

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOULEVARD PLANNING GROUP (BPG)
*****MINUTES / SUMMARY FOR MEETING HELD ON APRIL 6, 2023*****
COMMUNITY ROOM IN BACK AT 39919 RIBBONWOOD ROAD, BOULEVARD, CA, 91905

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

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (optional):

C. MINUTES/ SUMMARY FOR FEBRUARY 2ND MEETING / MARCH 3RD MEETING WAS CANCELLED:

- *M/S: Goodnight/Keane: Approve February 2, 2023 minutes/summary as written. PASSED: 6 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT*

D. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: No public comment was made.

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

1. **APRIL 12 COMMUNITY MEETING AT 6PM AT BACKCOUNTRY RESOURCE CENTER EQUIPMENT BAY. 100 MW STARLIGHT SOLAR PLUS BATTERIES PLANNED FOR 565 ACRES IN 8 EMPIRE RANCH AREAS OF JEWEL VALLEY AREA; MAJOR USE PERMIT (MUP) NOTICE OF PROJECT: PDS2022-MPA-22-006. 20 MW POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT REPORTED WITH SDG&E: DISCUSSION AND VOTE:**
 - Project is industrial scale 100 MW solar facility with battery energy storage system (BESS), collector substation, transformers, inverters, gen-tie line, and 24' internal roads, water tanks for fire protection, security fencing, lighting, and signage. South of I-8 and Old 80 and east of Tierra Del Sol Road. Project has proposed eight solar array areas with approximately 300,000 PV modules on support structures.
 - **Comment deadline is April 24, 2023.** Project documents are posted at: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/ceqa/PDS2022-MUP-22-010.html> .
 - County project manager: Ashley.Smith2@sdcounty.ca.gov (619) 857-8012.
 - Chair Tisdale expressed her opinion that the Starlight Solar project is too big, too close to neighbors, is planned for extremely sensitive areas that will displace wildlife. Cumulative impacts from multiple projects just exacerbate the impacts. Project batteries and other electrical infrastructure will be introduced and will significantly increase fire risk in an area with only one road in and out.
 - One project neighbor on Tule Jim Road expressed his strong opposition and major concerns over traffic, blasting in fracture rock areas that can interfere with existing residential wells, property values, fire risk, quality of life and more. He has lived here for decades and does not support these projects.
 - Tisdale responded that she personally opposes Starlight Solar and all other major rural wind and solar projects when there are significant alternative options for roof top, parking shade cover, and infill projects closer to the end user.
 - Tisdale also stated that today's political climate and so-called green agenda has made it virtually impossible to stop these projects, especially for small rural communities, even with litigation.
 - It is important to show up at the April 12th hearing and express your opinions on the project.
 - Other planning group and community members expressed concerns on the following issues:
 - Request to use less flammable Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP or LiFePO4) instead of Lithium Ion (Li-on) that are subject to burst into flames and thermal runaway.
 - Increased fire risk and limited water supplies to fight fires.
 - Property rights and quality of life impacts for adjacent neighbors.
 - Well interference in both Boulevard and Jacumba through ground water extraction for construction and blasting during construction process.
 - Valid mitigation and project screening needed for impacted neighbors.

- Tisdale said she asked Mr. Haagen to buy out willing neighbors who will be harmed by his project.
- Several Jacumba residents concerned with potential to use JCSD water for project construction that in past has reportedly lowered water levels in private residential wells in the area during construction of previous energy / transmission projects.
- Questions were raised over potential community benefits and the fact that community benefits cannot and do not make up for adverse impacts for neighbors and the community overall.
- Project consultant, Jim Whalen, said the developer has agreed to use Lithium Iron Phosphate batteries for the project and underground gen-tie lines. They expect to source water from JCSD and will be working with community on benefits and mitigation options.
- Project is expected to start construction in 2024 with operation expected in 2025.
- Whalen confirmed Tisdale's comment that many projects have been stalled due to supply chain issues for project components and increased prices.
- A straw poll of group members indicated 3 potentially in favor or project and 3 opposed.
- ***M/S: Good/Casanova: Authorize Chair Tisdale to submit comments by April 24th deadline: PASSED: 6 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT.***

2. **SHOULD THE BOULEVARD PLANNING GROUP JOIN OTHER SPONSOR AND PLANNING GROUPS IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREA SEEKING CHANGES TO POLICY I-1 NEEDED TO ALLOW A REQUEST FOR AN ADVISORY SEAT AT THE SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS (SANDAG):**

- Review and take action on whether or not to endorse the proposed Policy I-1 changes and approval of the sample letter, or similar letter, to the SANDAG Chair, Vice-Chair and First Vice-Chair.
- The proposed changes to Policy I-1, that are needed to pursue goal, were reviewed along with the sample letter produced and provided via the coalition of community planning and sponsor group chairs that have been working on this effort to gain an advisory seat on the SANDAG Board of Directors.
- One community member did not think this was the best way to pursue the goal. And that Policy I-1 will be up for review later this year.
- I-1 review presents opportunity for this effort to be addressed.
- Everyone else present expressed support for the current effort.
- ***M/S: Casanova/Goodnight: Authorize Chair Tisdale to submit letter to SANDAG based on sample letter: PASSED: 6 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT.***

F. GROUP BUSINESS, ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Tisdale announced that, after 32 years as a volunteer community planner, she is resigning from the Boulevard Planning Group, effective as of April 25, due to the pending sale of her home and plans to move out of state.
- *The Draft CAISO 20-year Transmission Outlook dated 4-3-23 includes 23 projects at estimated cost of \$9.3 billion over next ten years.*
- *No big SDG&E transmission projects are currently proposed for our area of East County.*
- *A new SDG&E Imperial Valley – N. SONGS 500 kV line is proposed from Imperial Valley north and then west between Lakeside and Escondido area to San Onofre area and then further northeast /north.*
- *Tisdale provided info showing that California residential utility rates are 73% higher than US average and is up 28% since 2020.*
- *Between 2008 to 2022 California's all-sector rates have increased 80%*
- *Rates will continue to go up with all the new wind, solar, and transmission required for alleged 100 % renewable.*

- **New California bill aims for more solar over parking lots and along highways.** (Senate Bill 49. SB 49) A new bill authored by California Sen. Josh Becker and sponsored by Environment California would encourage solar canopies over parking lots and direct the state to plan for solar power along its highways.
- More than 60 environmental organizations signed a letter of support for this legislation, saying existing developed areas like parking lots and highways should be used to their fullest extent to capture solar energy. <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2023/03/new-california-bill-more-solar-over-parking-lots-along-highways/>
- Jim Whalen reported having a meeting next week regarding Hamann Companies 5 million square feet of existing commercial roof space that is potentially available for solar.

1. REVITALIZATION & FIRE SAFE COUNCIL REPORTS:

- Mark Ostrander reported for both:
- SDG&E's fire safe event for Boulevard closed just before April 6th BPG meeting. 7 people showed up.
- There are 5 grants in the works for Real East County Fire Safe Council. Next meeting is April 17th.
- Food Security grants for hot food for seniors with bus service to Backcountry Resource Center (BCR).
- BCR food pantry is now open 8-12 on Mondays.
- BCR currently has no fire insurance due to cancellation of policy with costs escalated to over \$15,000.
- Supervisor Joel Anderson's office has not returned Mark's calls for assistance.
- Anderson has granted funds to numerous other communities, including Alpine Community Center and recreation at Wrights Field
- Jim Whalen said he would reach out to Anderson and recommended that Mark contact Greg Kazmer.

G. PROJECT UPDATES:

1. UPDATED CAISO GRID QUEUE WIND & SOLAR PROJECT LIST FOR BOULEVARD / JACUMBA AREA:

- Tisdale provided update:
 - New list with additional local projects will be published in late April.
 - 5 projects with 860 MW of wind and solar are already operating or approved in the area.
 - 26 projects with 4,240 MW of additional wind and solar are in the CAISO grid queue to connect to local grid.
 - Another 25 local wind and solar projects with 4,567 MW were withdrawn from the CAISO grid queue, after local push back.
 - 4 additional solar projects were proposed for 1,142 Boulevard acres but never applied for place in CAISO grid queue.
 - Unsubstantiated information received that Manzanita Reservation has approved a new wind turbine project. Speculation that any new project in that area could connect to Boulder Brush Substation.

2. REGIONAL DECARBONIZATION FRAMEWORK (RDF):

- A lawsuit was filed by The Protect Our Communities Foundation (POC), alleging conflict of interest with main author of RDF's author and focus on developing rural wind, solar, and transmission projects in Boulevard and Jacumba instead of solar on rooftops, parking lots and other infill locations in the already built environment.
- The RDF failed to include billions in costs for new transmission for new rural projects.
- Tisdale pointed to articles included in the agenda package describing the POC lawsuit.
- It was reported that a large group of Jacumba residents showed up at recent San Diego Community Power (SDCP) meeting on amendment to JVR Power Purchase Agreement.
- It was further reported that Terra Lawson-Remer relied on support from IBEW labor activists to push through the JVR PPA amendment.
- That amendment was necessary due to changes caused by delay caused by lawsuit and increased costs.
- At that same SDSCP meeting, there were complaints regarding the larger than expected number of those opting out of SDCP.
- SDCP also voted in 100% renewable energy by 2035 without discussion of all related costs that can only result in increased utility rates when many are already struggling to pay currently high rates.

- Many believe that will move to 100 % renewables can only result in major rate increases.
 - Most are not aware that SDCP does not need CPUC approval to raise rates.
3. **TERRA-GEN'S BOULDER BRUSH FACILITIES (SUBSTATION GEN-TIE) PDS2022-MUP-19-002TE:**
 - The County vested Terra-Gen's project so their permit Time Extension application has been withdrawn.
 - On October 21, Judge Ronald Frazier granted Intervenor-Defendant Campo Band of Diegueno Mission Indians' Motion to Dismiss the legal challenge to the County's approval of this project, due to their sovereign immunity. Project docs and maps link:
<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/ceqa/BoulderBrush.html>.
 - An appeal by a non-profit is still in process.
 4. **74 MW RUGGED SOLAR PDS2017-MUP-12-007W1 MAJOR USE PERMIT MODIFICATION APPROVED ON 10-12-22. CONSTRUCTION EXPECTED TO START WITHIN A YEAR OR SO:**
 5. **DECORATIVE COMMUNITY SIGN:**
 - No news. Waiting for response to our interest from Kenton Jones at DPW.
 6. **SDG&E's BOULEVARD MICROGRID & STRATEGIC UNDERGROUNDING:**
 - CPUC approved the project on 6/23/22. It will serve selected Boulevard and Campo Reservation facilities.
 - SDG&E's Dallin Young provided an update:
 - Work is about 50 % complete.
 - Lithium-ion batteries will be used. (*BPG had requested that less flammable batteries be used)
 - Recent meeting with neighbor regarding complaint over project drainage during recent heavy rains.
 - More straw wattles are being added to reduce concerns.
 - Utilities are not subject to County regulations or permits.
 - Some Boulevard circuits are being placed underground to reduce fire risk.
 - In response to concerns raised, Dallin agreed to try to provide advance notice of which neighborhoods (boundaries) will be impacted and when.
 - SDG&E completed 65 miles of undergrounding last year and expect to complete another 120 in the next year or so.
 - Questions were raised about just how many rural residents will benefit from the Boulevard Microgrid project beyond just the specified facilities that have been identified.
 - General consensus was that all new energy infrastructure and changes significantly increase utility rates that are already too high and unsustainable for many families and businesses.
 7. **TERRA-GEN'S 252 MW-60 TURBINE CAMPO WIND PROJECT. ON OCTOBER 27th THE 9th CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS DIMISSED THE LEGAL CHALLENGE BASED ON TRIBAL SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY:**
 - 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 Dismiss the case based on sovereignty. The approval was appealed to 9th Circuit.
 - In 2021, the FAA approved the project for second time despite SO CAL TRACON objections over significant aviation impacts.
 - An appeal of FAA approval is still in process at the 9th Circuit.
 8. **90 MW JACUMBA VALLEY RANCH ENERGY PARK (JVR SOLAR); APPROVED BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON 8-18-21. CEQA LAWSUIT WAS FILED AND DISMISSED.**
 - 90 megawatt (MW) solar energy facility and a battery energy storage system of up to 90 MW (360 MWh) on 613 acres. Project documents are posted at:
<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/ceqa/MUP-18-022.html>.
 - Strongly opposed by residents and business entities.
 - An appeal is still in process.
 9. **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.
- Terra-Gen was granted another project time extension through March 22, 2023: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/ceqa/TorreyWindNOP.html>
- The CAISO Grid Queue report (#2177) shows a Boulder Brush Hybrid with 105.8 MW wind and 314 MW battery storage with an online date of 6/1/25: <http://www.caiso.com/PublishedDocuments/PublicQueueReport.xlsx>
- Tisdale expressed her opinion that this project will restart once Boulder Brush Substation appeal is resolved.

10. 60 MW 420 ACRE BOULEVARD SOLAR MUP12-010TE PDS2012-3300-12-00 @ 796 Tierra Del Sol Road:

- No project progress. Approved in 2014 and terminated by Soitec Solar in March 2015. Invenergy withdrew from project in 2018.
- Permit was set to expire at the end of July 2022. Another Major Use Permit Time Extension was reportedly being processed.
- It has been confirmed by Mr. Haagen that there is no easement across Empire Ranch for Boulevard Solar gen-tie line to substation.

11. ENERGIA SIERRA JUAREZ (ESJ) WIND II-EXPANSION COMMENCED OPERATIONS:

- FEB 8, 2022: Sempra commenced operations of their 108 MW (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 SDG&E's ECO Substation.
- Full capacity at build out is 1,000-1,200 MW.

12. SEMPRA'S CIMMARON WIND:

- New 300 MW wind & 500 MW Volta Mexicali battery storage project in Mexico announced for Jacumba border area. Both projects to connect cross border at SDG&E's ECO Substation. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/business/story/2022-10-28/sempra-power-purchase-deal-with-santa-clara>

13. 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>

H. MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 8:20 PM: NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY, MAY 4 2023.

Minutes approved by Group on May 4, 2023

Manuel Casanova, Secretary: *Manuel Casanova Jr*

For More information contact Donna Tisdale, Chair at 619-766-4170 or tisdale.donna@gmail.com; After April 25, contact Earl Goodnight at blvdgoodnight@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>

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