



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

CITY HALL

CITY OF SONORA 94 N. WASHINGTON STREET, SONORA, CA 95370 P: (209) 532-4541

SERVICE, INNOVATION, INTEGRITY, COLLABORATION, RESPECT, LEADERSHIP

DATE: July 21, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Gina Stassi-Vanacore, Pioneer Community Energy Director of Communications

SUBJECT: Receive a Presentation Regarding Pioneer Community Energy's Planned Expansion into the City of Sonora with a Service Launch in October 2027.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a Presentation Regarding Pioneer Community Energy's Planned Expansion into the City of Sonora with a Service Launch in October 2027.

BACKGROUND:

On February 18, 2025, the City of Sonora adopted Ordinance No. 902 and Resolution 02-18-2025-A, Adding Chapter 1.30 – Community Choice Aggregation Program, to Title 1, General Provisions, of the Sonora Municipal Code, and Approve the Amended and Restated Joint Powers Agreement for Pioneer Community Energy ("Pioneer"), Authorizing the Implementation of a Community Choice Aggregation Program Under Public Utilities Code Section 366.2.

On March 11, in compliance with Public Utilities Code ("PUC") section 366(c)(3), Pioneer filed Addendum No. 3 to the Community Choice Implementation Plan and Statement of Intent ("Implementation Plan") with the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") addressing Pioneer's expansion into the 13 new jurisdictions, including the City of Sonora, with a service launch in October 2027.

On June 9, 2025, the CPUC certified the Implementation Plan, and City staff worked with the Pioneer team to complete a signed letter of intent to join Pioneer.

On July 9, 2025, all required documentation was filed with the California Secretary of State and the State Controller's Office for the City of Sonora to join Pioneer Community Energy's JPA.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS:

The results of the Fall 2024 Impact Assessment Study determined that the optimal time for a service launch into expansion territories is October 2027. Among the primary considerations for the Council in joining Pioneer was ensuring there is sufficient planning in place to educate area residents about the service launch, answer questions, and address public concerns.



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Pioneer has repeatedly emphasized its desire to be a strong community partner and plans to work collaboratively with the City to educate stakeholders, influencers, and members of the general public, and will work closely with the City of Sonora to develop a comprehensive education and outreach campaign that ensures a strong public understanding of expansion into the area.

Key to these efforts is creating a strong, accurate, and consistent flow of information during the next 27 months. Pioneer plans to take a phased approach, with communications activity ramping up over time and culminating in multi-dimensional communications and community outreach efforts throughout 2027. While specific tactics may shift over time, the general approach includes:

2025: Research and Planning

- Research and planning to identify stakeholders, influencers, and community organizations for engagement
- Meetings and briefings with City staff and leadership
- Development of outreach and media lists
- Joining local Chambers of Commerce

2026: Early education and plan development

- Working in coordination with City staff and community leaders, Pioneer will develop a comprehensive communications campaign
- Focus on raising awareness about Pioneer's entry into the area
- Earned and paid media
- Sponsorship of key events
- Continued membership in the area Chambers of Commerce

2027: Plan Implementation

- Early in 2027 and through the service launch, Pioneer will use a variety of channels to communicate with businesses and residents about the upcoming service launch.
- Create and send a series of direct mail pieces introducing Pioneer, explaining how Pioneer works, answering frequently asked questions, and familiarizing customers with program offerings
- Paid, earned, and social media
- Town hall meetings

Presentations to civic and fraternal organizations, senior centers, and others

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact on the City of Sonora for the communications and outreach efforts.

However, city staff will collaborate with Pioneer to provide input on planning to prioritize target audiences and ensure maximum effectiveness of the communications and outreach efforts.



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CORE COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

Fiscal Responsibility and Stability, Infrastructure and Engineering, Public Safety and Disaster Preparedness, Economic Development/Growth and General Plan, Homelessness Issues, Staffing - Salary, Benefits, Training, and Retention