Outlook

Opposition to the AES Rancho Viejo Solar Project

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Date Thu 7/3/2025 5:24 PM
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7/3/25

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Santa Fe, NM 87508

Dear County Commissioners,

I am writing to ask you to deny the permit for the AES Corporation to proceed with their Rancho Viejo Solar Project.

The proposed site has to be one of the worst possible locations for this, considering the near-by populations, the dry and windy climate, the emergency state of our water resources, the lack of emergency infrastructure, and the loss of “rural fringe”.

To take the risk of approving this must mean that the risk is considered almost non-existent, but who can assume this to be true? While AES has gone 3 years since their last fire, I can’t buy at all that they can now sign up for 36 years here because there are no more unknowns, nor human error, nor manufacturing defects, nor impossible to foresee cyber events or climate effects possible in this project.

If the risk is so remote, why is home insurance threatened, why are real estate agents required to disclose the possibility of this being approved, why can’t AES be liable for any direct or indirect effects of having the facility here?

Also sorry to say, the last hearing where AES was given the go-ahead, seemed quite biased in favor of AES, with AES given the lion’s share of time, a seeming attempt to discredit one opposed person with standing, and other similar “vibes”. The main example that sticks with me however, is that one person gave a convincing argument that the county’s sound test was inadequate and misrepresented the actual conditions. So near the end after their vote, the chair asked a county member IF they had conducted a sound test. It struck me as a total CYA question, because the existence of a test was not in question; it’s adequacy was. So now, I suppose people will just find out later if they get to live with a 24/7 hum or worse. From the time I first heard about this project up until now, there has seemed to be a lack of transparency and fairness to the process, such as having to go to court to get basic information.

AES does not seem to be a desirable partner either. Their numerous environmental violations seem to indicate that if there is a way to cut corners and get off with a fine with this project, that will be their choice.

Lastly, I want to say that many of us are transplants to the area, having fallen in love with it years before moving here. It is a most desirable location, and we should do our best to keep its nature intact! Calling a major solar and BESS facility “community solar” to get around the rural fringe zoning is a bridge too far, in my opinion.

Sincerely,

Robert Barney