

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, BORREGO SPRINGS COMMUNITY SPONSOR GROUP

APPROVED MINUTES

Wednesday, June 4, 2025, 4:30 p.m.

In-person at the Borrego Library, 2850 Country Club Rd, Borrego Springs & also via Zoom

THE PUBLIC IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO OUR MEETINGS

WE REPRESENT YOU WHEN ADVISING THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO ON LAND USE ISSUES

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

John Peterson, Chair	Present
Jim Dax, Vice-Chair	Attended via Zoom (unable to vote)
Bruce Durbin	Present
Bill Haneline	Present
Rebecca Falk	Present
Anne O'Connor	Present
Nancy McRae	Present
Seat #5 - Vacant	
Seat #9 - Vacant	

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING of April 2, 2025

MOTION: Bruce Durbin
SECOND: Bill Haneline
APPROVED: Unanimous of the six members able to vote

C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (will be limited to 3 min): Opportunity for members of the public to speak to the Group on any subject matter within the Group's authority that is not on the posted agenda.

No comments from the public. Public comments closed.

D. ACTION ITEMS:

1. Establish meeting schedule for the Sponsor Group through the Summer and Fall 2025.
The next meeting is going to be a Special Meeting, as it is not our typical meeting day the first Wednesday in each month. The meeting will be Monday, October 6 at 4:30 in the library and on ZOOM. There will be no meetings in July, August or September unless special business arises that requires a meeting; if so the Sponsor Group and the public will be so notified. Regular meetings will resume on November 5 and December 3.

E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:

1. **Report from SDG&E on the status of (1) the Borrego Springs Microgrid,** (2) the potential for getting power from Imperial County off the power line that runs along Highway 78. **SDGE representatives in attendance** via Zoom: Joe Britton, Sr. Mgr. Regional Public Affairs; Rob Knudsen, Mgr. Project Affairs - Regional Public Affairs; Jennifer Quijano, Project Affairs Advisor - Regional Public Affairs; Katie Giannechini, Principal Meteorologist - Fire Science & Climate Adaptation; Laurence Abcede, Mgr. Renewable/Alternate Power Generation; Beverly Raposa, Sr. Engr. Renewable/Alternate Power Generation.

Giannechini spoke on recent Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events in December and January. These affected the transmission lines through Warner Springs and Ranchita up to BS. On December 9-10, Santa Ana winds of 50-60 mph were forecast; they reached 95 mph. This coupled with low humidity, and a low rain YTD total resulted in a Red Flag warning. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) issued its first high rating since 2018. The exceedingly quick ramp-up in winds was a concern with operating the electric grid even though it was a short-lived Santa Ana (24 hours). A few weeks later in January, the first event developed on Jan 7, and there were six waves between then and Jan 24 with moderate to strong winds. **This was the driest start to winter in SD since record-keeping began in 1850.** There were wind gusts up to 102 mph; 54 of SDGE's 223 weather stations reached all time maximum wind gust records in Jan. That was the background for the decision making: widespread, strong winds, and very dry vegetation.

Raposa spoke on the status of the microgrid. Power Point Presentation below:

BACKGROUND Installed in 2013, America's first and largest community-scale microgrid.

- Microgrids - a mini local power grid that can disconnect/connect from the main grid during outages to supply power to the local community.
- Microgrid keeps critical facilities such as fire and sheriff stations, schools, gas stations, markets energized during outages.
- Demonstrates the capabilities of renewable generation and new technologies to enhance energy reliability.

Challenge - BS is connected to the grid by a single transmission line.

- Experiences many outages of PSPS events due to the extreme weather - heat, monsoonal rains, high winds.
- Uses technologies such as energy storage, generators, solar (farm/rooftop) and special controls to power critical loads and specific neighborhoods in an outage.

NORMAL CONDITIONS

- Microgrid is typically dormant and main grid provides power to BS.
- Local solar plants export power, battery storage and ultra-capacitors are "charged and ready" to provide grid support.

GRID OUTAGE SCENARIOS

Planned Outage - scheduled compliance maintenance and repair

- Microgrid seamlessly transitions to and from the regional grid to provide power.
- Island Mode on Demand - operates both locally and remotely to support and respond to an outage.

Unplanned Outages:

- Microgrid can be activated to restore power.
- Community Safety First - SDGE must patrol the region/lines to identify and isolate any cause of the unplanned power outage.
- Once Safe, Microgrid Activated - using the batteries and/or generators to power the community and critical facilities - fire and sheriff's station, local gas stations, food mart, etc.

Day vs Night Outages:

- During the day - microgrid harnesses power from the batteries, generators, local solar plants and rooftop solar to power the community
- During the Night - microgrid's batteries and generators can only power designated critical load areas. As needed, non-critical loads are shed to balance load vs. generation to maintain microgrid stability.

PROGRESS OF MICROGRID ENHANCEMENTS

February 2023 - Generators failed during 61-hour operation resulting in microgrid out of service.

California ISO approval for BESS testing charge/discharge onto grid. *(No date on power point.) Note: ISO means Independent System Operator, a non-profit organization that manages and coordinates the transmission grid in a region to ensure reliable electricity delivery. ISOs operate independently of power generators and distributors.*

December 2025 - Complete integration of remote microgrid control systems.

Other notes from presentation: storage, diesel generation, leverage solar on rooftop and special controls; Energy storage systems - 1st system was vintage 2010, 500 kWh. The 2nd system installed 2013. The ultra-capacitor helps with frequency stabilization as well as 2 new diesel generators and new Tesla batteries. Load bank helps during operation. Local solar export power, battery storage and ultra-capacitor are "charged and ready" to provide grid support. Another system under construction much larger is 9 hours of battery energy storage.

Planned Outage: Allows time to schedule support for microgrid. When planned outage starts see transition from grid to microgrid. Operates both locally (team on site) and remotely. Support for the whole duration of the outage.

Unplanned Outage: Microgrid can be activated to restore power.

Day vs Night Outages: during the day microgrid harnesses power from batteries and local solar. Night is solely relying on batteries and generators (no solar).

Progress of Microgrid Enhancements: February 2023 diesel generators failed during replacement of transmission poles, Much larger battery asset was needed. August 2024 installation started, March 2025 generators commissioned/fully functional, battery storage still in commissioning process, California ISO - batteries participating in market to keep rates lower. Goal by September local on-site control of all of the microgrid system, by end of year, complete integration of remote microgrid systems.

Extensive testing this morning of existing microgrid yard (w/o new batteries). Stress tested assets. Believe that on a case-by-case basis should be able to support community with existing assets.

Questions from BSCSG members and the public

Falk: Are you taking solar power that you're storing and selling it? New Tesla batteries were supposed to be for protection of community. How many homes will be protected.? A: Laurence - the battery will be placed in marketplace to support the reliability of the entire grid. Used in evening hours when peak energy and no solar; when need is high ISO deploys batteries. Falk: what % of customers will benefit when used for emergency conditions? A: Connected to everyone on grid if you have service with SDGE. For 80% of the conditions, we can keep 100% of the customers on line. Outliers - Heavy loading in evening hours or agriculture using pumping heavy load. As long as we can get a continuous flow of fuel for diesel generators, they are there to extend the life of the microgrid.

Haneline: Solar and generators are for servicing batteries - keeping them charged? A: Yes.

MP (Member of the Public): How long can the batteries supply 100% power to community during extended outage? A: For 80% of the conditions, loads are manageable. Once new battery is ready we can supply support for entire community as long as diesel fuel is available. Currently can supply about 3 megawatts - the center of town could be supported with microgrid right now. Once new batteries are available we can pick up entire community, for a long period of time.

McRae: Diesel is trucked in. 4000 gallons for each generator on site, 2 generators, 8K gallons, Is there a chance that diesel would not be available when needed? A: Sourced from Imperial Valley or Orange County and Temecula. Can pretty much truck it in on demand. Can refuel while generators are running.

MP: During 2024 we were down for quite some time. Big concern was food going to waste, at least it wasn't when A/C was needed. Would you consider rolling blackouts like you do in the rest of the county until new batteries are in? A: Part of stress test this morning was to simulate the type of behavior the battery might experience as you rotate outages, we did see some favorable results, but must review data; for an unplanned outage in close touch with public affairs guiding them in usage priorities of community; stability is the goal, don't want to collapse frequently.

MP: We know that the field of battery storage is evolving rapidly, will these large scale projects become obsolete before they come online? They will have devastating impacts on soil, flora and fauna. How do you allow for changes in technology to inform your policies? Do you have a system in place to recognize tech improvements that could scale down the size of projects? A: Looking at best technology for the use case. First batteries installed are very early vintage, by taking care of these batteries they continue to operate well, have exceeded lifespan of 10 years, looking for batteries that have high sustainability characteristics. We have recycled batteries in the past, there has been a lot of investment in how to re-use batteries (not recycle).

MP: Is the microgrid in BS able to be isolated? A: Yes. Q: You have to have staff on site to do that? A: When new microgrid is fully integrated, we can start batteries remotely to pick up some of the load, not in a position yet to start up generators completely remotely, is possible, but need to go through some trials to be sure it's operated safely. Q: will you be always on site or remote in future? A: remote in control center in Mission Valle. Q: do local people know how to put out a fire A: Yes

Haneline: Have generators and batteries been subjected to the extreme temps in summer? A: Batteries since 2012, have had to replace HVAC systems and fire suppression systems, generators will be de-rated so that they're not damaged in high heat conditions,

Petersen: We've been talking about the microgrid for 15 years, yet it's always "in the future" we appreciate all the work, the plan is for completion in Dec 2025. Can I put this on the agenda for Jan 2026 and get a report on completion. A: I think that's safe. If there are unforeseen circumstances in Q425, I'll reach out to you and provide you with an update. Q: Would like another tour for community in 2026 A: We'll start to put tour plans together later this year and schedule when it is safe to do so.

Q: Why can't we get power from Imperial County? A: Exchange agreement with SDGE and Imperial Irrigation District (IRD). If there is a momentary outage when you do switch over; so it's a collaborative approach, IRD must be ready to take on additional load and willing to take on the risk. In Jan, they weren't ready for fire risk associated with that event. Still in negotiations.

MP: I know there's a program to increase resiliency in BS. A: Yes, BS can be isolated from grid, in Dec/Jan the microgrid was still not available, have made progress since then. Q: Is it a hydrogen battery? A: No. Technology is still evolving. Q: Is SDGE using them anywhere? A: Small asset in North County, experimental and also at Palomar, still learning and gaining more experience. Q: Is there a greater fire risk with diesel and lithium? A: Keep tanks pretty close to full. When we need to use generators, diesel trucked in. Q: Can any microgrids be off-grid completely? Do you see more capacity as part of future? A: Have approved letter on remote grids to cut line to utility to reduce fire risk. Even tho we have approval, the funding is limited and need approval. Have experience with mobile batteries, can connect them as we need to.

MP: Can you shut off mountain areas without shut off BS? We were told it was not possible to shut off one without shutting off the other. Mountains have been shut off multiple times without shutting off BS, so people could come to BS for safety and electricity. A: It depends. Only one transmission line to BS and it did experience heavy winds. The usual options didn't apply.

2. Report from the County regarding the new County Ordinance regarding safe camping. Presenting Quentin Brooks, San Diego County. Joanna Contreras, Frank Arbelo.

The County has added enhancements to current camping ordinance relating to unauthorized camping in unincorporated area. Reported back to CBOS (County Board of Supervisors) on March 11 with options and May 20 they were adopted. Goes into effect 30 days later. Addressed fire risk, added additional protections for open space and public infrastructure- amendment as to how enforced. We are a resource when engaging with this population, team will go out and try to offer services, housing, mental health, temporary hotel; don't want to criminalize, want to help. After providing resources, if it's deemed that they are camping in a public property and pose some risk to safety, fire, disease - enhancements can be enforced. Sheriff is enforcing ordinance. This is another tool in the tool box when it comes to having this population removed from certain areas.

Questions from BSCSG members and the public

Haneline: Homeless camps have been on church property. Is the only way that citizens can do anything is to use "Tell Us Now" app? A: Yes, Dept of Public Works (DPW) maintains only on public lands, on private development, it's different people, so the app can help put in touch with people who can help with those camp on private property. Staff goes out and monitors facilities and performs clean up as needed. Planning & Development Services (PDS) team. They work together.

MP: City of SD had a lot of problems with safe camping sites - trash, drunkenness, location. What kinds of location restrictions does the county put in place? A: All public county property - county owned or operated; park, public infrastructure buildings (ex. Library); we're already doing this, this strengthen our ability to enforce. Can't ban someone from a public space. They have teams out in the field everyday, patrol and enforce homeless camp abatement; we're knocking things down right away.

MP - Spoke in favor of homeless people. There's nowhere for people to go.

3. Report from Bri Fordem regarding the status of Power Lines within the Park.

There has not been a lot of progress. Context: 500K KW line set to run through the park. Nexterra (in California, but owned by company in Florida) won the bid they will submit application in 2026, will be reviewed for the proposed route. In Jan 2025 a streamlined process was released between the 3 agencies - new rules now, they have put our meetings on hold until they know more about streamlining in context of project. The 3 agencies are the California Energy Commission, the CPUC (Public Utilities Commission) and the California Independent System Operator. Together they oversee the state's energy policy, regulation and electricity grid operation. 131E order adopted by CPUC in January 2025 updates rules for the CPUC's electric infrastructure permitting processes. Group of 5 organizations has submitted a request for re-hearing, new ordinance diminishes environmental review, hasn't heard anything, huge push to meet renewal energy goals, there is not a voice for protected lands

or designation wilderness, we've had a proposed line threaten the park, there is already a line through the park that was put in long before protections, non-legislative process, executive/admin orders.

Questions from the BSCSG members and public

Q: All above ground? A: nothing underground, too expensive

Q: What are the other groups we're partnered with? A: not for this particular line, the Farm Bureau, Protect our Communities Foundation; Center for Biodiversity, very diverse group

Haneline: Grapevine Canyon? A: owned by SDGE not an option, looking for a brand new option. One of the ways they're proposing to streamline is if you can attach to an existing line, you can circumvent public process. That should incentivize someone to hook into existing line. Q: renewal power sources don't exist, line comes before source? A: 3 agencies decide how much power we need, here's the map of where it needs to go, here's how it goes.

MP: Have they identified the other 3 routes? A: No, they haven't shared any info. We need a route around it.

MP: Does CEQA still exist? A: CEQA process is intact. In the 131E order, there may be things they will try to fit into that to get streamlining.

MP: Have you considered proposing where it would be acceptable? A: Want route of least impact. I've never seen a civic project un-designate wilderness. She has reached out to Desmond's office. Change mitigation terms, change amount of time CEQA has to look at things, educating decision makers. Fighting for state parks to be exempt from all streamlining.

Falk: If there's a role we can play at the state level, let us know. A: Residents of BS need to understand what is going on. Seeing lots of things that could remove public review of proposals.

Q: Name of parent company? Inopah? A: She will get back to us.

4. Potential for establishing an award for individuals who have contributed to our community, led by Anne O'Connor.

Peterson: We have a number of big movers and shakers, but also a number of individuals that don't get acknowledged for all they do to help and assist. We could go to CBOS to get an award for people that make a difference. Example, the person who paints over the graffiti at old gas station. Do you think this is good idea?

Haneline: Yes, good idea, if we can get our Supervisor involved. A: Won't take much money, just a plaque.

MP: If you start giving out awards for picking up trash, you might get more people picking up trash. Park had a program called Adopt a Wash. (?). Maybe we could do something similar in community to encourage more people to volunteer. Anne O'Connor will take lead.

McRae - Need an outline of process to bring forward to the group.

Falk: Don't know how you would chose one person over the next. But she likes the idea.

Melissa Houston, member of the public, volunteered to help Ann.

F: GROUP BUSINESS:

1. Notice of vacation of seat #9 by Bill Berkley.
2. Search for candidates for vacant seats.
3. Summer vacation schedule.
4. Subcommittee Reports: None
5. Meeting Updates: None
6. Correspondence received: None

G. ADJOURNMENT

Nancy, anne, 6:38

MOTION: McRae

SECOND: O'Connor

APPROVED: Meeting adjourned at 6:38 pm

The Chair has appointed the following BSCSG Members to serve as points of contact for the following areas:

- a) Road Maintenance, Bill Haneline
- b) Dark Sky Ordinance and issues, Rebecca Falk

- c) Association of Planning Groups, Jim Dax
- d) Landscaping at the La Casa Solar Panel Field, Bill Haneline

Emails sent to the Chair at petersonenv@hotmail.com will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

To sign up for County of San Diego email or text notices about various programs and topics that you can choose, visit: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CASAND/subscriber/new?preferences=true#tab1> or search for the program at the county you want to find and scroll down to their email sign up link.

For further information and to be added to the Sponsor Group email list to receive agendas and agenda packets, contact the Chair at petersonenv@hotmail.com . Address U.S. mail to: Community Sponsor Group, P.O. Box 1371, Borrego Springs, CA 92004-1371. For agendas, minutes and Community Plan, visit: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/gpupdate/comm/borrego.html> .

Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group Members:

Chairperson: John Peterson; Vice-Chairperson: Jim Dax; Secretary: Nancy McRae

Members: Bruce Durbin, Bill Haneline, Rebecca Falk,
Anne O'Connor, Seat #5 and #9 vacate.

Standing Committees (with both Sponsor Group members and members of the public): None