

February 22, 2010

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Sebastopol asks PG&E to put off SmartMeters

By BOB NORBERG THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

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The city of Sebastopol is asking PG&E to delay putting wireless meters inside the city limits while state regulators and the utility conduct studies on the meter's safety. "We are getting different information from our citizens and we don't get the full information from PG&E," said Mayor Sarah Gurney. "We feel this is a safety matter that is being investigated, and that's why we are asking for a deferral."

The city in a letter will also ask that PG&E make it a matter of choice, allowing customers to opt to have a SmartMeter, as they are called. SmartMeters are being installed in a statewide program by PG&E, which says they will give customers the instant feedback that is necessary to reduce energy during peak times and save money.

The meters were to have been installed in Sonoma County beginning this month. Critics, however, contend the meters emit radio waves that are damaging to the health, contributing to the electromagnetic field that already exists from other sources.

They also contend that the meters may not be the cost-saving device the utility claims them to be. Supporters, however, said the meters are a step toward reducing energy use during peak times, when the additional electricity is generated by "peak plants" that are among the most polluting.

Sonoma County Supervisor Efren Carrillo is setting up a countywide forum on SmartMeters for April, city officials said.

The letter will be sent to the state Public Utilities Commission, which has jurisdiction over the utility, asking for the delay and that customers be given a choice. It passed on a 3-1 vote, with Councilman Larry Robinson voting against it, contending that meters are necessary in the climate change fight. Councilwoman Linda Kelley was absent.

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Sebastopol residents lash out against PG&E plan for 'smart meters'

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