



TO: GCSB Board of Directors

FROM: Peter Kampa, General Manager

DATE: July 10, 2023

SUBJECT: Agenda Item 1B: Discussion and Board Direction Regarding the Impacts from Frequent and Extended PG&E Outages

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends the following actions:

1. Direct staff to convey to PG&E and the CPUC the severity of damage experienced by the District, residents, property owners and businesses in the Groveland region caused by the power outage of July 1 – 3, 2023 and our expectation of financial restitution.
2. Direct staff to convey to PG&E and the CPUC our opposition to the further deployment and use of the Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings (EPSS) which result in extended power outages with no advance customer notification or consideration provided to protect public health and safety or offset negative community impacts.
3. Direct staff to convey to PG&E and the CPUC our demand for immediate action to address and remedy electrical grid infrastructure defects in the region, including undergrounding as needed to ensure local power reliability and optimize against fire hazards.
4. Direct staff to convey to PG&E and the CPUC our demand for the immediate installation of permanently installed emergency backup generators, connected to the Permanent Interconnection Hub (PIH) at Mary Laveroni Park. These generators must be capable of powering the downtown Groveland electrical system during all power outages including those triggered by the EPSS.
5. Direct staff to convey to PG&E and the CPUC our demand that it should fully adhere to all previously established Public Safety Power Shutdown (PSPS) protocol and requirements including the required documentation of weather conditions and other factors in shutdown decisions, advance public notification of shutdowns, establishments of local community resource centers, rapid installation of generators and their use at the PIH to minimize outages during planned PSPS.
6. Direct staff to convey to PG&E and the CPUC our demand to remove the PIH equipment and abandon the associated easements on District property if PG&E intends to not install permanent generator(s) at the PIH site or re-implement the PSPS protocol and procedures, including the rapid installation of temporary generators connected to the PIH in advance of PSPS shutdown.

BACKGROUND:

On August 11, 2020, the Board approved [Resolution 37-2020](#) which authorizes the following actions related to the installation of a Permanent Interconnection Hub (PIH) in Mary Laveroni Park. This resolution authorized the following:

1. The General Manager is authorized to execute the Letter Agreement with Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)
2. The General Manager and Board President are authorized to execute the permanent easement deeds attached hereto as LD# 2201-16-10002 and LD 2201-16-10003, and any necessary related documents to consummate this transaction to provide for the proposed Permanent Interconnection Hub (PIH) installed near Mary Laveroni Park.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) requested that the District grant various exclusive and nonexclusive easements on property owned by the District at Mary Laveroni Park, for the purpose of facilitating the provision of generated electrical power by PG&E into the downtown Groveland power grid during emergency PG&E Public Safety Power Shutdown (PSPS) events. In addition, PG&E offered just compensation to the District for the purchase of easements, and the PIH will provide emergency power to District facilities at Mary Laveroni Park and the Groveland Fire Station during PSPS events.

The PIH was constructed by PG&E in 2020 and 2021 and is substantially complete. The PIH consists of the equipment needed to allow PG&E to bring in large backup generators to be located in the parking lot and connected, to be used during PSPS events only. PG&E had agreed to provide 48 hours advance notice when they intended to ship and install the temporary generators, based on predicted/planned PSPS events, with the intent of having the generators in place before the PSPS event began. Since the temporary generators had to be trucked in, this PIH system was never intended to be used on an immediate basis for all power outages. Please note that at the time of this agreement with PG&E in 2020, the only time that PG&E could shut down the power for Fire safety was during a declared PSPS event which met very specific criteria including documentation of necessity, and 24 hour advance public notification of planned shutdowns.

PG&E first implemented “*Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings*” also known as (EPSS) as a pilot program in 2021 across 11,500 miles of distribution circuits in High Fire Threat Districts (HFTD). In 2022, PG&E expanded the scope of its EPSS program to cover all circuits in the HFTD and selected HFTD-adjacent areas. These settings allow our powerlines to automatically turn off power within one-tenth of a second. Implementation of the EPSS results in unexpected outages which can happen for multiple reasons, like a tree branch falling into a powerline, temperature, or wind. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) does not require PG&E to issue advance notification to customers for an EPSS related shutdown.

Since EPSS was put in place and the grid can be shut down at any time for any reason that triggers an event, there does not appear to be the need for PG&E to implement

formal PSPS events in the future, and therefore we should plan on having no advance notification of EPSS outages. EPSS may be an effective way for PG&E to reduce fire risk and prevent the ignition of wildfires, but this is not efficient for all rural communities such as the Groveland region. It is staff's opinion that the public health and safety risk attributable to the recent EPSS shutdown far exceeds the benefit, as truly the only beneficiary is PG&E as it is now allowed to rely on technology alone to shut down the grid to protect PG&E finances.

As we experienced July 1-3, 2023, the EPSS outage events are extremely unpredictable and difficult to plan for. When the power jumps on and off multiple times as it did, our sensitive water and sewer electronic equipment, motor starters and protection devices are regularly damaged and fail. Our operations and maintenance staff work many overtime hours continuously restarting equipment, recalibrating, fueling and checking backup generators as well as monitoring the system online 24 hours per day.

As a responsible local government providing critical local services, the District is in the position to provide recommendations to PG&E to set our region as a priority in its plans for power reliability and safe delivery. We can also present our case to the CPUC for consideration if PG&E is unresponsive.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Enhanced Powerline Safety Settings (EPSS) "Weather Related Outage"
https://www.pge.com/en_US/residential/outages/enhanced-powerline-safety-settings/enhanced-powerline-safety-settings.page