

As a result of staff's commendable initiative and diligence, the VCE board is being asked to approve its last large renewable supply contract.

On one hand, the Willow Springs Solar (WSS) project and its predecessors fulfill one important element of VCE's vision. On the other hand, doubling down on imported renewable electricity may preclude building up critically important local capacities to deliver benefits Community Choice advocates once promised. Benefits targeted in the early stages of CCA development in Yolo County included minimizing environmental impacts of renewable energy deployment, empowering local deployment of renewable resources, and strengthening local economies.

The chart in the staff report suggests that any further renewable electricity purchases will be RECs and purchases from baseload renewable projects. RECs cannot increase the share of local renewable supply in VCE's supply portfolio; baseload renewable purchases are unlikely to. Capturing the WSS project's tactical benefits comes at the price of missing longer term strategic opportunities and creating new risks.

There will no longer be room in VCE's generation portfolio for local projects that strengthen member jurisdiction economies, nor for solar projects on brownfield sites. Likewise, clean, equitable future energy resilience is impossible without community renewable projects which VCE will now have limited ability to enable as an off-taker. Regarding risks, have the project's impacts on future resource adequacy costs and transmission charges been considered?

The agenda item raises strategic questions VCE's CAC has not had the opportunity to ask. The staff report summarizes the case to move forward without benefit of non-staff deliberation beyond a single board meeting. This risks future surprises and unintended consequences. If the CAC provides a benefit to VCE, it is its habit of staged and deliberative questioning and fact finding. Why does this benefit not apply to VCE's power procurement core business?

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