

**From:** [Koutoufidis, Nicholas](#)  
**To:** [Koutoufidis, Nicholas](#)  
**Subject:** RE: [External] JVR Energy Park Project (PDS2018-MUP-18-022); public hearing on August 18  
**Date:** Monday, August 09, 2021 4:09:56 PM

---

---

**From:** Ian Abramson <[ianabramson@gmail.com](mailto:ianabramson@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 09, 2021 3:00 PM  
**To:** Anderson, Joel <[Joel.Anderson@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Joel.Anderson@sdcounty.ca.gov)>  
**Cc:** Vargas, Nora <[Nora.Vargas@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Nora.Vargas@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Flores, David <[David.Flores@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:David.Flores@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Kazmer, Gregory <[Gregory.Kazmer@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Gregory.Kazmer@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Lawson-Remer, Terra <[Terra.Lawson-Remer@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Terra.Lawson-Remer@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Andrade, Evlyn <[Evlyn.Andrade@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Evlyn.Andrade@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Petterson, Cody <[Cody.Petterson@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Cody.Petterson@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Fletcher, Nathan (BOS) <[Nathan.Fletcher@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Nathan.Fletcher@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Wier, Emily <[Emily.Wier@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Emily.Wier@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Desmond, Jim <[Jim.Desmond@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Jim.Desmond@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Mills, Benjamin <[Benjamin.Mills@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Benjamin.Mills@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; FGg, Public Comment <[PublicComment@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:PublicComment@sdcounty.ca.gov)>; Slovic, Mark <[Mark.Slovick@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Mark.Slovick@sdcounty.ca.gov)>  
**Subject:** [External] JVR Energy Park Project (PDS2018-MUP-18-022); public hearing on August 18

Ian Abramson  
3861 Pringle St., San Diego, CA 92103.

August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Supervisors Joel Anderson, District 2,  
Nora Vargas, District 1,  
Terra Lawson-Remer, District 3,  
Nathan Fletcher, District 4,  
Jim Desmond, District 5, - and all their land-use advisors.

Dear Supervisors Anderson, Vargas, Lawson-Remer, Fletcher, Desmond, and their Land Use Advisors –

**Re: JVR Energy Park Project (PDS2018-MUP-18-022), and the coming public hearing on August 18<sup>th</sup>.**

A little background: I am a retired UC San Diego faculty member, living in San Diego. I have some land in the Boulevard district, about five miles from the planned solar project, but not in direct viewing distance of it. I hope this distance gives me standing to comment, but also some immunity from charges of pure NIMBYism where I express my concerns about the project.

The far southeast county, including the In-Ko-Pah and Jacumba Mountains (with Carrizo Gorge between), along with the escarpment down to the Imperial Valley, is a region of

exceptional scenic beauty of a rare kind. Unlike the greener postcard-quality beauty of the wooded lands further west, the terrain has a more rugged and austere majesty. It is a narrow transitional zone of high-desert chaparral, with extraordinarily diverse but fragile plant communities giving texture to a fantastic exposed geology of granite boulders and quartzitic and basaltic outcroppings such as Table Mountain just to the north of the planned project, on the border of the Anza-Borrego State Park. The region is sometimes compared to parts of Joshua Tree National Park. Stand on the ridge on the west side of Jacumba Hot Springs (whimsically called Snob Hill, to the annoyance of its residents), and the view east is stunning. Across a great plain extending far south into Mexico loom a low range and then the Jacumba Mountains dominated by Blue Angel Peak. The view west from the hill behind the disused airport, where there are abandoned houses, is equally breathtaking. To the north lie Round Mountain and the Table Mountain of legend with its worked-out mines and at least two species of threatened dudleya, including the rare, tiny *Dudleya abramsii*. The plain is bounded by distant hills to the south, but heading north it drains around a gap on the east side of Round Mountain to the beginning of the Carrizo Gorge, before the plunge to the low desert. Up here it has its own distinct plant community due to the high water table, supporting dense willow and two species of mesquite: honey mesquite, *Prosopis glandulosa* and the rarer screwbean, *P. pubescens*. I have encountered a mountain lion at short range in that zone. All these vistas would be tragically marred if the full 600+acre solar project went ahead.

Perhaps none of this would matter as much if Jacumba were destined to be stuck in its economic doldrums forever. It is not. A hundred years ago the hot springs and a grand multistory stone-fronted hotel made it a nationally known playground for the rich and famous. Outlying satellite towns, now ghost towns like Bankhead Springs, sprang up to accommodate the overflow of the rich-adjacent and famous-adjacent who couldn't quite make it into the main hotel. Then a double-whammy in the 70s: Interstate 8 bypassed the town, replacing Old Highway 80, which had passed through, and the hotel burned down, leaving the town in a slump that's persisted until now. But there are signs of life. The Spa has been bought and is being refurbished. People with some capital and vision have seen potential. A year ago Jacumba Lake was a foul-smelling, tamarisk-choked bog. After repairing a dam at some serious expense and a heroic community cleanup it is once again a big sparkling lake fringed with willow and San Diego sedge, with powerful jets of spring water feeding it, one hot and one cold, and swimmers and blanket-covered beaches and boats and children yelling. The De Anza Resort, on the other side of Round Mountain has also been bought, with plans afoot to spiff it up. There is finally buzz about the land market in the region. And even more anxious buzz about killing the goose that lays the golden egg, because people know that these prospects are fragile and much dependent on the physical beauty of the region.

Land around Jacumba is some of the most undervalued residential land in the county. It looks as if it's set for a boom – with the obvious accompanying boost to the tax base - which could equally easily be snuffed out by a reckless, irreversible assault on the obvious charm of the place. There is no reason why Jacumba might also not undergo significant expansion, with building for residential and other land uses - as long as it remains attractive. There is so much visually degraded land to our east, less desirable for residential use, on the Imperial Valley floor. Why choose a place of such special value and with so much other potential, for a utility

project like this?

That all said, there is some agreement in the community that the solar field should not be opposed in its entirety at this point. Green sentiments are generally strong; mine certainly are. Everyone is clear-eyed about the moral conflict in NIMBYism, and most of us concede that the forces behind the project have a case with influential backing. But we are already host to a lot of unsightly infrastructure: 108 acres under solar panels, 58 acres under the ECO substation, two Powerlinks, a 148kV line through town and **beyond**. Enough, surely. We're hoping for a compromise this time on the grounds that this patch of land is of exceptional and fragile value. A competing map has been submitted that would confine the field to a less conspicuous 300 acres to the northeast of town, leaving the viewshed from well north of Old Highway 80, and down to the border, more or less unaltered. The landscaping mitigations that have been offered by the developers to soften the view are band aids - perfunctory and useless in making up for what would be lost by their full 600-acre plan.

I'll end on a note of mild indignation, intending no disrespect. The southeast county is a poor region, thinly populated, but by a surprisingly close-knit community that loves this hardscrabble place and generally gets along with some humor. There is no economy out here to speak of, and there's a general weary sense of having no political clout. There is one sad recurring phrase that one hears whenever the topic of county governance comes up: that phrase is "dumping ground", as in "We are the dumping ground of the county." I could add a litany of detail on this (and the old-timers could add more), but simply there's a sense that the land-use and life-quality interests of the region are consistently overridden whenever there's a trade-off to be made against the interests of other parts of the county, or whenever it's the path of least resistance. Because indeed we can't offer much of that. We ask that the Board consider in good faith our request for a substantially curtailed project, or, at the least, give a delay, so that we can make our strong case stronger - on environmental-impact and other grounds. Thank you.

Sincerely -

- Ian Abramson

CC: Mark Slovick, Deputy Director, Planning and Development Services, Andrew Potter, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

[attachment]

Ian Abramson

3861 Pringle St., San Diego, CA 92103.

August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Supervisors Joel Anderson, District 2,  
Nora Vargas, District 1,  
Terra Lawson-Remer, District 3,  
Nathan Fletcher, District 4,  
Jim Desmond, District 5, - and all their land-use advisors.

Dear Supervisors Anderson, Vargas, Lawson-Remer, Fletcher, Desmond, and their Land Use Advisors –

**Re: JVR Energy Park Project (PDS2018-MUP-18-022), and the coming public hearing on August 18<sup>th</sup>.**

A little background: I am a retired UC San Diego faculty member, living in San Diego. I have some land in the Boulevard district, about five miles from the planned solar project, but not in direct viewing distance of it. I hope this distance gives me standing to comment, but also some immunity from charges of pure NIMBYism where I express my concerns about the project.

The far southeast county, including the In-Ko-Pah and Jacumba Mountains (with Carrizo Gorge between), along with the escarpment down to the Imperial Valley, is a region of exceptional scenic beauty of a rare kind. Unlike the greener postcard-quality beauty of the wooded lands further west, the terrain has a more rugged and austere majesty. It is a narrow transitional zone of high-desert chaparral, with extraordinarily diverse but fragile plant communities giving texture to a fantastic exposed geology of granite boulders and quartzitic and basaltic outcroppings such as Table Mountain just to the north of the planned project, on the border of the Anza-Borrego State Park. The region is sometimes compared to parts of Joshua Tree National Park. Stand on the ridge on the west side of Jacumba Hot Springs (whimsically called Snob Hill, to the annoyance of its residents), and the view east is stunning. Across a great plain extending far south into Mexico loom a low range and then the Jacumba Mountains dominated by Blue Angel Peak. The view west from the hill behind the disused airport, where there are abandoned houses, is equally breathtaking. To the north lie Round Mountain and the Table Mountain of legend with its worked-out mines and at least two species of threatened dudleya, including the rare, tiny *Dudleya abramsii*. The plain is bounded by distant hills to the south, but heading north

it drains around a gap on the east side of Round Mountain to the beginning of the Carrizo Gorge, before the plunge to the low desert. Up here it has its own distinct plant community due to the high water table, supporting dense willow and two species of mesquite: honey mesquite, *Prosopis glandulosa* and the rarer screwbean, *P. pubescens*. I have encountered a mountain lion at short range in that zone. All these vistas would be tragically marred if the full 600+acre solar project went ahead.

Perhaps none of this would matter as much if Jacumba were destined to be stuck in its economic doldrums forever. It is not. A hundred years ago the hot springs and a grand multistory stone-fronted hotel made it a nationally known playground for the rich and famous. Outlying satellite towns, now ghost towns like Bankhead Springs, sprang up to accommodate the overflow of the rich-adjacent and famous-adjacent who couldn't quite make it into the main hotel. Then a double-whammy in the 70s: Interstate 8 bypassed the town, replacing Old Highway 80, which had passed through, and the hotel burned down, leaving the town in a slump that's persisted until now. But there are signs of life. The Spa has been bought and is being refurbished. People with some capital and vision have seen potential. A year ago Jacumba Lake was a foul-smelling, tamarisk-choked bog. After repairing a dam at some serious expense and a heroic community cleanup it is once again a big sparkling lake fringed with willow and San Diego sedge, with powerful jets of spring water feeding it, one hot and one cold, and swimmers and blanket-covered beaches and boats and children yelling. The De Anza Resort, on the other side of Round Mountain has also been bought, with plans afoot to spiff it up. There is finally buzz about the land market in the region. And even more anxious buzz about killing the goose that lays the golden egg, because people know that these prospects are fragile and much dependent on the physical beauty of the region.

Land around Jacumba is some of the most undervalued residential land in the county. It looks as if it's set for a boom – with the obvious accompanying boost to the tax base - which could equally easily be snuffed out by a reckless, irreversible assault on the obvious charm of the place. There is no reason why Jacumba might also not undergo significant expansion, with building for residential and other land uses - as long as it remains attractive. There is so much visually degraded land to our east, less desirable for residential use, on the Imperial Valley floor. Why choose a place of such special value and with so much other potential, for a utility project like this?

That all said, there is some agreement in the community that the solar field should not be opposed in its entirety at this point. Green sentiments are generally strong; mine certainly are. Everyone is clear-eyed about the moral conflict in NIMBYism, and most of us concede that the forces behind the project have a case with influential backing. But we are already host to a lot of unsightly infrastructure: 108 acres under solar panels, 58 acres under the ECO substation, two Powerlinks, a 148kV line through town and up past Bankhead Springs. Enough, surely. We're hoping for a compromise this time on the grounds that this patch of land is of exceptional and fragile value. A competing map has been submitted that would confine the field to a less conspicuous 300 acres to the northeast of town, leaving the viewshed from well north of Old Highway 80, and down to the border, more or less unaltered. The landscaping

mitigations that have been offered by the developers to soften the view are band aids - perfunctory and useless in making up for what would be lost by their full 600-acre plan.

I'll end on a note of mild indignation, intending no disrespect. The southeast county is a poor region, thinly populated, but by a surprisingly close-knit community that loves this hardscrabble place and generally gets along with some humor. There is no economy out here to speak of, and there's a general weary sense of having no political clout. There is one sad recurring phrase that one hears whenever the topic of county governance comes up: that phrase is "dumping ground", as in "We are the dumping ground of the county." I could add a litany of detail on this (and the old-timers could add more), but simply there's a sense that the land-use and life-quality interests of the region are consistently overridden whenever there's a trade-off to be made against the interests of other parts of the county, or whenever it's the path of least resistance. Because indeed we can't offer much of that. We ask that the Board consider in good faith our request for a substantially curtailed project, or, at the least, give a delay, so that we can make our strong case stronger - on environmental-impact and other grounds. Thank you.

Sincerely -

- Ian Abramson

CC: Mark Slovick, Deputy Director, Planning and Development Services, Andrew Potter, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors