

A Brief History of Sustainable Rossmoor

In June, 2014 ten residents got together to talk about why there was not more solar power at Rossmoor, considering the abundant sunshine the community receives. None of Rossmoor's community buildings had solar panels and only a handful of residents, perhaps 10 to 12, had solar panels on their roofs. Everyone in the group was concerned about climate change, environmental degradation, pollution, and basically how to save the planet for future generations.

The group decided to form a club in order to have official status at Rossmoor as an advocacy group. And with club status, meeting rooms in the Multi-Purpose Rooms at Gateway would be free and the club could put notices in the Rossmoor News. To form a club the group had to round up a minimum of 20 members and formulate a mission statement. By August, the group had come up with the mission statement: "To advance solar power and other sustainable energy practices throughout Rossmoor", a name for the club—"Solar Powered Rossmoor"—and the requisite 20 members.

The club's first committee was the 1 megawatt solar array committee, whose goal was to convince the GRF Board to install an array that would provide the electrical energy for all of Rossmoor's community buildings. To accomplish this goal, the committee had to find out how much electrical power all the GRF community buildings used in a year and then to submit that data to solar contractors and solicit bids for construction of the array—bids which would then be presented to the GRF Board. This was an onerous and complicated process, taking approximately one year to complete. (See Solar Array Committee)

In the meantime, club members saw other areas in Rossmoor where environmental sustainability was sorely lacking and so other committees were formed—the Water Conservation Committee with its sub-committee The Landscape Working Group, and the Del Valle Renovation Committee. Members brought many issues of concern to club meetings—heavy pesticide use at Rossmoor, the need to promote Community Choice Aggregation for renewable energy sources (now called CCE), and lack of recycling of organic trash.

Because of the expanded "mission" of the club, members voted to change the name of the club to "Sustainable Rossmoor" at the September 2015 meeting.

Club members have always believed that expanding awareness about environmental sustainability throughout the Rossmoor community should be a top priority. With this goal in mind, the club has sponsored many Rossmoor-wide informational events.

The first Rossmoor-wide event was about solar power—how it worked, how much it cost to install panels, how much money could be saved, etc. There were two parts to this event. First, Kent Steele, a solar consultant, gave a 30 minute Power Point presentation on solar energy and panel installation. His talk was followed by a panel of 5 Rossmoor residents who had installed panels on their roofs. They explained the process they went through within their Mutual and MOD and the cost benefits they received from rooftop solar. This event was held on October 23, 2014 in the Fairway Room at Creekside and was attended by approximately 75 people. Rossmoor's Channel 28 filmed the event and the following January broadcast it as part of a regular Channel 28 weekly programming.

Since that first event, the following Rossmoor-wide events have been sponsored:

January 24, 2015

Pete Shoemaker, a Renewables Program Coordinator for PG&E, spoke on residential solar installations.

March 31, 2015

Michael Sammet, an Adjunct Professor of Sustainable Design at UC Berkeley Extension

April 20, 2015

“Solar Town Hall” event featuring Jeff Parr, the President of Solar Technologies, who was the contractor chosen by The Villages Golf and Country Club in San Jose to build their 618kw solar array. He was joined by Tyson Grul, a representative of NextEra, who spoke about PPA financing—“Power Purchase Agreement” financing.

October 6, 2015

Marti Roach, representing the Citizens’ Climate Lobby in Contra Costa County

December 15, 2015

Dr. Udi Helman, a renewable energy consultant.

February 2, 2016

Susan Junfish, founder and Director of Parents for a Safer Environment, spoke on pesticide use and alternatives.

August 25, 2016

“Tice Creek and its Watershed” Rebecca Pollon, Rossmoor’s Landscape Manager, and Lesley Hunt, President of Friends of the Creeks

September 27, 2016

Walnut Creek Councilman and former Mayor Bob Simmons spoke on the City’s environmental programs—progress and challenges

December 6, 2016

David Hochschild, Commissioner on the California Energy Commission and Carter Lavin from the California Solar Energy Industry Association

The club welcomes input from all in the Rossmoor Community and especially welcomes new members who want to help Rossmoor become more and more environmentally sustainable.

[This SR History through December, 2016, was written by Anne Foreman, the first Recording Secretary of our club]