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*Comment Received From: Kristi Strandquist
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Opposition to Hazardous BESS Facility Near Homes, Schools, and Sensitive Environmental Areas in San Juan Capistrano

Dear California Energy Commission,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed Compass Energy Storage Project (â€œBESSâ€) in San Juan Capistrano. While I understand the importance of advancing clean energy solutions, the location and scale of this project present unacceptable risks to public safety, environmental health, and the integrity of surrounding communities.

Public Safety and Emergency Evacuation Concerns

The proposed location of the BESS facility is in close proximity to residential neighborhoods, schools (including a preschool, K-8 school, and a high school), churches, and critical infrastructure. In the event of a fireâ€”an all-too-common occurrence at BESS sitesâ€”evacuation routes would be severely compromised. The only access road to the schools is a narrow, winding hill that cannot accommodate emergency evacuation traffic, particularly if first responders need to use the same route. Additionally, the siteâ€™s proximity to Interstate-5 raises serious concerns about freeway closures during an emergency, compounding evacuation challenges and endangering lives.

Fire Hazard and Environmental Impact

Californiaâ€™s climate and dry vegetation make the region highly susceptible to wildfires. The introduction of a large-scale lithium-based energy storage facility poses a substantial ignition risk, with potential to trigger fast-spreading fires. If such a fire were to occur, the firefighting efforts (including air drops of fire retardant or water) could result in toxic runoff entering Trabuco Creekâ€”an environmentally sensitive watercourse that ultimately drains to the ocean. This could devastate local ecosystems, threaten native flora and fauna, and violate environmental protection standards.

Impact on Local Residents and Historic Community

San Juan Capistrano is a densely populated and historically significant city. Installing a hazardous industrial facility in this area undermines the safety, character, and heritage of the community. In addition to physical danger, the perception of risk may drive insurance companies to drop coverage or raise premiums, making it more difficult for local families to afford or maintain their homes. The cumulative impact on property values, community trust, and long-term livability cannot be overstated.

Conclusion

For all these reasonsâ€”emergency evacuation risks, fire hazard potential, environmental degradation, and the negative impact on a historic, residential areaâ€”I

urge the California Energy Commission to reject the current siting of the Compass Energy Storage Project. Alternative locations with appropriate buffers, lower population density, and safer infrastructure access must be considered.

Respectfully,

Kristi Strandquist

Coto de Caza, 92679

Parent of 3 children attending the school directly across the freeway from the proposed site.