. Giving in to political pressures, the PUC, presumably with the Governor's approval, recently reduced incentives for roof top solar. It also increased the fees PG&E can charge solar users.

A community sized solar farm is an alternative idea that could supply clean affordable energy to apartments, homes, and businesses in Sebastopol and West County. Successful demonstrations are apparently complete in New York. \$7.1 billion federal dollars have been available since 2022 to make it happen. Apparently, it stalled in California due to the same political opponents to rooftop solar.

With only 3,000 homes and 2 square miles, Sebastopol could be a leader in adopting community solar and battery technology. The **"Sebastopol/West County Community Solar Demonstration Project"** could produce the first zero emission community in the world. Federal dollars are available to pay for it. This would be **a perfect EIFD project.**

The Climate Action Committee and the City Council can increase its influence by writing letters that ask for specific solutions to problems experienced by Sebastopol and other rural communities in California that can also have a bigger impact on the planet:

- Request the governor to stand up to greedy monopolistic utility companies and unions to restore and even increase incentives for Solar Rooftop/battery installations, particularly in vulnerable underserved rural communities like Sebastopol where PG&E infrastructure is insufficient and not dependable or affordable.
- Ask the Governor to prioritize electric infrastructure improvements in small California towns like Sebastopol so we can meet state mandated goals for new housing.
- Open the EIFD opportunity by requesting the Governor accelerate approval of community solar initiatives in California. He should request California's fair share of the Inflation Reduction Act \$7 billion dollars to implement the programs. Ask the Governor to plan for Sebastopol to get the first Community Solar Grant in California. Show the Governor and the world that Sebastopol has a real vision for limiting our impact on climate change.

The clock is ticking. The planet is warming. We need to insist that our politicians take actions that prioritize the planet over political expediency. We need to stop talking and start acting. In Sebastopol we need to think our unique problems through and propose practical solutions to the real problems facing Sebastopol and other small rural communities in California.

Public investment is about intelligent trade-offs based on our most important priorities. Public investment is also about making investments that have an impact on the problem it is designed to solve. The planet seems important, solar solves real problems, local and global.

A Sebastopol/West County Community Energy Initiative would make Sebastopol stand out as an example of a small town pulling more than its own weight for the good of the planet.