

LOCAL NEWS

# MCE boss gets raise amid discord over performance



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MCE has approved a \$36,000 raise for its chief executive officer, bringing her annual salary to \$568,828.

The salary increase for Dawn Weisz includes a 4% merit raise. Separately, Weisz also receives the annual Bay Area labor cost-of-living increase, which was 3.3% as of June, and benefits provided to all staff.

The executive committee of the company, formerly known as Marin Clean Energy, approved the hike in a 7-2 vote on Monday.

"I appreciate the board's partnership and ongoing commitment to MCE's mission to provide clean energy at stable rates for our communities," Weisz said Tuesday. "I remain focused on our work and the important progress ahead — lowering GHG emissions, strengthening our communities and keeping ratepayer dollars invested locally where they make the most difference."

Weisz's raise is less than she received the last two years, and does not include a bonus. Last year, Weisz received a 5% raise and a \$42,000 bonus; the year before, she got 5% and a \$116,000 bonus.

The smaller salary increase this year comes amid [strained relations](#) with some board members spurred by multi-million-dollar operating losses. MCE serves about 1.5 million people in Marin, Contra Costa, Napa and Solano counties.

In its fiscal year ending March 31, MCE's operating costs exceeded its budget by \$76 million. In the first fiscal quarter that ended June 30, MCE had a \$26.8 million operating loss that was tempered by \$6.7 million in investment income. In its year ending in March 2024, its budget and expenses were \$100 million apart.

The MCE directors from Marin who voted yes were Fairfax Councilmember Barbara Coler and Mill Valley Vice Mayor Max Perrey. The other directors voting yes were Concord Councilmember Laura Nakamura, Contra Costa County Supervisor Shanelle Scales-Preston, Pinole Councilmember Devin Murphy, Walnut Creek Mayor Cindy Darling and El Cerrito Mayor Pro Tem Gabe Quinto.

The no votes were cast by Belvedere Vice Mayor Sally Wilkinson and Larkspur Councilmember Gabe Paulson.

“My vote was based on the challenging financial climate, consideration of executive pay in other large CCAs using metrics like total mega-watt hour loads and total customers (e.g. AVA, Clean Power Alliance) and elevating fiscal transparency to the Board as an urgent priority which I have faith Dawn will pursue,” Paulson said in an email Tuesday. CCA stands for community choice aggregation, the kind of service MCE provides.

The other Marin directors declined to comment or did not respond to requests for comment.

For more than a year, many Marin directors on the 34-member board have called for more transparency, accountability and collaboration as MCE’s costs exceeded revenues. The Marin directors and public interest groups have sought better explanations about the strengths and weaknesses of its various energy contracts.

MCE staff provided more detail about the latest quarterly financials for Monday’s meeting. But public interest groups still called for a fuller accounting.

“It would be advantageous to MCE if there was ample time to have an informed discussion about financial results and their implications,” said Dan Segedin of the Marin Conservation League. “An operating loss of \$27 million (is) all the more reason to make the time through a standing finance committee.”

Weisz has resisted governance reform. That stance and ongoing operating losses prompted public comments opposing a raise.

“I see a split screen here where you have MCE under a fair amount of recent scrutiny, appropriately so, and at the same time you have an exceptionally well-paid CEO,” said Mimi Willard, president of the Coalition of Sensible Taxpayers, an organization in Marin. “The question is, what are the metrics that are being used to set and reward the compensation of your CEO? I think the public deserves to know.”

Willard asked if the pay was compared to “similar districts or agencies.” She asked if MCE has polled its board, the staff or the public. She asked if MCE was rewarding performance — “in other words, predictability as well as other results versus other similar agencies.”

“I would advocate that you postpone a compensation vote today pending a more complete review of the kind of metrics that I am suggesting,” Willard said. “If you nonetheless decide for whatever reason to proceed today with the vote, I think you should consider zero increase and zero performance award.”

Matt Salter, a Ross councilmember and former MCE director, said Weisz should be replaced, calling the company’s recent financial performance “unacceptable.”

“At \$532,000, Dawn’s base salary was the highest of all 25 CCAs,” he said of Weisz’s prior salary.

Aside from the executive committee action, Weisz announced four promotions for senior staff: a chief financial officer, two power resources staffers and a policy staffer.

“A couple of members of the executive committee voted no on the compensation package, which appropriately reflects the unresolved controversies surrounding MCE,” Willard said after the meeting. She noted the other promotions will increase its operating expenses.