

**DOCKETED**

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*Comment Received From: Keep Vacaville Safe  
Submitted On: 2/10/2026  
Docket Number: 26-OPT-01*

## **Keep Vacaville Safe Official Opposition Statement**

*Additional submitted attachment is included below.*



California Energy Commission  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Opposition to the Proposed Vaca Dixon Power Center Battery Energy Storage System Project (26-OPT-01)

Honorable Commissioners,

We represent a coalition of more than 1,500 residents of Vacaville and Solano County who are concerned about lithium-ion battery energy storage systems (BESS) located in inappropriate locations in our community. While we firmly support the transition to clean energy and recognize the critical role of energy storage, we are writing to formally express our opposition to the proposed Vaca Dixon Power Center. Our stance is not one of general opposition to BESS technology, but rather a firm insistence on responsible siting and safety as a priority. We believe this specific location is unsafe for a facility of this size and use of lithium-ion battery chemistry.

Our primary concern stems from the inherent risks associated with lithium-ion Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), specifically the threat of thermal runaway.

Our opposition is based on the following points:

**Unacceptable Public Safety Risks:** Unlike conventional fires, lithium-ion failures trigger chemical reactions that are nearly impossible to extinguish, burn for multiple days and emit highly toxic gases that can be harmful and deadly to breathe. The project's proximity to densely populated areas create a significant risk of toxic exposure

for residents should a thermal runaway event occur. The project site is near numerous rural residential homes and just across the highway a large subdivision with thousands of homes exists. Kaiser Permanente—a Level II Trauma Center and Solano Community College are located a mile away. Adult care centers, childcare centers, schools, apartments and numerous businesses along highway 80 could also be impacted during a thermal runaway event. Thermal runaway at this location can put first responders in harm's way trying to facilitate difficult and immediate evacuations or shelter in place orders for this highly populated area.

**Agricultural and Environmental Impacts:** A fire at the Vaca Dixon site could not only endanger the health of residents but also impact agriculture operations. This project is sited on and near prime agricultural land, threatening the heritage and economy of Solano County. A fire incident at the project site could lead to contamination of the surrounding farms and properties due to heavy metal concentrations in the smoke plume<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, fire suppression efforts to cool neighboring battery packs and prevent fire spread, could lead to thousands of gallons of water runoff that become contaminated. This toxic water runoff poses a contaminant threat to nearby Solano Irrigation District canals used for farming. Additionally, there is potential for contamination of rural residential wells and the City of Vacaville well water systems that our community relies on for municipal water supply. City of Vacaville is currently constructing a new city well 1.5 miles of the project site. The project site is known to have shallow groundwater which increases potential for contamination of groundwater in the surrounding agricultural area if battery effluent leaks or water from firefighting efforts aren't contained.

**Transportation and Economic Risks:** The project's proximity to Interstate 80, a critical artery for California's commerce presents significant concerns. Construction related closures could force heavy traffic onto Vacaville's municipal and unincorporated roads,

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<sup>1</sup> [Coastal wetland deposition of cathode metals from the world's largest lithium-ion battery fire](#)

burdening the City with the costs of police or city-led traffic management and traffic signal reprogramming. Furthermore, these detours could cause emergency response delays within the city and obstruct access to Kaiser Permanente, our area's only Level II Trauma Center. If trucks carrying heavy loads don't stay on detours, there may be damage to city roads that aren't intended for this use. This negative impact is compounded by the potential for a lithium-ion Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) fire. A thermal runaway event could necessitate large-scale evacuations or "shelter-in-place" orders, potentially forcing an unplanned, long-term closure of I-80. In such a scenario, first responders would be stretched thin, simultaneously managing a hazardous materials crisis and a massive highway diversion. This could result in millions of dollars in lost regional commerce, damage to local roads from heavy freight rerouting, and multiple day gridlock that endangers both residents and travelers.

**Strain on Community Resources:** The project places a disproportionate and unfair financial strain on Vacaville's community resources. By moving forward with this project, the city is essentially forced to subsidize the risks of a private utility through the emergency preparedness and liability. As part of an emergency preparedness plan, the City of Vacaville would need special equipment, personal protective equipment, initial and annual training for first responders and mutual aid. Additionally, installation and monitoring of 10 or more gas and air monitoring devices. Thermal runaway fires are complex and resource-intensive. They are known to burn out over multiple days, an event would require a long term commitment of first responders and equipment. Such a response would unjustly drain City resources, directly inhibiting or delaying the ability to respond to emergency calls from residents Most concerning is the liability shift - the City would be left to absorb the staggering costs of emergency response, and potential environmental remediation following a thermal runaway event. Ultimately, the financial burden of such an event would fall on the local taxpayers rather than the developer.

**Decline in Property Values:** The project threatens the financial stability of the community by likely devaluing local real estate and introducing persistent noise pollution. Significant concerns regarding diminished property values make this project a

direct threat to the surrounding neighborhood's desirability. For most residents, a home is not just a residence, but their primary investment and a cornerstone of their retirement security; any decline in equity would have a devastating ripple effect on their long-term livelihoods. Proximity to large scale industrial utility projects creates a "stigma" that leads to significant economic loss for homeowners.

A study from the University of Pennsylvania (2025) notes that similar energy projects can create a price discount of 8.8% to 15.8% for homes within a 1-km radius due to "scenic vista and nuisance stigma."<sup>2</sup> The study notes that while grid-stabilization is a "positive externality," the "risk of fires for nearby properties" is a documented negative externality. In a high-density area (like the subdivision near Kaiser), this specific negative risk is amplified compared to the rural sites often used in these studies. A BESS facility creates a similar industrial "stigma" that makes a residential area less desirable to buyers, resulting in the inability to sell their home (see real-life example [here](#))

As insurance companies become more aware of lithium-ion fire risks (i.e. thermal runaway), they may increase premiums for homes within a certain radius of a lithium-ion BESS facility. Higher insurance costs make a home less affordable, which directly lowers the price a buyer is willing to pay. This industrialization of rural and residential adjacent land devalues the single largest investment many of our residents have made: their homes.

**Negligible Local Benefit:** The Vaca Dixon Power Center offers no energy discounts to our residents, as the power is intended to be sold to out-of-area providers. Furthermore, by occupying land designated for a "business park," this project displaces the potential

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<sup>2</sup> [The Impact of Utility-scale Battery Energy Storage System Projects on Property Values in California, Massachusetts, and New York](#)

for bio-tech business offices and manufacturing centers that would provide hundreds of high-paying jobs and long-term tax revenue for Vacaville. This results in a **huge** net loss for the local economy as calculated below:

Based on Vacaville's economic development data for 2026, we can calculate the "Opportunity Cost" or net loss to the community.

### **1. Direct Wage Loss (35-Year Lifespan)**

The most significant loss is in payroll. Vacaville is a global hub for life sciences (housing giants like Lonza and Genetech).

Business Park Potential: A 10-acre biomanufacturing site typically supports ~300 high-paying roles (based on a density of 30 employees per acre).

Average Salary: In the Vacaville biotech sector, the average annual salary is approximately \$160,000.

Business Park Payroll:  $\$160,000 \times 300 \text{ jobs} = \underline{\$48 \text{ Million/year}}$

BESS Project: The Vaca Dixon project application confirms it will be staffed by only 1–3 technicians for periodic maintenance.

BESS Payroll:  $\$160,000 \times 3 \text{ jobs} = \underline{\$480,000/year}$

35-Year Net Loss: Over the 35-year life of the BESS project, the community loses **\$1.66 Billion in direct wages.**

### **2. Economic Output & "The Multiplier"**

Economists use a "multiplier" to show how one high-paying job supports other local businesses (restaurants, housing, services). For California life sciences, this multiplier is roughly 2.0.

Total Economic Impact (Business Park): \$48M annual payroll × 2.0 multiplier = \$96 Million/year injected into the local economy.

Total Economic Impact (BESS): The BESS project provides a one-time construction boost but near-zero ongoing local spending.

***Total 35-Year Lost Economic Activity: ~\$3.36 Billion.***

**3. Revenue vs. Risk** The developer of Vaca Dixon Power Center highlights the property tax benefits to the city in their application, but the city would realize this as a net negative of **\$3.36 billion dollars** when compared to the lost potential.

**Haphazard Development and Zoning Violations:** By exploiting the AB 205 "opt-in" program, the applicant is attempting to bypass local authority and ignore the zoning laws designed to protect our community. There are more appropriate locations that could be utilized for this facility outlined in the Solano County's BESS Ordinance. Additionally, there is safer technology that is commercially available that doesn't pose the thermal runaway risks<sup>3</sup>. The developer demonstrates a total disregard for the community's safety, economy and our local policies that would forbid this project at this location. Furthermore, in their project application they downplay the inherent risks of thermal runaway and toxic emissions that their project includes. They reference the emissions akin to a class A fire of ordinary combustibles. This is an insult to our community, who is fully engaged and well educated on this topic. This process of circumventing our city undermines our local General Plan and sets a dangerous precedent for industrial sprawl, allowing the state to force projects into areas where the community has already voiced serious safety and planning concerns. If Vaca Dixon Power Center is allowed to proceed bypassing City of Vacaville's regulations on BESS, more BESS projects may follow which would magnify and significantly increase the cumulative effects of all the above concerns listed in this letter.

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<sup>3</sup> [A Safer BESS](#)

To conclude, the proposed Vaca Dixon Power Center asks the citizens of Vacaville and Solano County to bear 100% of the safety, environmental and economic risks while receiving negligible benefits. We urge the Honorable Commissioners to uphold the priority of public safety and local- land use integrity. For these reasons stated above, we respectfully request that the California Energy Commission deny the permit for the Vaca Dixon Power Center and protect the future of our community.

Sincerely,

Dee Cole

Sarah Dunn

Mike Geller

Carmen Martinez-Calderon

***Keep Vacaville Safe***