



Fw: Please Support Solar Energy in Santa Fe County

From Hank Hughes <hhughes@santafecountynm.gov>

Date Thu 5/22/2025 11:53 AM

To Dominic J. Sisneros <djsisneros@santafecountynm.gov>; Gabriel C. Bustos <gcbustos@santafecountynm.gov>

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From: pam gilchrist <pamgilchrist1@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 8:44:37 PM

To: Hank Hughes <hhughes@santafecountynm.gov>; Gabriel C. Bustos <gcbustos@santafecountynm.gov>

Subject: Please Support Solar Energy in Santa Fe County

Warning:

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Dear Hank,

I have recently moved from Eldorado to Las Soleras Senior Living at 5011 Las Soleras Dr., 87507. If I understand the County Commissioners website correctly, I still live in District 5 and you are still my commissioner. Ken Mayers and I have been supporters of you since day one. As you may know, Ken died at the end of January, but I know he would join me in urging you to vote for the AES project.

I also understand that you are prohibited from engaging in ex parte discussions about AES' application, which is coming before the County Commission for a decision. I don't expect to hear your opinion; but, of course, I will see your vote. I'll simply recount here all the reasons why I support the project. For the sake of our children, I ask that you also support it.

It is well documented that solar and energy storage projects benefit local economies. Local solar and energy storage projects produce construction jobs, landowner payments, and a stable source of tax dollars for county governments. This tax revenue can fund roads, first responders, schools, and other Santa Fe county needs while making up for declining revenue from other sources.

Solar farms preserve the rural lifestyle that Santa Fe County residents value. County residents, specifically in the El Dorado and Rancho San Marcos neighborhoods, appreciate the quiet and spacious environment that defines their rural desert community, and want to preserve that way of life. Unlike the high-density housing developments that are likely to be proposed in these communities, which can strain local infrastructure and resources like water, roads, and public services; solar farms contribute to the local economy without straining local infrastructure or increasing traffic. They offer a compatible solution for land use, allowing the county to maintain its rural character while benefiting from clean energy and economic growth.

Santa Fe County can lead the way for New Mexico's clean energy future. New Mexico has ambitious goals for clean energy, aiming for 50% renewable energy by 2030 and fully zero-carbon electricity by 2050. The state has huge potential for solar energy—enough to produce far more power than we use—but right now, solar only provides about 10% of our electricity. Santa Fe County sees renewable energy as a key area for growth, and the Rancho Viejo Solar project is an important step. As the county's first large solar farm, it can pave the way for more clean energy projects and help the community build a greener future.

Energy storage supercharges renewable energy. By taking in electricity when it's generated and holding it until it's needed, battery storage systems are a critical component of a 100% renewable energy grid and getting our country off the fossil fuels that are the primary source of climate pollution.

Diversifying our energy sources will make our local power grid more reliable. Solar power, combined with energy storage, will help us diversify the energy sources on our grid, ensuring that the lights stay on if another power source fails.

Solar farms and energy storage systems are safe, clean, and built with public health in mind. Solar farms are designed with strict safety standards, using non-flammable materials like glass, silicon, and metal to withstand extreme conditions. They are combustion-free, have low fire risk, and produce clean energy without harmful pollutants like sulfur dioxide or nitrogen oxides, protecting public health and the environment. Energy storage systems also meet rigorous safety requirements and use technology found in consumer products and electric vehicles. Equipped with fire suppression and cooling systems, energy storage systems are designed to operate safely even under challenging conditions. Developers work with emergency responders to ensure communities are prepared to handle rare safety issues, making solar farms and energy storage reliable and safe energy solutions.

Locating energy storage facilities near homes and schools provides key community benefits. Battery storage is most useful to what it is closest to. To fully benefit from a cleaner, cheaper, and more reliable power grid, storage facilities need to be near power substations—the local hubs of the grid—which are often in areas where people live and work. Many critical infrastructure sites, like hospitals, are already installing their own battery systems for this reason. The benefits of having battery storage near homes and civic infrastructure outweigh the risks.

Solar and energy storage projects conserve water better than other land use alternatives. Solar farms require minimal water, mainly for occasional panel cleaning, and use 140 times less water than gas power plants per MWh generated. Similarly, energy storage relies on dry, electrochemical processes to store and dispatch electricity, with only minor water use for maintenance or safety systems. Together, these technologies offer a sustainable approach to clean energy production and storage, making them ideal for water-conscious communities like Santa Fe County, where preserving water for agriculture and residential needs is a priority.

These are the facts that make the AES project one to support. We are counting on you to do the right thing.

Pam Gilchrist

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