

Dominic J. Sisneros

From: Dayna, CEC <cleanenergycoalitionsfc@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2024 8:35 AM
To: Dominic J. Sisneros
Cc: Alexandra Ladd
Subject: In opposition of the AES Project

Warning:

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Dominic,
Please add this letter to the record in opposition of the AES project:

Commercial Solar vs Utility-Scale Solar

The AES Corporation's proposed Rancho Viejo BESS (Battery Energy Storage System) to be sited just a couple miles south of Santa Fe City is trying to use loopholes in the county codes by calling their project "Commercial" Solar rather than what it really is: a Utility-Scale energy project—a fact admitted to in District Court by their own expert. They are doing this to push through an approval with a CUP (Conditional Use Permit) — the same process used to approve things like a simple retail store, like the Dollar General recently built just off the 285 Highway.

The Commercial Solar designation is used for businesses such as libraries, retail stores, ranches, and even the National Guard solar installation along Hwy 25. The energy these solar projects generate is used for their own power needs. They may have a small amount of batteries to store some of the energy they generate but, again, this is primarily for their own consumption.

In contrast, AES plans to have 570,000 dangerous lithium-ion batteries. That's significantly more storage capacity than needed for the energy produced by their solar panels. Their plan is to pull power off the PNM grid when demand and rates are low and sell it back to us at a profit when demand and rates go up. Most of us agree that we need to transition to renewable energy. But this project is a wolf in sheep's clothing as it's not really about renewable energy at all but a cynical attempt to make massive battery money machines look like they're good for the environment when they in fact a threat to both the environment and the Santa Fe community.

So while AES tries to squeeze a square peg into a round hole, residents are rightly concerned about the serious risks and consequences from a battery storage facility of this size being located so close to their homes and schools. They're angry with AES for putting corporate profits above their health, safety and the general welfare of Santa Fe citizens — and they are wondering who will protect them. Signing the CEC petition at <https://cleanenergycoalitionsfc.org/petition/> at least helps them feel heard. And many plan to attend the first two hearings on December 4th and February 3rd, both scheduled for 9:30 am at the Santa Fe Convention Center. (Dates and times are subject to change by the County).

In the meantime, since we aren't allowed to talk with our County Commissioners about this project (as they will likely be voting on it at some point), there's no way for us to know what their thoughts are about all this. As the community liaison for the Clean Energy Coalition for Santa Fe County, that leaves me fielding neighbors' fears and repeated questioning, "Why isn't the County looking out for us?"— Well, here's hoping our five County Commissioners read this, hear us, and realize that this project is simply not needed or appropriate for Santa Fe.

Dayna Matlin lives in Eldorado at Santa Fe and volunteers on the CEC steering committee, serving over 1,000 members of The Clean Energy Coalition for Santa Fe County.

It's going to take a village to win this fight!

