

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOULEVARD PLANNING GROUP (BPG)**

*****MINUTES/SUMMARY FOR IN-PERSON MEETING HELD ON APRIL 7, 2022*****

A. MEMBERS PRESENT: 1) VACANT; 2) Earl Goodnight; 4) Donna Tisdale; 5) Michele Strand; 6) Michael Coyne; 7) Nancy Good. **ABSENT:** 3) Kevin Keane (unexcused)

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (optional):

C. ACT ON DRAFT MINUTES/ SUMMARY FOR, MARCH 3RD MEETING:

- *M/S: Good/Goodnight: Approve March 3 minutes/summary as corrected. Passed: 5-0-0*

D. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: No public comments on non-agenda items.

F. ACTION ITEMS (Agenda items may be taken out of order upon request):

1. **COUNTY STAFF WILL PRESENT REGIONAL DECARBONIZATION FRAMEWORK (RDF) UPDATE: PROPOSED CONCENTRATION OF LARGE RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS IN BOULEVARD & JACUMBA;** Comments due May 31: zerocarbon.Lueg@sdcounty.ca.gov; Project website: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/sustainability/regional-decarbonization.html>
 - Chair Tisdale commented on the vague RDF Maps that show that the Boulevard / Jacumba area is the most targeted for wind and solar in the County. The maps provided in the packet were from a previous version because she was unable to print current version. The figure numbers are different in the current version of the Draft RDF Summary for Policy makers: Figure # 5 Scenario 1 Wind and solar in San Diego County and & # 6 CPA Scenario 2 San Diego and Imperial County on pages 10-11.
 - Tisdale also noted that mid-day, before the meeting, both Kumeyaay Wind and Energia Sierra Juarez turbines were curtailed. Kumeyaay Wind was shut down at least part of the previous day, too. A common sight.
 - Local wind turbines are a nuisance with noise and flashing lights. Solar paves over fields and flood plains.
 - NextEra energy and subsidiary ESI Energy have been fined \$8 million for 150 bald and golden eagle deaths at 50 wind turbine projects in 8 states, including California. She considered \$ 8 million a drop in the bucket compared to all the subsidies and tax breaks they get.
 - Tisdale introduced County Staff, Murtaza Baxamusa, Program Manager for Regional Sustainability, Land Use & Environment Group.
 - Mr. Baxamusa provided 1-page Public Outreach Plan handouts. He said the RDF was a County initiative and not a mandate. They are working on solutions for climate emergencies. Regional analysis for transportation, energy, land use, and buildings. Analysis is intended to inform.
 - There have already been four updates for Board of Supervisors; 500 comments; including Imperial County. May 31st is the comment deadline; looking for opportunities based on assumptions for different scenarios (Figures 5 & 6).
 - Mr. Baxamusa stressed the fact that consultants who made the maps do not make the decisions. Staff will make recommendations to Board and Board will take action.
 - Tisdale pointed to large cumulative energy projects map and informed Mr. Baxamusa of all the different projects that have been planned, approved, constructed, pending, withdrawn, and those lingering local projects that were approved years ago, never built, and still hang over our heads. He seemed unaware of the scale and scope and was interested to learn that the ESJ Wind energy comes cross border from Mexico to connect to the grid via SDG&E's ECO Substation near Jacumba.

- She stressed the fact that the economically disadvantaged Boulevard / Jacumba area and her native Imperial Valley have been disproportionately targeted for huge and incredibly destructive, wind, solar, substation, high voltage lines, battery storage projects and more. Over 25,000 acres of productive farmland in Imperial County has been converted to industrial solar with few benefits for the locals, with loss of long-term seasonal farm jobs and multi-generational farm related services/ businesses.
- Mr. Baxamusa said they had a robust discussion in the RDF Energy Workshop held earlier in the day and learned that the cost of transmission was NOT included in consultants report showing Boulevard and Jacumba as least cost areas for energy.
- Cherry Diefenbach asked why her comments were not included on the website.
- Mr. Baxamusa said he had a slide showing all the comments including hers. The website does need to be updated. The public can go to <https://engage.sandiegocounty.gov/rdf> to comment.
- Nancy Good asked how the public can be sure that comments are received including by staff and Board.
- Larry Johnson said he was impressed at the day's 2 hour Energy Workshop with universities and scientists involved, but the targeted backcountry was passed over during workshop with little attention. Much more attention must be paid and Environmental Justice issues considered.
- Scott Hazelton asked what process was used to protect property values from all the energy / transmission projects.
- Teresa DeGroot echoed Hazelton's property value concerns. Campo Wind turbines planned for the Campo Reservation will be within approximately 1,000 feet of their home on private land. Too close.
- Mr. Baxamusa said they were talking about conservation value and did not have an answer on property values. He suggested that issue be included in comments.
- Tisdale said she includes that issue in every comment letter for years with no success.
- Michele Strand stated that SDG&E gets incentives for new transmission infrastructure while our bills are way up. Energy should be created where it is consumed not in our community, miles away.
- Andy DeGroot displayed a photo of the glare off the Boulevard Border Patrol station solar panels from his home on the hill to the west. He stated that the public has been lied to about cheap wind and solar. There is nothing cheap about it.

2. **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (MND) FOR LIVE OAK SPRINGS WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS – VOTE ON WELL # 6 ONLY:** No vote was taken at March meeting due to lack of time to review MND. Public comment closed on 3/31.

- Tisdale requested a vote to endorse comment letters submitted by Chair Tisdale and / or Michael Coyne that were previously provided to members and were included in agenda package. There were no objections.
- ***M/S: Strand/Goodnight: Endorse the comment letters submitted on the Live Oak Springs MND by Chair Tisdale (3/3/22) and Group member Michael Coyne (3/30/22): Passed: 5-0-0.***
- Tisdale also reported that Staff is now requesting a limited vote to recommend approval of just the Well No. 6 project to the Board of Supervisors.
- There was a public discussion on the overall project and long-term plans that include: 1)New secondary well; 2)Two new 100,000 gallon water storage tanks; 3)New booster pump station; 4) New water system piping; 5) Replacement of the existing primary well. Board of Supervisors vote on project is expected June 15th.
- The following concerns were raised:

- Scott Hazelton, the former local well driller who drilled adjacent wells on the Campo Reservation, for Golden Acorn Casino, strongly recommended that Well # 6 be sealed off for at least the first 100-300' to help prevent contamination from the surface of alluvial soil to help ensure better water quality for the water system. Sealing is usually required for commercial type wells.
- The same former well driller commented that placing an additional well only 250' from another operating well will impact the same cone of depression in the aquifer as the first well and potentially adjacent neighboring private and tribal wells.
- What is the status of the capped contaminated well located behind the main store in the open park area?
- Increased future 25% capacity production is a major concern.
- Old septic lines that include the old A frames may be compromised and leaking and should be looked into.
- County contact: gail.getz@sdcounty.ca.gov ; 858-877-0459: MND docs posted at: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/dpw/envrnsvcs.html>.
- ***M/S: Coyne/Goodnight: Approve construction of Well # 6 only: Passed: 4 yes; 0 No; 1 abstained (Nancy Good abstained, she lives across Old 80 from the well field)***

3. **VOTE ON APPLICATION FOR VACANT SEAT #1:**

- Chair Tisdale reported that Manuel Octavio Casanova, Jr. had applied for appointment to long-vacant Seat #1. His application had already been certified by the Registrar of Voters. Copies of the certification were provided to members.
- Seat 1 has been vacant and advertised for several years. The current term expires on 1/6/2025 along with all other odd numbered seats after 11/24 elections.
- Even numbered seat terms expire 1/2/23 after 11/22 elections.
- If Mr. Casanova is recommended for Seat # 1, the recommendation must be approved by Supervisor Anderson and the full Board of Supervisors. He will not be seated and able to vote until fully approved.
- Mr. Casanova was introduced to state his reasons for applying for seat.
- He said he had moved to Boulevard about a year ago. He works from home in cyber security. He loves it here. He has family in Jacumba who are concerned with the JVR Solar project. He wants to help preserve the area.
- Tisdale said that is what she wanted to hear.
- Earl Goodnight asked if he would be willing to run for election when the current term runs out. Casanova said yes.
- ***M/S: Coyne/Goodnight: Recommend Manuel Casanova for Seat # 1: Passed: 5-0-0***

G. GROUP BUSINESS, ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. **REVITALIZATION & FIRE SAFE COUNCIL REPORTS:**

- Mark Ostrander made both reports: Still working on Community Center repairs: Youth Martial Arts classes on most Saturdays; mattress and box springs recycling; call ahead for regular recycling; No tires; Chipping events April 16th at Backcountry Resource Center and 3rd Saturdays in May, June, July; Clean up events planned in August in Boulevard and Jacumba.

2. **REPORT ON COUNTY'S PLANNING & SPONSOR GROUP CHAIRS' MEETING HELD ON 3-19-22.**

- Earl Goodnight participated in place of Chair Tisdale.
- Virtual meeting was held via Microsoft Teams that did not work well on Earl's computer. He never got the video.
- Meeting included Land Use and Environment Group's budget presentation. They are moving to online Digital and mobile field apps to save \$1.8 million. If not, costs will go up.

- Trying to keep organics out of landfills through composting to reduce green house gas emissions.
- Proposing changes to allow more composting sites.
- Native plant use to reduce water consumption.
- Comments that Native Plants are hard to find at most nurseries.

H. PROJECT UPDATES:

1. BOULEVARD MICROGRID & STRATEGIC UNDERGROUNDING:

- CPUC conditionally approved the project on 12/2/21. SDG&E is reportedly still working through the final process with the CPUC but they are currently burying lines and installing transformers in Boulevard. Completion / online date expected to be August 2023.

2. 74 MW RUGGED SOLAR: PDS2017-MUP-12-007W1 MAJOR USE PERMIT MODIFICATION-NEW PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

- Chair Tisdale reported that the final public review / EIR Addendum public comment notice is expected next week and will be placed on the BPG May 5th agenda for a vote.
- The agenda packet includes two maps showing the previously approved project footprint and the proposed footprint, with a comparison table provided by Jim Whalen.
- Jim Whalen, project consultant, reminded everyone that the new solar PV units are about 7 ft tall instead of the Soitec CPV units, approved in 2014, that were about 30 ft tall.
 - The previously approved Major Use Permit (MUP), that stays with the property owner not the developer, was sold to Clean Focus / Greenskies.
 - New project is 74 MW vs 80 MW, matt black single trackers with reduced footprint and glare.
 - Asked for BPG May 5th vote to be positive or neutral.
 - Community Benefits lessons learned from JVR Solar. New Rugged Solar owner looking to update Community Center. Conducted walk around earlier in the day.
 - Should be able to renovate whole thing and to add services. Will ask County to match funds.
 - Project will not go to hearing until community benefit agreement reached with non-profit.
 - Talked to SDG&E in support of BPG's request for designation as Community Resource Center during Public Safety Power Shutoff events and other emergencies. Looking good.
- Questions / concerns raised included:
 - Maps do not include location of 26,000 sq ft substation that is almost 3 times the size of previous substation.
 - Why is 26,000 sq ft substation so much larger than previous 6,000 sq ft?
 - Grading / disturbance increases from over 28,000 cubic yards to 75,000 cubic yards.
 - On-site employees go from 20 with Soitec to -0- with Clean Focus/Greenskies.
 - In response to concern about lack of employees / local jobs, Whalen said jobs would not have gone to locals anyway.
- Current PDS Planner / contact: Regina.Ochoa@sdcounty.ca.gov .

3. 20 MW STARLIGHT SOLAR + 80 MW EXPANSION:

- Consultant, Jim Whalen, reported that the project will be located on the Haagen's 4,000 acre Empire Ranch between Jewel Valley Road and Tule Jim Road.
- This is his first solo project. Mr. Haagen wants no overhead lines and wants private views of project considered, which is not required by CEQA but was requested by BPG members during meeting.
- The Starlight Solar Visual Analysis Key Observation Points tried to block project views from private property. At least one property owner is impacted by project location on two sides of their property.
- Concerns were raised about ability to reduce / avoid impacts to non-participating owners and that buyouts should be offered at fair market value.

4. TERRA-GEN'S 252 MW-60 TURBINE CAMPO WIND PROJECT APPROVED BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON 3-17-21 WITH VOTE TO APPROVE BOULDER BRUSH FACILITIES. APPEAL OF FEDERAL APPROVALS OF CAMPO WIND FILED IN 9TH CIRCUIT COURT APPEAL ON 2-22-22:

- Campo Wind was approved for Campo Reservation land by Dept of Interior April 2020. Federal lawsuit filed 7-8-20. On August 6, 2021, the federal judge granted the Campo Band's Motion to intervene and dismiss the case. An appeal was filed in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on 2-22-22.
 - FAA approved 586' tall project turbines for second time despite SO CAL TRACON objections over significant aviation impacts. An appeal of FAA approval has been filed in the 9th Circuit.
5. **TERRA-GEN'S BOULDER BRUSH SUBSTATION FACILITIES PDS2019-MUP-19-002; PDS2019-ER-19-16-001; UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS 3-17-21:**
- CEQA lawsuit filed by non-profit challenging approval. In early 2022, the FAA approved the 32 transmission poles up to 150 ft tall to connect Terra-Gen's 60-4.2 MW Campo Wind turbines on the Campo Reservation to Sunrise Powerlink via the new substation and switchyard on private land.
 - See more project details at this link: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/ceqa/BoulderBrush.html>
6. **90 MW JACUMBA VALLEY RANCH ENERGY PARK (JVR SOLAR); APPROVED BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON 8-18-21. CEQA LAWSUIT CHALLENGING APPROVAL WAS FILED ON 9-20-21:**
- CEQA lawsuit filed challenging project approval is still unresolved. Project documents are posted at: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/ceqa/MUP-18-022.html>.
7. **ENERGIA SIERRA JUAREZ (ESJ) WIND II-EXPANSION COMMENCES OPERATIONS:**
- FEB 8, 2022: Sempra announced commencement of operations for 108MW (26-Vestas V150-4.2MW) expansion of existing 155 MW ESJ Wind I project (47-3.3 MW turbines) on 13,000 acres south of the border just east of Jacumba and Ejido Jacume. Energy is exported cross border to ECO Substation per Power Purchase Agreement with SDG&E: <https://www.sempra.com/energia-sierra-juarez-phase-ii-wind-farm-commences-operations>
8. **TERRA-GEN'S 126 MW TORREY WIND PROJECT WITH 30-4.2 MW TURBINES: PDS2018-MUP-18-014:**
- No project progress reported since approximately 2018. Torrey Wind will rely on Campo Wind's approved but not yet built Boulder Brush Substation.
 - PDS extended their project resubmittal with a due date of *March 24, 2022. No word on current status:*
 - Project details: <https://www.sandiegocounty.ca.gov/content/sdc/pds/ceqa/TorreyWindNOP.html>.
9. **TULE WIND PHASE II-69MW:**
- Currently permitted to erect up to 24 new turbines on State land and the Ewiiapayaap Reservation, with a capacity of 69 megawatts, as expansion to existing 131.1 MW Tule Wind I with 57 -2.3 MW turbines. No progress since approximately 2016: <https://www.eastcountymagazine.org/state-approves-tule-wind-phase-ii-opponents-voice-concern-eagles-wildlife-residents>
10. **BOULEVARD ENERGY STORAGE PDS2017-ZAP-17-006:**
- 100 MW battery storage project proposed to connect to Boulevard Substation is on the County's idle project list. County was reportedly going to send letter to applicant to withdraw, reactivate, or move forward for denial after April 30, 2022.
11. **60 MW 420 ACRE BOULEVARD SOLAR MUP12-010TE PDS2012-3300-12-00 @ 796 Tierra Del Sol Road:**
- No project progress reported. Approved in 2014 and terminated by Soitec Solar in March 2015. Invenergy withdrew from project in 2018. Absentee owner still promoting it. Permit reportedly expires in July 2022, unless extended further.

I. MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9 PM: NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2022.

MINUTES APPROVED AT MEETING HELD ON 5-5-22

Michele Strand, Secretary: 

For More information contact Donna Tisdale, Chair at 619-766-4170 or tisdale.donna@gmail.com ;
Current and past meeting agendas and approved minutes are posted on the County website @
<http://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/gpupdate/comm/blvd.html>