

Larkspur shuns Marin Energy Authority

[Jennifer Upshaw](#), 05/21/2009

Larkspur - the last city to consider joining the Marin Energy Authority - has rejected the offer to join the county-led collective, saying now is not the time for Marin to get into the energy business.

The council Wednesday voted 4-0 against joining the effort. Mayor Dan Hillmer, an architect, recused himself because of energy and water conservation projects that he is working on professionally.

"I wanted to avoid the perception of a possible conflict of interest," he said.

The Marin Energy Authority has been established to explore projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Chief among these projects would be the Marin Clean Energy initiative which, if enacted, calls for the authority to compete with Pacific Gas and Electric Co. as the retailer of electricity to Marin customers to boost usage of renewable energy in the county.

City Manager Jean Bonander said the council's position was firm.

"They made it really clear that a small city like Larkspur whose focus has always been on really basic core services and doesn't know anything about running an electrical utility, it probably didn't make a lot of sense for us to take that kind of risk," she said.

"We did not go forward with the clean energy initiative at this time because it did not make sense financially," said Councilwoman Joan Lundstrom, who is vice mayor and led the discussion in Hillmer's absence.

"The bond market and the credit market have completely imploded," she said. "It wasn't a decision between clean energy and PG&E - it was a decision why should the county suddenly start an energy bureaucracy that would cost \$8 million a year and have 20 employees at this time.

"This was not the time for the county to go into the energy market," Lundstrom said.

Dawn Weisz, a county planner overseeing the authority, said "We are, of course, disappointed that they won't be joining the authority because we would like our programs and our activities to encompass the whole county, but we hope that we will be able to serve them in the future."

Earlier this month, Larkspur's sister city, Corte Madera, also said no, saying joining at this time would be too costly.

All Marin cities and towns, and the county, with the exception of Novato, Larkspur and Corte Madera, have elected to join the authority.

Contact Jennifer Upshaw via e-mail at jupshaw@marinij.com