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**FW: The Rancho Viejo BESS project**

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**From** Hank Hughes <hhughes@santafecountynm.gov>  
**Date** Mon 4/7/2025 7:42 AM  
**To** Dominic J. Sisneros <djsisneros@santafecountynm.gov>  
**Cc** Gabriel C. Bustos <gcbustos@santafecountynm.gov>

Hank Hughes  
Santa Fe County Commissioner, District 5



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**From:** Michael Yearout <mike@mkyphotography.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 6, 2025 7:27 PM  
**To:** Hank Hughes <hhughes@santafecountynm.gov>  
**Cc:** Gabriel C. Bustos <gcbustos@santafecountynm.gov>; Dayna, Lee, CEC Team <info@cleanenergycoalitionsfc.org>  
**Subject:** The Rancho Viejo BESS project

Commissioner:

The more problematic aspect of the AES Rancho Viejo BESS plant is in proximity to a residential area and the risk of wildfires and toxic chemical releases.

A New York state working group recently addressed BESS fire safety. Group members recommend an emergency response plan for every BESS facility, annual firefighter training and expert fire mitigation help on-site within four hours. Does Santa Fe County have a plan? Do they have the trained personnel? No local official should approve a project lacking these.

Towns need time to evaluate the human and environmental impacts of such facilities. I suggest an energy storage moratorium while we write local laws. Fire companies need to understand the risks of fighting BESS fires and evaluate their resources. Decommissioning requirements must be considered carefully; these batteries comprise hazardous waste. In the rare event of a catastrophic fire, the developer must carry insurance to pay the full cost of cleanup.

Are nearby residents and institutions aware of how these fires may affect their lives, especially through shelter-in-place and evacuation orders? BESS fires can produce toxic hydrogen fluoride gas.

Water won't extinguish a BESS fire, but normally, firefighters use water to cool the containers and prevent the fire from spreading. This process can take days, with firefighters spraying water on units 24/7. Do our local fire companies have the training and personnel to fight these kinds of fires? Do firefighters have the equipment they need? Are there adequate water resources to handle constant discharge for days at a time?

We all want to embrace clean energy. BESS facilities are not clean energy. BESS is a temporary, flawed technology that we're attempting to use in ways for which it was never intended. We should think hard before we put our firefighters, communities and environment at risk by installing these projects.

Please share this letter with all commissioners. And please vote to DENY this project. It is far to dangerous for the location it is planned to be placed on.

Sincerely yours,

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