

Political Blotter

*December 6, 2011*

A Contra Costa economic development partnership was awarded a \$521,529 Department of Energy grant to help streamline and digitize the permitting process for solar system.

Read on for the news release issued earlier today:

A clean technology initiative of the Contra Costa Economic Partnership has been awarded a major grant through the U.S. Department of Energy Rooftop Solar Challenge, a national program to encourage cities and counties to compete to streamline and digitize solar permitting. (See the DOE news release here: <http://energy.gov/articles/doe-awards-12-million-spur-rapid-adoption-solar-energy-rooftop-solar-challenge>.)

The Economic Partnership, in collaboration with the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County ([www.wdbccc.com](http://www.wdbccc.com)), officially launched a business-led effort in June 2011 to stimulate economic growth and job creation throughout the Greater East Bay. This initiative led to the formation of the Diablo Innovation Alliance ([www.diabloinnovationalliance.org](http://www.diabloinnovationalliance.org)), a regional collaboration focused on driving economic growth and job creation in the clean technology sectors.

The DOE funds will be used to develop the first phase of a solar permitting process within Contra Costa County that encourages local jurisdictions to standardize permit requirements so they are easily understood, consistent, timely and cost effective. Subsequent phases and funding would involve the three-county region; successful implementation would serve as a best practice model for statewide adoption.

“The Economic Partnership is working closely with industry to accelerate market adoption and to reduce barriers to innovative solar and other clean energy programs throughout the region,”

said Partnership Chair Alex Mehran. “We want to become a global center of clean technology and innovation, and this grant will help us begin to get there.”

“We are extremely excited about this new award and the boost that it provides to spur innovation and job creation in our region,” said Stephen Baiter, Executive Director for the Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County. “By continuing to develop and promote policies that support sustainable and efficient energy sources, we will fuel increased demand for our rapidly growing solar industry cluster and get more people in the East Bay back to work.”

A second initiative involves development of a regional energy procurement plan that focuses on public-sector aggregated procurement of solar and other forms of clean energy, and is modeled on the successful Silicon Valley Collaborative Renewable Energy Procurement Project.

Bay Area legislators John Garamendi, Jerry McNerney and George Miller have been big proponents of the economic development initiative from its beginnings, and were part of the launch event on June 29 at Bishop Ranch.

“I am proud to have supported the Contra Costa Economic Partnership application for the Department of Energy SunShot program grant, and I congratulate them on winning the award,” said Rep. John Garamendi (D-Walnut Creek). “This program will move our country one step closer to energy independence. By streamlining the permitting process, the Economic Partnership will cultivate an environment for businesses to grow and create jobs in our community. Smart public-private partnerships like this will help us to Make It Locally and Make It In America.”

“This grant will put people in the East Bay back to work, creating jobs that we need in the region,” said Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-Pleasanton). “The work of the folks at the Contra Costa Economic Partnership is a wonderful example of how American ingenuity can get our economy back on track. I look forward to seeing the progress that will result from this grant. In today’s economy, the federal government needs to be a partner in spurring economic growth.”

“This announcement is great news for our community. I congratulate the Contra Costa Economic Partnership on their work to create jobs, help homeowners and businesses, and invest in the sustainability of our cities by making it easier to install clean energy in Contra

Costa,” Rep. George Miller (D-Martinez) said of the project.

About the Contra Costa Economic Partnership (CCEP): The CCEP is an association of business, education and public sector leaders dedicated to creating and retaining quality jobs in the Greater East Bay to maintain the region’s quality of life. It is the nonprofit arm of the Contra Costa Council