

County of San Diego
Jacumba Hot Springs Community Sponsor Group
FINAL Minutes from Regular Meeting on March 16, 2021
Jacumba Hot Springs, CA 91934

The March 16, 2021 Jacumba Community Sponsor Group (JCSG) regular meeting (via Zoom) was called to order at 5:05 pm.

A. Members Present: Seat 1. Jacari Cousins; Seat 2. Greg Curran; Seat 3. Cherry Diefenbach; Seat 4. Jeffery Osborne. Seat 5. VACANT. Public present: 7. PDS Staff present: 3.

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

C. Motion/Second to approve minutes of the regular JCSG meeting held on December 22, 2020: M/S: Curran/Cousins. Passed: 4-0-0.

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 comments.

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

1. Presentations on the Environmental, Housing and Safety Elements updates to the General Plan were provided by Robb Efrid and Camila Easland, of the Planning Development Services.

2. The chair provided newly seated members of the sponsor group with a general overview of the Jacumba Valley Ranch Energy Park (JVR solar) (PDS2018-MUP-18-022); (SCH No. 2019039044) DEIR. The JVR solar project involves the construction and operation of up to a 90 megawatt (MW) solar energy facility. The project footprint is approximately 643 acres on a 1,356 acre property formerly known as Ketchum Ranch. It would be 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 includes 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 also included project alternatives: 1. No project alternative; 2. Community buffer alternative; and 3. Reduced project Alternative. The Planning & Development Services (PDS) project manager is Nicholas Koutoufidis nicholas.koutoufidis@sdcounty.ca.gov or 858-495-5329. JVR Project documents are available at <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/cequa/MUP-18-022/JVRAdminRecord.html>.

The chair also identified some of the JVR project's conflicts with vision statements found in the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan:

-- "Provide a land use pattern that will accommodate the forecast population increase, while retaining the rural charm of the present living environment."

“Single family residential development on large lots outside the rural village with undeveloped meadows, open spaces, and hillsides. The ability to experience large open spaces and views to distant hills is essential to the preservation of the areas present quality of life.”

“Industrial development is not compatible with the goal of maintaining the rural character of the sub-region...”

3. Discuss/identify possible elements of an alternative to the proposed JVR project that could make it more acceptable to the community. Meeting participants voiced concerns about the enormous size of the planned solar facility that is six times the size of the village of Jacumba, and its close proximity to private residences and the Jacumba airport. Alasdair Mullarney, director of operations for the glider club that operates out of the Jacumba Airport, reported that he has requested that the FAA complete another solar panel glare study as it pertains to glider operations since the one contained in the DEIR was inaccurate. Cherry Diefenbach voiced an objection to any solar array placement south of Old Highway 80 as it would impede the construction of a future international border crossing. Jeff Osborne stated that a massive solar facility would negatively impact future tourism and drive a stake through his plans for revitalizing local businesses. Katrina Westley believes that since San Diego County continues to lose agricultural lands to development, prime agricultural land, like that in Jacumba valley, should not be covered by an industrial energy project that provides no tangible benefit to the community. Others expressed concerns about the negative impacts to property values, as well as the destruction of community character. Jacumba residents believe this scenic valley should be used for a mixture of residential, agricultural, and recreational uses—land uses that would bring a new vitality back to this tiny disadvantaged and disenfranchised community.

In the past, Jacumba residents have supported other nearby large green energy projects. They would likely support a much smaller solar project. **Motion to support a 200-acre JVR solar facility located well north of the town with 1,500 foot setbacks from residences and all public roads, one that would utilize underground transmission lines to send generated power directly to the ECO Substation. M/S Curran/Osborne. Passed 4-0-0.** The Chair will provide the PDS project manager with these recommendations for a reduced JVR project.

F. Group business and Announcements-discussion only.

1. Announcements:

- a. The JCSG chair and other planning group chairs recently participated at a quarterly PDS training session. At that session, PDS was unable to predict when we might be able to resume in-person meetings.
- b. The chair reminded newly seated members of JCSG of the requirement to submit their Assuming Office Form 700 within 30 days of their appointment and to complete the required online Ethics training within two years.
- c. A vacancy notice for Seat #5 will be posted on March 17 at the Jacumba library and at the post office.

2. Community Interface Reports:

- a. **Fire Safe Council and Revitalization.** Ken Dubach reported that a Community Wildlife Protection Plan was developed for Jacumba. It may need to be updated but one does exist. Ken also reported on improvements to the Backcountry resource center in Boulevard. The center has an emergency generator, and satellite phone and internet systems, that will operate during power outages. Since Ken and his family are relocating out of state, Mark Ostrander will be the POC for future fire safe and revitalization reports. Ken and his wife, Tammy, have provided countless volunteer hours while serving the communities of Boulevard and Jacumba on a variety of groups. We thank them for their past service and wish them well.

G. Meeting was adjourned at 6:45 pm. The next regular JCSG meeting is set for Tuesday, April 20, 5:30pm. (Place to be determined.)

Minutes were approved on April 20, 2021