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Six Rhode Island communities launch electricity aggregation program

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Providence, RI Six Rhode Island cities and towns have joined together to launch aggregation programs that leverage community-wide buying power to provide their residents and businesses with new options for electricity supply. These Community Electricity Aggregation (CEA) programs will focus on providing competitively-priced rates while also including additional clean energy from Rhode Island.

The new programs, set to launch in May 2023, are the culmination of a multi-year effort involving the communities of Barrington, Central Falls, Newport, Portsmouth, Providence and South Kingstown working with electricity aggregator Good Energy. By working together, these communities can harness significant buying power, collectively representing over 100,000 eligible electricity users.

Each municipality developed its own aggregation plan, customized to reflect its community priorities. These were then approved by votes of its city or town council, as well as by the R.I. Public Utilities Commission.

The primary electricity offering in each CEA program will exceed state renewable energy standards while maintaining focus on competitive pricing. With a combined load of roughly 15% of the state's electric utility, the group will benefit from substantial economies of scale while also providing significant demand for new renewable energy in the region.

The municipalities have committed to sourcing their renewable energy from within New England. This will include specific Rhode Island-based projects such as solar power facilities built on brownfields in North Providence and Johnston, as well as wind turbines located in Providence, Coventry and Narragansett.

“Providing cleaner energy options, and making those options more accessible and affordable, is a key strategy of Providence’s Climate Justice Plan,” said mayor Jorge Elorza. “We are proud to join these fellow cities and towns in beginning this program and excited to offer new options for energy supply in our community.”

“As cost of living expenses continue to skyrocket, like rent and energy, too many of our families in Central Falls are left struggling to meet their most basic needs. Energy aggregation is an opportunity for our city to work to address this growing challenge,” said Central Falls mayor, Maria Rivera. “This program aims to help residents with electricity price stability and potential monthly cost savings, all

while Central Falls moves toward a cleaner energy future.”

“Aggregation is a step toward reducing not only the impact of rising energy costs, but also our carbon footprint through a cleaner supply of electricity,” said Barrington town manager, Philip Hervey.

“We are happy to be joining with five other communities in Rhode Island in an initiative to bring green and low cost energy options to our residents,” said Portsmouth town administrator, Rich Rainer.

“Rising energy costs are one of the biggest concerns for the residents of South Kingstown. This program will provide our residents with stability and guard against volatility in the energy market,” said South Kingstown town manager, James Manni. “This collaboration with other cities and towns simply makes sense.”

“We are excited to help communities combat climate change while also looking out for the energy spend of their residents and businesses,” said Philip Carr, New England regional director of Good Energy. “Community electricity aggregation programs are rapidly transforming the electricity sector in many states, and we are thrilled to bring this program to Rhode Island consumers.”

Providence-based non-profit Green Energy Consumers Alliance will provide a significant portion of the voluntary renewable energy from Rhode Island-based projects. “Our organization’s mission is to speed the transition to clean energy. And that’s exactly what this program does. We’re going to bring more wind and solar onto the grid and the best part is that it will be from projects located right here in the Ocean State,” said Larry Chretien, executive director of GECA.

After a competitive bidding process, the group selected NextEra Energy Services, LLC as its electricity supplier. Final pricing will be announced about two months in advance of the launch, in March 2023, via community-wide outreach and education initiatives.

When each program launches, any electricity customer using Last Resort Service supply from the utility, RI Energy (formerly National Grid), will be eligible for automatic enrollment in the new CEA program. Customers will be provided with an opportunity to opt-out before the program starts and, if enrolled, will be able to leave the program at any time without penalty.

RI Energy will continue to deliver electricity, respond to outages and manage all billing. Customers who participate in the programs will continue to receive a single electricity bill, but will see a change in the bill’s “Supply” section. Utility discount programs, budget billing, and solar or net-metering benefits will not be affected by participating in the CEA programs. To learn more, visit goodenergy.com/rhode-island/.