

PAYING 5% LESS

River Islands sells electricity 5% less than PG&E does

By Dennis Wyatt

The 375 families that now reside in River Islands at Lathrop are enjoying electrical rates 5 percent lower than the rest of Lathrop, Manteca, and Tracy.

The reason is simple. They do not get their power from PG&E.

Instead they are served by the Lathrop Irrigation District. The public agency was formed by Cambay Group that is developing River Islands in consultation with the South San Joaquin Irrigation District.

Earlier this month the LID became free-standing from the PG&E grid after LID was able to get its own switchyard up. It is connected with high power transmission lines above Interstate 5 that were put in place early one Sunday morning when the CHP closed down the freeway so work could proceed.

The switch to a free-standing distribution system wasn't without a hitch. PG&E required River Islands to have everything in by specific date, which they did, before the new connection would be made.

PG&E ended up not being able to do the work as they previously agreed to schedule it. As a result load during a stretch of 100-degree plus days earlier this month threatened to overload the PG&E lines that had been serving the new community and have limited capacity.

The LID resorted to rolling brownouts that cut power during peak times of the day to the community's two schools and some homes.

The connection has been completed and LID now has the basic backbone of equipment in place that will be able to serve the entire project that will have 11,000 homes at buildout.

LID should be at 500 customers within the next several months as homes now under construction are completed.

River Islands project manager Susan Dell'Osso indicated Cambay Group is currently subsidizing the rates to make sure they are at 5 percent below PG&E rates as promised. As more customers are added, the subsidy won't be needed. As more and more homes are built the gap between LID and PG&E rates will continue to widen until they are 25 percent less.

LID, which has an elected board, is currently contracting customer service functions such as those that troubleshoot problems out to a private firm. The SSJID is handling the billing. The LID is moving next toward assuming those functions and accounting the equipment needed to do the work including vehicles.

Electricity started flowing in April 2013 through power lines to the River Islands Tech Academy.