

For Immediate Release

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NEWS RELEASE: Montecito Fire Protection District Board unanimously votes to proceed with Community Microgrid efforts

Clean Coalition and World Business Academy applaud this milestone as a significant step in the Montecito Community Microgrid Initiative, which will provide the area with renewables-driven resilience and emergency preparedness

Santa Barbara, CA — The Clean Coalition and the World Business Academy are pleased to announce that on Monday, February 25, the Montecito Fire Protection District Board of Directors unanimously authorized Fire Chief Chip Hickman to draft a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to proceed with Community Microgrid efforts for the Fire Protection District headquarters and fire stations.

This Community Microgrid represents the first building block in the [Montecito Community Microgrid Initiative](#), which will bring renewables-driven resilience to Montecito — allowing critical facilities like fire stations, emergency shelters, and critical water and communications infrastructure to remain online indefinitely, even during extended grid outages.

A [Community Microgrid](#) is a new approach for designing and operating the electric grid, based on local renewables and other distributed energy resources (DER) like energy storage and demand response. Although linked to the main electric grid, during a power outage a Community Microgrid can isolate from the broader grid and provide indefinite renewables-driven backup power.

The Montecito Community Microgrid Initiative aims to build multiple Community Microgrids in the area, ensuring the continuous operation of critical and priority facilities in the event of future disasters — as well as providing ongoing energy resilience to a broader Santa Barbara region that is served by a single, and highly vulnerable, connection to the high-voltage transmission system, via the Goleta Substation at the top of Glen Annie Road in Goleta.

“We are excited to explore renewable energy opportunities through a Community Microgrid approach that will make the Montecito Fire Department and the community more resilient,” said Fire Chief Chip Hickman. “The Fire Department is all too familiar with the dangers posed by extreme weather events like the Thomas Fire and the subsequent debris flow. This modern energy system will enable us to better serve the Montecito community, as well as provide much-needed redundancy to our essential service.”

“The Montecito Fire Protection District Board’s unanimous approval of drafting an agreement for a Community Microgrid is a major milestone in moving this Initiative forward,” said Craig Lewis, Executive Director of the Clean Coalition. “In casting a vote to

move forward, the Board has demonstrated a keen understanding of the unparalleled economic, environmental, and resilience benefits that a Community Microgrid will bring to Montecito.”

The Montecito Community Microgrid Initiative is led by a [Steering Committee comprised of dedicated leaders from throughout Montecito](#), which Judi Weisbart, VP of Community Relations for the World Business Academy, has helped to assemble. Members of the Steering Committee include Diane Boss, Sharon Byrne, Tom Dain, Cindy Feinberg, Julianna Friedman, Berna Kieler, Lee Lysne, Sara Miller McCune, Cheryl Tomchin, and Mike Weissman.

“I’m thrilled that the Fire Protection District Board of Directors has conceptually accepted the proposed microgrid design to make their headquarters more energy resilient in the face of extreme weather events,” said Sharon Byrne, Steering Committee member and Executive Director of the Montecito Association. “We hope that other critical facilities will adopt this idea and establish Montecito as the first energy-resilient community in Santa Barbara County.”

Supporting the Montecito Community Microgrid Initiative is the Kind World Foundation, which created a generous matching grant of \$150,000 for the Initiative. In February, the Zegar Family Foundation made a generous donation toward this matching grant, bringing the Initiative within sight of its initial \$300,000 fundraising goal. This funding will support the staging of Community Microgrids in Montecito’s Upper Village, which includes aligning stakeholders, performing engineering and economic analyses, and identifying investors to leverage the tax credits that are available to the parties that will own the Community Microgrid assets and sell energy to the sites via power purchase agreements (PPAs). These funds have positioned the Montecito Community Microgrid Initiative for success in bringing economic, environmental, and resilience benefits to Montecito.

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About the Clean Coalition

The Clean Coalition is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to accelerate the transition to renewable energy and a modern grid through technical, policy, and project development expertise. The Clean Coalition drives policy innovation to remove barriers to procurement and interconnection of distributed energy resources (DER) — such as local renewables, energy storage, advanced inverters, and demand response — and we establish market mechanisms that realize the full potential of integrating these solutions. In addition to being active in numerous proceedings before state and federal agencies throughout the United States, the Clean Coalition collaborates with utilities, community choice aggregation agencies, municipalities, and other jurisdictions to create near-term deployment opportunities that prove the technical and economic viability of local renewables and other DER.

About the World Business Academy

Since 1987, the World Business Academy has operated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit think tank focused on the role business can and should play in solving humanity's largest challenges. Over the past five years, the Academy has transitioned into an action incubator for energy, economic and environmental causes that directly impact our community. The Academy advocates for sustainable energy use by working to elevate the consciousness of people in the business community and encouraging them to use their influence to take responsibility for the environment. The Academy's 30-year advocacy and litigation track record includes the closure of San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, the rejection of the Ellwood and Puente natural gas peaker plants, and litigation to enforce CEQA review as part of the continued operation of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant.

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