

County of San Diego
Jacumba Hot Springs Sponsor Group
Final Minutes from Special Meeting on October 29, 2020
Jacumba Hot Springs, CA. 91934

The Oct. 29, 2020 Jacumba Sponsor Group (JSG) Special Meeting (via Zoom) was called to order at 4:07 pm.

A. Members Present: Seat 1. Lonna Marshall; (Seat 2. VACANT); Seat 3. Cherry Diefenbach; Seat 4. Michele Wilkins; and Seat 5. Helen Landman. (Public present: four.)

B. Pledge of Allegiance. (waived-due to virtual meeting format)

C. Motion/Second to approve minutes of the regular JSG meeting held on February 25, 2020: M/S: Wilkins/Marshall. Passed: 4-0-0. (Attachment 1)

D. Public Communication: The public may comment on any subject within the JSG's jurisdiction that is not on the posted agenda. (Speakers are limited to 2 minutes and no action can be taken on non-agenda items.) **There were no public communications.**

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

1. Discuss/vote on three Jacumba Sponsor Group members in odd-numbered seats due to expire on January 4, 2021. Those JSG members are: Lonna Marshall-Seat #1; Cherry Diefenbach-Seat#3; and Helen Landman-Seat #5. After discussion, Lonna Marshall (Seat 1) and Helen Landman (Seat 5) stated that they do not wish to continue serving on the JSG so seats 1 and 5 will become vacant on January 4, 2021. **Motion/Second to recommend Cherry Diefenbach (Seat 3) continue to serve on the JSG: M/S: Wilkins/Diefenbach. Passed: 4-0-0.**

2. Discuss/vote on Kathryn Graze's application for Seat #2 (Attachment 2). **Motion/Second to approve and recommend Kathryn Graze for JSG Seat 2: M/S: Diefenbach/Wilkins. Passed: 4-0-0.**

3. Discuss/vote on Jeffrey Osborne's application for Seat #4 (Attachment 3). Seat #4 becomes vacant on November 1, 2020 when Michele Wilkins moves out-of-state. **Motion/Second to approve and recommend Jeffrey Osborne for JSG Seat 2: M/S: Marshall/Landman. Passed: 4-0-0.**

4. Discuss/vote on the **Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed 90 MW Jacumba Valley Ranch Energy Park (JVR solar) (PDS2018-MUP-18-022); (SCH No. 2019039044)**. The JVR DEIR and Major Use Permit (MUP) were released on October 8, 2020 for public review and comment. The Project involves the construction and operation of up to a 90 megawatt (MW) solar energy facility. The JVR project footprint is approximately 643 acres on a 1,356 acre property formerly known as Ketchum Ranch. It is located immediately east, north, and south of the community of Jacumba Hot Springs; north, south, and west of the Jacumba Airport, for about a mile along both sides of scenic Highway 80; and south of the I-8 corridor near the Jacumba exit. The project will include the following:

--approximately 300,000 photovoltaic modules (12-feet high) mounted on single axis trackers which follow the sun from east to west

--75 battery storage containers-three containers at each site (55-feet long, 19-feet wide and 10-feet high)

--25 inverter/transformer metal platforms on skids (8-feet wide and 20-feet long) installed adjacent to the battery storage containers

--5,000-feet of underground electrical collection system

--an on-site collector substation (152-feet by 180-feet) and a 200-foot-long 65-foot-high overhead Slack span transmission line that connects the collector substation to the switchyard

--a 138kV switchyard (3.2-acres) (adjacent to the collector substation) with 1,860-feet of overhead transmission

lines strung on (five) 70-115 feet steel poles to loop the switchyard into the existing SDG&E Boulevard-East County Transmission Line

The DEIR includes several alternatives to the original JVR project: 1. No project alternative; 2. Community buffer alternative; and 3. Reduced project Alternative.

The County's Planning & Development Services (PDS) JVR project manager is Nicholas Koutoufidis nicholas.koutoufidis@sdcounty.ca.gov or 858-495-5329. JVR Project documents can be downloaded at <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/cequa/MUP-18-022/JVRAdminRecord.html>. A copy of the DEIR is located at the Jacumba Library.

During a discussion of the proposed project, the public and members of the JSG raised their concerns about the size of the project and its potentially negative impacts to Jacumba.

--Alasdair, a glider instructor, who trains glider students at the Jacumba Airport stated placement of solar panels in such close proximity to the airport poses a very real safety hazard--on more than one occasion, gliders have landed safely in the dirt beyond the runway. He also stated solar panel glare will be a flight hazard as gliders routinely circle above the airport for multiple passes before making a landing. (The Glaze study that is an appendix to the DEIR evaluates potential glaze impacts to small engine planes not gliders.)

--Kerry, a Jacumba resident, expressed concerns about the disruption of wildlife corridors if the massive project as described in the DEIR is approved.

--Beatrice, a Jacumba resident, was concerned elevated temperatures in town, due to a possible "Heat Island Effect" that may result when Santa Anna winds blow across 643 acres of hot solar panels. She also believes this project is a completely wrong use for the Jacumba Valley, a view shared by the vast majority of residents.

--Jeff, a Jacumba resident and new owner of the Jacumba Spa, believes the project will be the nail in the coffin to the prospects of vitalizing Jacumba. He and his partners recently made a huge financial investment in Jacumba as a destination for those seeking healing waters in a desert landscape. He believes that placing an industrial-size green energy project in the Jacumba Valley will ruin the town and drive away visitors and residents.

--Cherry Diefenbach stated that due to current COVID restrictions imposed by county officials, the CEQA process has been severely flawed. The placement of the DEIR at a library currently closed until November 4, 2020 that also serves as the computer resource for many residents clearly disenfranchises the public. The restriction to prohibit this JSG meeting from being held in person also limits community awareness of project details. The virtual (online-phone-in) public meeting sponsored by PDS was not an effective alternative to an in-person community meeting. Cherry also referenced the solar project's incompatibility with the Mountain Empire Subregional Community Plan adopted in 2011. **Motion/Second to approve the Community Buffer Alternative of the JVR Solar project. M/S: Marshall/Wilkins. Vote: Aye: 2 (Marshall, Wilkins); No: 1 (Diefenbach); Abstain: 1 (Landman). MOTION FAILED DUE TO LACK OF A QUORUM.**

Members of the public can submit written comments on the DEIR to: Susan Harris, Planning & Development Services, 5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 310, San Diego, CA 92123 or by email to: Susan.Harris@sdcounty.ca.gov. All comments must be received at PDS no later than November 23, 2020.

F. Group business and Project Updates-discussion only. There were no announcements or reports from community interface groups.

G. Meeting Adjourned at 5:05 pm. The next regular JSG meeting is tentatively set for Tuesday, November 24, 2020 at 6pm.

Minutes were approved on Dec. 22, 2020 at our regular Jacumba Sponsor Group Meeting.