

PG&E upgrades promise fewer outages

By KELLY NIX

A NEWLY rebuilt PG&E substation that went online last month in Monterey will help reduce power outages on the Peninsula by as much as half, utility officials said this week.

On Thursday morning, PG&E and Monterey officials gathered at the substation on Del Monte Avenue next to the Monterey Sports Center to discuss a \$42 million transformer, state-of-the-art switchgear building and new power lines. The infrastructure adds 30 megawatts of electricity, which PG&E said is enough to supply power to about 7,500 homes and serve more than 10,000 customers from Pacific Grove to Cannery Row and downtown Monterey.

Capacity, redundancy

The upgraded substation, which was energized May 6, along with improvements to power lines, transformers and a substation on Fremont Boulevard, “provides much more redundancy, so when a problem does occur, we can more quickly restore power and get the lights back on,” James Tucillo, PG&E’s senior manager of distribution and planning, told members of the press.

The changes are expected to reduce the Peninsula’s frequent power outages and their duration by 50%. They will also allow for more capacity for electrification, including

more electric vehicle chargers.

Monterey council members Kim Barber and Jean Rasch attended Thursday’s event. Rasch and Monterey City Manager Dante Hall addressed the press and thanked PG&E for the infrastructure.

“It’s really on top of our priorities to create energy resilience,” Hall said. “So, this is going to be a big help, especially during storms, to support our downtown and the rest of our community.”

Keeping the power on

The multiyear project, PG&E said, will also make it easier for the power company to isolate problems and reroute electricity during outages so it can restore power more quickly during extreme weather events. PG&E’s regional senior manager Jeremy Howard said the project would strengthen the grid to help it better withstand poor weather conditions.

“Our community deserves an electric system that’s reliable and ready for the future, and investments like this are helping us deliver it,” Howard said.

PG&E predicts that demand for electricity will double by 2040 due to the proliferation of electric vehicles, manufacturing facilities and data centers.

The upgrades, the company said, will “increase capacity and strengthen reliability at the lowest cost possible to customers.”

Panetta cruises through another primary

By KELLY NIX

DEMOCRATIC REP. Jimmy Panetta dominated Tuesday’s primary election and will face off against a Republican in the Nov. 3 general election.

Panetta, 56, represents the 19th Congressional District, which includes the Monterey Peninsula. He garnered 64,596 votes (58.3%), while Republican Peter Coe Verbica, 65, was the second-highest vote-getter with 25,297 (22.8%). There were five other candidates on the ballot.

“The people are unified behind making sure that their public servants actually deliver for them,” Panetta told The Pine Cone Wednesday, “and I think that’s demonstrated in the results, considering the work that I have done and will continue to do when it comes to legislation and bringing in federal funds.”

The Carmel Valley congressman also credited his staff for everything they do for constituents, including in the areas of immigration, Medicare and taxes.

The congressman has criticized President Donald Trump’s stances on offshore oil drilling, the war in Iran, Medicaid, immigration enforcement, energy and other issues.

The top two vote-getters in California’s primary election advance to the general election regardless of party preference or whether one candidate receives a majority of votes in the primary. Only candidates running for state superintendent of public instruction or candidates for voter-nominated offices in special elections can win outright by getting a majority of the vote in the primary.

Panetta was elected in 2016 and took office in early 2017, which means his next term will be his sixth.

P.G. voters say ‘no thanks’ to paying council more

By KELLY NIX

A BALLOT measure seeking a pay increase for members of the Pacific Grove City Council was defeated in Tuesday’s election, according to preliminary results from the county elections department.

As of Wednesday, Measure C had received 1,700 yes votes (43.55%) compared to 2,204 no votes (56.45%). The elections department is still counting ballots, but such a large margin of defeat is very unlikely to be overturned. If the measure had passed, it would have raised council members’ pay from \$420 a month to \$987, and the mayor’s from \$700 a month to \$1,645.

Compensation for the city council has remained the same since 1998, and proponents argued it’s time for an increase. Paying more, they say, would also attract more residents to run for office.

‘Without drama’

Despite support for the measure from the council, it appears that most voters don’t like the idea of paying them more.

Former Mayor Bill Kampe, who along with PG Progressives president John Mothershead helped lead the Measure C campaign, said he was “disappointed” in the results of the election.

“Cities in our county and throughout California made this salary adjustment,” Kampe told The Pine Cone Thursday. “They did it without delay, without extra expense, and without drama. I feel this is not a healthy outcome for Pacific Grove.”

Former P.G. councilman Luke Coletti, whose group, Transparent Pacific Grove, led the No on Measure C campaign, said there were good reasons for the measure to be defeated.

“After reducing the number of council meetings, approving an immediate 135% pay raise, pursuing medical benefits and spending \$63,000 on an unnecessary special election,” Coletti said Wednesday morning, “voters gave Mayor Nick Smith and the council exactly what they deserved: nothing.”

Signatories to the argument in favor of Measure C were Kampe, former Mayor Bill Peake, former council members Robert Huitt and Amy Tomlinson, and retired city recreation department employee Don Mothershead.



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