

<b>DOCKETED</b>	
<b>Docket Number:</b>	24-OPT-02
<b>Project Title:</b>	Compass Energy Storage Project
<b>TN #:</b>	266276
<b>Document Title:</b>	CPRA Request Email Compass Energy Project Conversation Stern, Dominguez to Change CBA
<b>Description:</b>	<p>CUSD Schools oppose the agreement. Trustee Dak Question "...if the District has had any discussion regarding the battery storage project t...some cusd members have voiced their concerns to me. Chancellor text to Trustee Dak - "I'll have to find out more about the project. I've not heard any concerns..." Pres Stern long email Compass Project he briefed earlier Main Points: "...yes, Lithium batteries can catch fire...The San Juan...rejected the project, so Compass used the new application system through the California Energy Commission under the state law that allows them to bypass city approval...Still, there is obviously a lot of community concern, against the will of the SJC City Council..." VC Gabel "Julie you may recall that Trustee Bartlett sent someone your way to brief us on the project...March 3, 2025 // Barnes "I did a little search and did discover that the agency did meet with Trustee Bartlett and they also approached Trustee Jemal...This is one of those tricky situations...may in fact have two strong sides..."</p>
<b>Filer:</b>	Carl James David
<b>Organization:</b>	Veteran Resident of Laguna Niguel
<b>Submitter Role:</b>	Public
<b>Submission Date:</b>	10/1/2025 5:43:08 PM
<b>Docketed Date:</b>	10/2/2025

**RE: Message from Ryan Dack**[Julianna Barnes <jbarnes@socccd.edu>](mailto:jbarnes@socccd.edu)

Sent time: 03/27/2025 06:03:06 PM

To: [Ann-Marie Gabel <agabel@socccd.edu>](mailto:agabel@socccd.edu); [Elliot Stern <estern@saddleback.edu>](mailto:estern@saddleback.edu)Cc: [Ryan Brook <rbrook@socccd.edu>](mailto:rbrook@socccd.edu); [Rodrigo Garcia <rgarcia198@saddleback.edu>](mailto:rgarcia198@saddleback.edu)Attachments:  [image002.png](#)  [image006.png](#)  [image007.png](#)  [image009.png](#)  [image001.png](#)

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He..o a,,

Thank you so much for all of this background information. It's super helpful. I did a little search and did discover that the agency did meet with Trustee Bartlett and they also approached Trustee Jemal, but I don't think they met with him (and now see that I asked you to meet with them, Ann-Marie... didn't initially connect that meeting with Trustee Dack's message ... now I see it.).

This is one of those tricky situations. Of course "we" wish to remain neutral (and want the funds), but I have a feeling that our Trustees won't be neutral (and we may in fact have two strong, opposing sides among our Trustees). Before we proceed, I need to take a pulse on Trustee sentiments. Also, I think we need to consider potential political impact with our neighboring school districts. The fact that CUSD wrote a strong opposition letter is a factor for consideration...

Let's hang tight for a moment and loop back around on this.

Julie

**South  
Orange  
County****Community  
College District*****Julianna M. Asperin Barnes, Ed.D.***

Chancellor

South Orange County Community College District

949.582.4840





[h!!J1 ://www.socccd.edu](http://www.socccd.edu)

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**From:** Ann-Marie Gabel <agabel@socccd.edu>**Sent:** Wednesday, March 26, 2025 6:17 PM**To:** Elliot Stern <estern@saddleback.edu>; Julianna Barnes <jbarnes@socccd.edu>**Cc:** Ryan Brook <rbrook@socccd.edu>; Rodrigo Garcia <rgarcia198@saddleback.edu>**Subject:** RE: Message from Ryan Dack

Hi there,

Julie you may recall that Trustee Bartlett sent someone your way to brief us on the project. Medhanie and I met with them on March 3, 2025, and received a quick update on what the project entailed. We both found it very interesting, and it didn't seem to pose any major risks to the area since it was being built on vacant land with a large wall around it. They did mention that they were meeting with SC's workforce development folks and eventually asked if we would give them a letter of support. I

to them that before we consider doing so, we would need to share all the  
 K: Message from Ryan Dack  
 MJ@rrlj/s b Q 9r. they said they would send us more information and  
 \$@lltdt ri:e(f.):e'6¥H0fiM, but they never sent it and I haven't followed up to get it.  
 ICf Ann-rvJaij.e abel <ag\_aLb\_el@sqcccd.edu>; Elliot St.:n <estern@saddleback.edu> + ll h h h  
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I agree with Elliot, that we should remain neutral on it; and I also agree that we  
 shouldn't turn down funds if offered.

I guess the answer to Ryan is "yes" we have had discussions about the project, but we  
 haven't committed one way or the other to it.

Ann-Marie



**Ann-Marie Gabel | Vice Chancellor of Business Services**  
 South Orange County Community College District  
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 Phone: (949)582-4664 | Email: [ggabel@socccd.edu](mailto:ggabel@socccd.edu)

**From:** Elliot Stern <[estern@saddleback.edu](mailto:estern@saddleback.edu)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 26, 2025 4:04 PM

**To:** Ju ian na Barnes <[J...-...-...9.Y](mailto:J...-...-...9.Y)>; Ann-Marie Gabel <[..?...-...9....9](mailto:..?...-...9....9)>

**Cc:** Ryan Brook<[E.?.?.-...9](mailto:E.?.?.-...9)>; Rodrigo Garcia<[E?.E.i.-...-1--?...9](mailto:E?.E.i.-...-1--?...9)>

**Subject:** RE: Message from Ryan Dack

Addition to my briefing after getting some additional information and documents from Rod and  
 checking out a few online sites and a regional map:

The company, Compass Energy Systems, has filed a State application to build an regional energy  
 storage facility in San Juan Capistrano under a new State law that allows such companies to bypass  
 local approval of projects in order to facilitate the move toward renewable energy. The battery storage  
 facility takes SDGE electricity and stores it for a 4-hour supply for the community in case of outage.  
 The batteries are Lithium, and, yes, Lithium batters can catch fire. The project is to be built on land  
 owned by Saddleback Church, so I'm assuming the church has sold or leased part of their property to  
 Compass.

The San Juan City Counsel rejected the project, so Compass used the new application system through  
 the California Energy Commission under the State law that allows them to bypass city approval. Here's  
[the project page at the CEC website.](#)

According to the CEC's project description, the project would be on the Northern end of San Juan off  
 of Camino Capistrano, on the west side of 1-5, so more than a mile from us and on the other side of I-  
 S. So a fire would have to jump the 1-5 (and then move way north) to get to us. Chris Brown wrote an

objection letter to the project, attached (...because the project site is about 2500 feet from Capistrano  
 y @ufr Wm, RfgOel Hills MS. In the case of the former, Chris indicates that the  
 , 5d i % gl% fi<t nd th exit is on the side facing the proposed site such that  
 W:l w ""aP¥agab'tM@!9&eM% 9::t;'t!Mlr 'SM,W e9MR s\$gdl acR I approaching fire.  
 Cc: [Ryan Brook <rbrook@socccd.edu>](mailto:Ryan.Brook@socccd.edu); [Rodrigo Garcia <rsgarcia198@saddleback.edu>](mailto:Rodrigo.Garcia@rsgarcia198@saddleback.edu)

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 exits, substantially farther from the proposed storage facility and without the limited exit problem.  
 While I can see Chris's rationale for having concern about his two schools within a mile of the facility, I  
 would point out that a potential fire would have to jump Camino Capistrano, the 1-5 and the 1-73 to hit  
 CVHS. Still, there is obviously a lot of community concern, and the issue with the high school having  
 only one exit, that being on its south side, is legitimate.

A private school in San Juan, Fairmont Academy, also wrote a letter of objection based on proximity of  
 their facility to the proposed project. As I look at their school location, it appears to be a half mile  
 further south than CVHS, but on the west side of 1-5, on the same side as the proposed project. So like  
 CUSD, I can see why they wrote a letter of opposition.

Part of the California Energy Commission's application requires Compass to indicate how their facility  
 will benefit the community. According to the city manager for San Juan Capistrano who approached  
 Rod, they are listing us, among others, as a potential beneficiary of a Community Benefit grant. The  
 grant Compass pitched to Israel would give us \$150K/year for five years to fund apprenticeships for  
 students, focusing on green energy, but they have told Israel that they see lots of programs that would  
 qualify. The grant would only begin after their application is approved by the CEC. There is no grant  
 unless they are approved. We have not offered to write a letter of support nor would we voice any. So  
 their listing our college as a potential community benefit grant recipient in their application materials  
 came without us ever signing their proposed Community Benefit Agreement, attached. (We still  
 haven't.)

I defer to your judgement on this, but I do not think we should bow to the pressure of the opponents  
 to this project, but I do think we should meet with them and let it be known that we will remain  
 neutral on the project, as it does not pose a real public safety threat to our campus and we do not  
 typically take stands on political issues that do not impact the performance of our mission or our  
 students. In this case, the potential impact to our students is positive, but we would not endorse the  
 project against the will of the SJC City Council.

The City Manager for San Juan is the only one who has approached college leadership, and he  
 approached Rod, specifically. He has asked for contact information for the head of Workforce  
 Development and our Foundation. Now we know he is already reaching out to Trustees. We also think  
 he might use public comment at Board meetings. I've asked Rod to work with Trish to set up a  
 meeting for Rod, me and the City Manager to exchange views on this. I don't expect that to assuage  
 him from approaching Trustees, but I do want him to understand why we need to be politically neutral  
 on this, given that we do not have the same risk to our campus that CUSD and Fairmont articulate in  
 their letters of objection to the CEC.

We could certainly refuse Compass's grant money and notify the CEC that we do not wish to be  
 included as a potential grant recipient in order to appease opponents of this project, but in the  
 absence of a significant safety threat to our campus, I feel that this would be taking a political position  
 on an issue of controversy that does not impact our students or mission. And the sacrifice we would

be making in refusing the an money (IF they are approved for the project) is a sacrifice of support  
**g aM fpJf<W!! fj.Dack**

[Julianna Barnes <jbarnes@socccd.edu>](mailto:jbarnes@socccd.edu)

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I also recognize that there is a risk that the objections of CUSD (and other public feedback) may be enough to kill this application at the California Energy Commission such that we will get no grant at the end of the day. There is that risk here.

Let me know what you think. I the meantime, feel free to share whatever you like with the Board, including all or portions of this and my briefing from earlier today. Below is the email the SJC City Manager, Ben Siegel, sent to Rod yesterday. And I'm also attaching the community grant proposal Compass sent to Israel some time ago. (Israel has been working with them on a flat-out grant agreement that would look more like the Samuelli grant. Obviously, Compass is still going to want it to be contingent on State application approval.)

Please note that I've copied in Rod, just to make sure I've got the information I got from him correct.

E

**From:** Ben Siegel <[gfil@goj1.Qfg\\_Ristra\\_no.org](mailto:gfil@goj1.Qfg_Ristra_no.org)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 25, 2025 10:53 AM

**To:** Rodrigo Garcia <[rgarcia198@saddleback.edu](mailto:rgarcia198@saddleback.edu)>

**Cc:** Saddleback College President <[gRresident@saddleback.edu](mailto:gRresident@saddleback.edu)>

**Subject:** RE: Battery Storage Project

Rod:

I wanted to share two important letters filed with the California Energy Commission regarding the proposed Battery Storage project. The first is a letter of opposition from the Capistrano Unified School District and the second is a letter expressing concern from Fairmont Schools. I wanted to be sure you and your colleagues at the Saddleback College Foundation are aware of the opposition from our local schools as you consider any potential funding partnership with the applicant under a "community benefits agreement."

I would greatly appreciate if you would share these letters with the College president, and I would also ask that you provide me with the contact information for the appropriate staff at the Foundation.

Thank you for your assistance.

Ben

From: Elliot Stern <[estern@saddleback.edu](mailto:estern@saddleback.edu)>  
**RE: Message from Ryan Dack**  
 Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 2:13 PM  
 To: Julianna Barnes <[jbarnes@socccd.edu](mailto:jbarnes@socccd.edu)>; Ann-Marie Gabel <[agabel@socccd.edu](mailto:agabel@socccd.edu)>  
 Subject: **Message from Ryan Dack**  
 (!: [MliRmw&>](#) [el@e@e'El!@s/u](#); Elliot Stern <[estern@saddleback.edu](mailto:estern@saddleback.edu)>  
 ch: [Rx: r r9R!f<rbrcrok@.sac&d:e-qsp: Bodrigo Garcia <\[rgarcia198@saddleback.edu\]\(mailto:rgarcia198@saddleback.edu\)>](#)  
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The battery storage company is located in San Juan Capistrano, nowhere near our campus.

~~Community activists in SJC don't want them there. We have been in discussion with the company about a grant to fund student internships--maybe \$500k, if I recall. We do not take any stand on the political issue of their location. But city leaders and activists reportedly don't want us to take their money, even though we take no position on the issue. We don't even endorse the company. The grant is probably part of a PR effort to gain public support, but Cc we offer no support.~~

So these activists and city leaders reached out to Rod this week. I am going to ask Rod to schedule a meeting for him and me to meet with them to listen. But I believe refusing a grant for students would be counter-mission and would, itself, be a political statement. We'd prefer to remain neutral. About to be briefed by Rod. I will have more then.

E

Sent from my T-Mobile SG Device

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**From:** Julianna Barnes <[jbarnes@socccd.edu](mailto:jbarnes@socccd.edu)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 26, 2025 1:29:09 PM  
**To:** Elliot Stern <[?!L?....-!...-...-...>](#); Ann-Marie Gabel <[!!...!...?....-...-...>](#)  
**Cc:** Ryan Brook <[rbrook@socccd.edu](mailto:rbrook@socccd.edu)>  
**Subject:** Message from Ryan Dack

Hello Elliot and Ann-Marie,

Ryan Dack sent me a text today and asked for information about it. First time he shared this with me:

*Ryan: I know there's a lot going on, but I wanted to know if the district has had any discussion regarding the battery storage project that is being planned relatively near Saddleback's campus*

*Ryan: Some cusd members have voiced their concerns to me, and they have had their superintendent write a letter to the cpuc against it*

*Julie: I'll need to find out more about the project. I've not heard any concerns. Could you please send me the concerns you received so we could respond accordingly?*

What say you?

Thanks, Julie

**RE: Message from Ryan Dack**

[Julianna Barnes <jbarnes@socccd.edu>](mailto:jbarnes@socccd.edu), *M. Asperin Barnes, Ed.D.*

Sent time: 03/27/2025 06:03:06 PM h::m

To: [Ann-Marie Gabel <agabel@soccccf.edu>](mailto:agabel@soccccf.edu), [Bf Stern <estern@saddleback.edu>](mailto:estern@saddleback.edu)

Cc: [Ryan Brook <rbrook@socccd.edu>](mailto:rbrook@socccd.edu), [Bum@mtllli=nya0o](mailto:Bum@mtllli=nya0o) District

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