DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	25-OPT-02
Project Title:	Prairie Song Reliability Project
TN #:	270089
Document Title:	Transcript from Informational and Environmental Scoping Meeting Held on February 24, 2026
Description:	Transcript from Informational and Environmental Scoping Meeting Held on February 24, 2026
Filer:	Marichka Haws
Organization:	California Energy Commission
Submitter Role:	Commission Staff
Submission Date:	5/19/2026 4:20:09 PM
Docketed Date:	5/19/2026

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

In the matter of:

Prairie Song Reliability Report Opt-In Application for Certification	)))	Docket No. 25-OPT-02

INFORMATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCOPING MEETING FOR

THE PROPOSED PRAIRIE SONG RELIABILITY PROJECT

HYBRID: IN-PERSON AND REMOTE

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

3:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

Reported by:

Elise Hicks

APPEARANCES

COMMISSIONER

Noemi Gallardo, Lead Commissioner

COMMISSIONER ADVISOR

Caroline Grey, Senior Advisor to Chair David Hochschild

CEC STAFF

Drew Bohan, Executive Director

Kaycee Chang, CEQA Project Management Unit Supervisor

Lisa Worrall, Project Manager

Dr. Alvin Greenberg, Risk Science Associates, consultant to CEC

Alex Mayer

Barbara Borkowski

Hilarie Anderson

PUBLIC ADVISOR

Fabi Lao, Equity, Outreach, and Engagement Lead

APPLICANT

Garrett Lehman, Director of Development for Coval Infrastructure, Coval Energy

Matt Quinn, Fire Safety Consultant, Fire & Risk Alliance

APPEARANCES

PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Stillwagon, L.A. County Fire Marshal

Carlos Torres, Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles (WINTER)

June Perkins, Acton Town Council Member, Agua Dulce Acton Senior Citizen's Club Member, Friends of Acton Library member

Drew Mercy, Executive Director, Economic Development and Growth Enterprise

Katherine Sky Tucker, Acton Resident

Ruthie Brock, Acton Takes Action

Stephen Brock

Ken Perkins

Joe Sullivan, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 11, and the National Electrical Contractors Association of Greater Los Angeles

Jeff Bree, Iron Workers 433

Jonah Henry, Volunteer, Sunrise Movement Los Angeles

Russ Fawkes

Wayne Wilson, Resident

Dawn Deans

Roland Gutierrez, Sprinkler Fitters U.A. Local 709

Kelly Teno

Laney Clevenger-White, Acton Resident

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PUBLIC COMMENT (cont'd)

Doug Bayer, Resident

Susan Bayer, Resident

Patricia Akkad

Myllex Guadamuz, Apprenticeship Readiness Fund

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Larry Sanderson

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Jacqueline Ayer, Save Our Rural Town

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Aurora Gadbury

Bethany De Santis

Heather La Bella

Ann McKeown

Don Wright

Don Laird, Acton Town Council

APPEARANCES

PUBLIC COMMENT (cont'd)

Chuck Mercier

Tasia Kieffer, L.A. County Business Federation

Perry Goldberg

Mikayla Gibson, Valley Industry and Commerce Association

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Enrique Huerta, Climate Resolve

Karen Stueve

John Vidic, Acton Resident

Quinton Garrard, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy

Tom Smith

Mark Kulla

Monica Kulla

Joan Millar

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Nancy Crosby

David Devereux

Nina Chacon, Resident of Acton

Mark Stocks

Vivian Phillips

Dianna Spiegel

APPEARANCES

PUBLIC COMMENT (cont'd)

Steve Kaplan

Kathy MacLaren

INDEX

P R O C E E D I N G S

3:03 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

MS. CHANG: Welcome, everyone. My name is Kaycee Chang with the California Energy Commission Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division, or as we like to say, STEP. And I supervise the STEP project -- CEQA project managers. Thank you all for attending the CEC-hosted Informational and Environmental Scoping meeting for the proposed Prairie Song Reliability Project.

Next slide, please.

Commissioner Gallardo will now lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Please rise.

(The Pledge of Allegiance is recited in unison.)

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Thank you.

MS. CHANG: Thank you.

We would like to go over a few logistics. This meeting is hybrid with attendees in-person at the Acton Agua Dulce Library and virtual attendees on Zoom. Again, thank you all for being here.

We also thank our Spanish interpreters and court reporter for their assistance today.

For those attending virtually, Zoom closed captioning has been enabled. Attendees can use the service

by clicking on the live transcript icon and then choosing either show subtitle or view full transcript. The closed captioning service can be stopped by exiting out of the live transcript or selecting the hide subtitle icon. We also have enabled Spanish interpretation on Zoom.

For those participating in-person, please be mindful of speaking slowly and clearly into the microphone for those participating online to hear, our Spanish interpreters, and our court reporter.

The Restrooms are located outside of the meeting room door around the corner to your left. If you are not able to find a seat in the room, there is additional seating in the patio. The applicant has provided coffee, pastries, and water at the back of the room.

And finally, this meeting is being recorded. The meeting recording will be available on the California Energy Commission's website.

Next slide, please.

This slide provides an overview of today's agenda. We will be sharing information with the public on our Opt-In Certification Program and process, and the applicant will be sharing information about the proposed project. There will be plenty of opportunities for comments from California Native American tribes, government agencies, elected officials, and interested parties and

members of the public.

You may have seen a printout of the agenda and today's slide presentation, which are available at the back tables with our Public Advisor's Office.

Next slide, please.

I just want to take one step back and introduce the California Energy Commission, or CEC. The CEC is the state's lead agency on energy planning and policy, including leading the 100 percent clean energy planning process. We are committed to promoting a clean, affordable, and reliable energy supply for all Californians.

Next slide, please.

The CEC was created by statute in 1974. We have a variety of functions and work closely with other energy-related agencies, like the California Public Utilities Commission and the California Air Resources Board. Our primary functions include state energy policy, energy efficiency and reliability, and clean energy transition, planning, and infrastructure.

Next slide, please.

The CEC is led by our five Commissioners. We are fortunate to have with us today our lead siting Commissioner, Noemi Gallardo, and Caroline Grey, Senior Advisor with the Chair David Hochschild's office. Our

Executive Director, Drew Bohan, cannot be here in-person with us today, but he is online.

And now I would like to invite Drew, our Executive Director, Drew Bohan, to make opening remarks.

MR. BOHAN: Thank you, Kaycee. Appreciate it. Drew Bohan here, as Kaycee noted, Executive Director for the California Energy Commission.

I just want to start by thanking Kaycee, our Project Manager, for helping really be the linchpin of organizing all this. And Kris Peters, who is our IT professional who keeps things running smoothly with Zoom. It's a job that only gets noticed typically when something goes wrong, but he does a wonderful job keeping us all live and connected.

Thank you all for coming. I see there's about 60-some-odd folks online. I know there's many more in the room. Apologies that I can't make it in-person. This is the first Opt-In matter I have missed in-person. I had a family matter and just returned to California from Wisconsin earlier today with no sleep, so I'll do my best here. Anyway, I do plan to come down, though, and visit the site in-person. I'm disappointed to have missed that this morning.

And I want everybody to know that as the representative of our staff, we all feel that community

input is very important. So we're really glad to see a lot of people out to share their views. We welcome all comments, positive comments, negative comments, neutral comments.

And our job as staff is to evaluate the project, all of its impacts, all of its benefits, and then apply the law to those facts we've learned about this project. And ultimately, that results in a recommendation that we make to the Commission, as the Commission staff, as to whether we believe that the project meets the requirements of the law and should be approved or does not and should not be approved.

And we have so far made four recommendations, three for approval, one for disapproval. And we'll look at this one closer. This is new to us, and we want to get it right and learn what we can. So one of the best ways we do that is to hear from people who live nearby and can tell us about the features of the community that they think would be positively or negatively impacted.

So with that, I'll just say again, thank you very much, and look forward to learning more about this project. And let me hand it back to Kaycee to move on with the program.

MS. CHANG: Thank you, Drew.

Next, I would like to invite Commissioner

Gallardo.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Buenas tardes. Good afternoon, everyone.

I want to let the folks in the back know there's still some seats in front or folks on the side in case you do want to sit. And our staff will be reminding people as well.

It's wonderful to be here in Acton. It's my first time here. It's a beautiful area. I want to start with some gratitude first to the residents in the community, both of Acton and Los Angeles County for welcoming us here. We really appreciate it. We also appreciate you being here in the room and also all the folks on Zoom. As our Executive Director mentioned, there are about 60 people on Zoom, and the number continues growing.

I also wanted to thank the staff of the Agua Dulce Library for welcoming us into the venue and helping us set up. It's really important for us to have a venue where the community feels comfortable and a place where it is accessible to everyone, so we really are happy to be here.

I also want to thank all of our staff who set up this public meeting. It takes a lot from the beginning to getting to today to be able to do this, and so I really

want to uplift them for all of their efforts.

So as mentioned, my name is Noemi Gallardo. I'm one of the five Commissioners at the California Energy Commission. The Commission assigns two Commissioners for every policy area that is a priority policy area, so there's a lead commissioner and an associate. I am the Lead Commissioner on what we call Siting, so that's the certification and overseeing of eligible power plants, or permitting for short, as most people say it, and then our Chair, David Hochschild, is the Associate Commissioner, and we usually both will come out to the sites. This is the first time that neither our Executive Director or Chair were able to make it, but they will -- they both have indicated that they will be coming to visit.

So the Chair and I will be working with staff throughout their review and analysis of the proposed Prairie Song Project, and ultimately the five Commissioners will vote on whether to approve or to deny the project.

Right now, we are at the beginning stages of this proceeding, reviewing the application for this project, and a little later, you will hear from our staff. They will walk through some of the potential impacts that they have identified during their preliminary review of this application. However, staff has not yet conducted that really in-depth review and analysis of this project, so

there's still a lot of work for all of us to do.

Today, as was mentioned, we are here to learn more about the project and to -- that will help us with that analysis. Earlier, we did visit the site of the proposed project, which is just a few miles from here. These site visits that we do are not required, but we think it is vital for us to come out and see firsthand what the site looks like, what the potential impacts could be, the boundaries, the parameters, and all of the important things that go along with it.

I'd like to thank the Applicant, Coval Infrastructure, for facilitating that visit and for engaging with us in this proceeding.

I also want to be transparent that I will meet with the Acton Town Council President, Jeremiah Owens, tomorrow for another site visit, so we'll hear from Jeremiah's perspective.

Again, today is the most important job for -- the most important job for the Commission is to learn from the applicant who will be presenting and also from all of you. So as our Executive Director mentioned, do not hesitate, don't be shy, please let us know. We appreciate all the insight and the knowledge that you have about the area and want to better understand it.

And I want to also emphasize that one of the key

criterion that the Commissioners apply when voting on a project is whether we ourselves would be confident in the safety of the project having it in our own neighborhoods near our own home. So we do look at that and we do -- we have heard from the community that's one of the concerns.

So the state is in need of building out our clean energy resources. The state legislature created the Opt-In process to help bring projects online, so for this very reason of building out. However, this Opt-In Certification Program is not a rubber stamp, so it is not guaranteed that we will approve every application. What we can guarantee is that we will carefully consider each one, treat each application as unique, and do a very diligent and comprehensive job in that independent research and analysis.

So you will hear a little bit more about that when our staff presents, but also you will hear from our Public Advisor's Office who will speak about the various ways that the public can participate, including showing up at our public meetings that we have.

And I want to ask, too, I know there are a lot of you here who are very passionate about this area where you live, work, and play, and so we understand that. I just want to make sure we're very respectful of each other, and so if someone's speaking, please listen. Let's not talk

over them.

And also want to remind folks to either turn down the volume on your cell phones or turn off the cell phones because that can also be disruptive, and we want to ensure that everyone can hear what everyone else is saying.

So finally, I'd like to point out that this is the first public meeting about this proposed project that we're having. We will have at least two more meetings. One of them will be our business meeting where we vote on different items, and that will be in about eight months. And so that's when we will be voting on this project, at least that's what we anticipate.

So I will turn it over now to someone who's here representing our Chair, David Hochschild.

Caroline?

MS. GREY: Hi, everyone. As mentioned, my name is Caroline Grey, and I'm here representing the Chair of the Energy Commission, David Hochschild, who, as Commissioner Gallardo mentioned, is the Associate Commissioner on these matters.

And I really just want to emphasize remarks that Commissioner Gallardo has already made about the burden that we at the Energy Commission put on citing these projects, which is that we really want to look at them as projects that we would feel comfortable living with, next

to, and in our own neighborhoods. That is something that the Chair has been able to share at each of the proceedings that he's been able to attend in-person. And so that is one of the things that I'm listening to you all speak about today, and also to our applicant share some more initial information.

With that, I want to pass it to our Public Advisor, Ryan Young, who will provide more guidance on how to share your comments, either here in the room or online through the Zoom procedure.

MS. LAO: Good afternoon. I am not Ryan. I am filling in for him today. So I am Fabi Lao, Equity, Outreach, and Engagement Lead with the Office of the Public Advisor, Energy, Equity, and Tribal Affairs of the Energy Commission. Today, we will have some presentations, hear from government representatives, and then have our main public comment period.

I just wanted to mention at the beginning of our time together that I will be sharing some instructions later today, and I'll repeat again later. We ask everyone in the room who would like to make a comment to please turn in a blue card that you can find in the back in the Public Advisor's table. And if you represent a government entity, whether it's local, state, federal, legislature, or California Native American tribe, please also indicate that

on the blue card.

And now I'll pass the mic back to Kaycee.

MS. CHANG: Thank you, Fabi.

Can you move to the next slide, please?

So one of the programs, as you've heard, we implement is the Opt-In Certification Program. The goal of today's CEC meeting is to provide an opportunity for interested members of the public, including surrounding communities, to learn about the proposed project and our process. Your comments provided today or in writing to our proposed project docket will be considered for our staff assessment.

I will kick it off by providing an overview of the Opt-In Certification Program.

Next slide, please.

Through Assembly Bill 205, the Opt-In Certification Program provides an optional permitting pathway and a condensed timeline for the types of energy facilities listed on the slide and certain transmission lines associated with these generating and storage facilities. Prior to the signing of AB 205, the CEC's permitting authority was limited to thermal power plants with a generating capacity of at least 50 megawatts. AB 205 expands the types of facilities that can be certified by the CEC to include energy storage systems of at least

200 megawatt hours, like the proposed Prairie Song Reliability Project.

The Opt-In process provides for early tribal consultation, robust public input, and rigorous environmental review.

The CEC is the lead agency for the California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA, and is charged with preparing the staff assessment, which includes the appropriate environmental document. In this case, CEC staff will be preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Report, or EIR. We will discuss the contents later in the presentation.

Next slide, please.

We don't do this alone. We consult with our state partner agencies, including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the Department of Toxic Substances Control. We are also coordinating with local agencies, such as Los Angeles County.

Next slide, please.

CEC certification or approval of an Opt-In application requires the CEC find that the construction or operation of the proposed project will have an overall net positive economic benefit to the local government that

would have had permitting authority over the site and related facility. With the passage of Senate Bill 254, there is a rebuttable presumption that the project will provide an overall net positive economic benefit.

The CEC must also find that the applicant has entered into one or more legally binding and enforceable agreements with or that benefit a coalition of one or more community-based organizations. At the stage of application completion, where we are now with the Prairie Song Reliability Project, the applicant submitted the required community benefits plan in its application, which included a timeline for execution.

An actual community benefits agreement is not necessary for application completion, but the applicant must provide additional information updating or supplementing the information in the application no later than 45 days after an application is deemed complete. On February 2nd, 2026, the applicant submitted a community benefits agreement to the docket, which is currently being reviewed.

The CEC must also find that the applicant will use a skilled and trained workforce and pay construction workers at least prevailing wages, subject to statutory enforcement or a project labor agreement.

Any significant effects of the project must be

avoided or substantially lessened, or the CEC must find -- must adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations for significant effects found infeasible to avoid or mitigate. The list of requirements is not exhaustive and, based on the project, other requirements may apply.

Next slide, please.

This slide shows the timeline for our process. This application is deemed complete on January 30th, 2026, which started our 270-day schedule. And today we are hosting the informational and environmental scoping meeting. We are actively working on the staff assessment, which includes a Draft Environmental Impact Report, or EIR, working towards day 150, the day we are to file the document.

We will then host a public meeting on the staff assessment 30 to 60 days after filing. The updated staff assessment would be published at least 30 days prior to a publicly noticed CEC business meeting at which the CEC will render its decision, and that is to be no later than 270 days after the application is deemed complete or as soon as practicable thereafter.

Next slide, please.

We want to mention that our work does not stop at day 270. If the proposed project is approved by the CEC, the project then goes to our Compliance, Monitoring and

Enforcement Unit who ensures the facilities comply with all provisions in their associated certification. They also analyze any proposed changes to the design, operation or performance. The team performs both formal inspections and unannounced inspections, reviews monthly and annual compliance reports, and investigates complaints.

Next slide, please.

For more information about the Opt-In program, please visit our webpage. I will now invite the applicant representative, Garrett Lehmamn, for their presentation of the proposed Prairie Song Reliability Project.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: And while we wait for Garrett, this is Commissioner Gallardo, I wanted to let folks in the back know there's still seats up front here. If you do want to take a seat, this would be a good time to come over. You're not in trouble sitting up in the front.

Garrett, if you could wait until -- yeah, just to make sure we can hear you.

Any other takers? Well, don't want to force anyone, but, okay. There's still chairs here.

MR. LEHMAN: Good afternoon. I wasn't sure it was going to work. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Garrett Lehman. I serve as a Director of Development with Coval Infrastructure, and I bring over 15 years of hazard analysis and renewable energy development to California.

I'd like to thank Lead Commissioner Gallardo, the CEC staff, and the public for joining us today to review the CEC application for the Prairie Song Reliability Project.

Next slide, please.

Before discussing project specifics, I'd like to speak a little bit about who Coval is. Coval is a long-term owner and operator of large grid interconnected infrastructure. Our mission is to strengthen the grid while bringing down costs for everyday rate pitters. How we execute on that mission matters.

Safety is our first priority. It guides how we design our facilities, train our teams, work with first responders, and operate our projects every day. We apply rigorous engineering standards, build in multiple layers of protection, and hold ourselves accountable to continuous improvement.

Equally important is our commitment to the communities where we operate. We believe the right approach is to listen, engage directly at the right time, and be transparent about projects' benefits and impacts.

As we move through the presentation today, I'd like to reinforce that this isn't just a project for this community, but it's a project for the entire state. Prairie Song will benefit every Californian and help the

state meet its growing electricity, carbon reduction, and reliability goals.

Next slide, please.

I'd like to briefly take a moment to ground us in the Prairie Song Project and why it matters. Prairie Song is a standalone battery energy storage facility that will utilize lithium-ion phosphate technology, or LFP battery chemistry, which is widely regarded as one of the safest and most stable battery chemistries. The system will be containerized with layered fire protection, suppression, thermal management, and isolation systems built in. Safety is engineered to the project from the onset and -- from the outset and must meet stringent building, fire, electrical, and operational standards.

Beyond grid reliability, the project will provide measurable benefits to the local residents, Los Angeles County, and the state. We are committed to a just transition. The move to cleaner energy creates real opportunities for working families. That's why we're proud to stand here today with our union brothers and sisters with a project labor agreement already signed. This project labor agreement will help ensure family sustaining wages, strong safety protection for workers, and clear pathways into the skilled trades.

In addition, we're also very proud of the

community benefits agreement we have with the LA/Orange County Building and Construction Trades Council and Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles. This partnership expands meaningful access for women entering and advancing in union training programs and supports a more inclusive workforce.

At its core, Prairie Song is about meeting growing electricity demand responsibly in a manner that prioritizes safety and delivers lasting benefits to the community.

If you look at the slide, the project is located roughly three miles from the commercial center of Acton and about as near to the Vincent Substation as you can get. That's a deliberate decision and we'll talk about it more on the next slide.

So it's important to address the fundamental question of why here. And the Vincent Substation is key node on California's transmission system. As a 500 kV substation, it's one of the few places that can accommodate a project of this size without the need for miles of new transmission upgrades or large substation build outs. Avoiding these types of upgrades, limits land disturbance, reduces environmental impacts, avoids added costs to ratepayers, and reduces time to operation to help these types of projects meet the grid when it is needed.

From a reliability perspective, Vincent is ideally located to move renewable energy in from the Central Valley and the eastern portions of the state to various load pockets. Also, what that means in practical terms is it allows energy that's generated during the day to be produced, stored, and used when it is needed, where it is needed.

We all recognize that this area requires careful attention to safety and land management and the project has been designed with that reality in mind. Prairie Song will incorporate defensible space, vegetation management, non-combustible materials, onsite water supply, and advanced fire depression -- fire detection and suppression systems into its design.

Because we've chosen to go down the CEC permitting path, it also means we must work closely with multiple regulatory agencies, the Commission, local fire authorities, and relevant state agencies to ensure emergency response planning and operational protocols are aligned before operations begin.

We're also committing to continuous reviews, trainings, and inspections during operations. These measures are intended to reduce risk, strengthen preparedness, and ensure the facility operates responsibly within its surrounding environment.

Next slide.

It's important to address -- sorry. Projects at Prairie Song are necessary to meet the growing economy and evolving electricity demands. California will need approximately 52,000 megawatts of energy storage by 2045 to help keep the lights on and houses cool. The state's already brought on 17,000 megawatts, and that's commendable. But as you can see from the first graphic, we're still a long way to go to meet that need.

By 2045, electricity demand is expected to increase by more than 50 percent. That growth is occurring alongside a planned 7,000 to 10,000 megawatts of natural gas capacity retirement. All this does is accelerate demand while reducing existing capacity resources. That makes the need for projects that can come online quickly even more important.

This unmet need carries real consequences for California families, businesses, hospitals, schools, and care facilities that depend on a system that must perform, especially when temperatures are hottest, demand is highest, and communities are most vulnerable.

Recent experience underscores what's at stake. During the record heat events of the summer of 2024, batteries provided 20 percent of the capacity at peak demand, helping to stabilize the grid and avoid outages.

Not only did batteries show up to meet demand, but also no Flex Alerts or calls for energy conservation were issued to residents that summer.

Projects like Prairie Song are not optional additions. They're essential infrastructure needed to protect people, strengthen an aging system, and ensure reliability as the grid grows and transitions to a cleaner future.

Next slide.

Battery safety is one of the most important questions surrounding this project, particularly in a community that lives with wildfire risk. The concern is legitimate and it deserves a response.

If you look at the first graphic, it reflects global experience. From 2018 to 2024, battery deployment increased tenfold, all while incident rates dropped precipitously. 2024 showed record deployment, although incident rates remained at some of their lowest.

The second graphic puts the scale in context for California. In 2019, California had one gigawatt of battery storage online. By 2025, that had risen to 17 gigawatts, a 15-fold increase in just six years. But if you notice the red line at the bottom, incidents have not been increasing.

The reason for that are key best practices have

been established, standards have tightened, fire codes have strengthened, and system design requirements have advanced. The industry operates today under far more rigorous regulatory requirements than it did even one year ago, including new standards signed into law by Governor Newsom in 2025 and expanded reporting and regulatory requirements implemented by the California Public Utilities Commission.

Speaking to the third graphic, energy storage systems are everywhere at all scales, residential, commercial, utility. We're already seeing battery storage across the state, even in areas that are designated as high and very high wildfire hazard severity zones. That reality doesn't lessen the scrutiny applied to these projects. It increases it.

This project is proposed in a very high fire hazard severity zone, and the review before the Commission, the siting analysis, engineering design, fire protection systems, and operational protocols in the project will all address that fire designation.

Next slide, please.

I'd like to take a minute to emphasize the level of technical analysis that has gone on, gone into this project, and is continuing through the CEC certification process. As we move forward, Prairie Song will continue to undergo a comprehensive set of environmental, engineering,

and safety studies. The depth of this review extends well beyond your typical environmental assessment and reflects the seriousness with which potential impacts and safety concerns are being evaluated.

Regarding public health, specifically, multiple plume dispersion studies were conducted that exceeded burn scenarios experienced in typical UL 9540A and large-scale burn tests. An expanded toxic air contaminant analysis was also completed at the request of the CEC. These analyses evaluated worst-case thermal runaway behavior, heat release weights, radiant heat at property boundaries, container spacing, fire duration, and plume constituents. Under conservative modeling assumptions, the results indicate that exposures remained well within health-based protective thresholds at neighboring properties.

To reduce operational risk, the project has prepared a community risk assessment, a hazard mitigation analysis, and an emergency response plan. In addition, the design is going to be subject to an alternative materials and methods review framework which applies a heightened technical standard to fire protection and system configuration.

From a wildfire resiliency standpoint, the site is relatively flat and bound by existing infrastructure corridors that function as natural fire breaks. The layout

incorporates setbacks that study exceedance standards -- that exceed standard requirements and includes two sources of defensible water as part of the project design. Engineered container design, integrated fire response systems, and operational protocols are structured to contain potential events and prevent off-site impacts.

The takeaway here is important. Safety is not a single feature. It is a result of layered engineering controls, detailed technical studies, regulatory reviews, and disciplined operational planning.

Next slide.

At Coval, community partnership is core to who we are. When we build, we commit to showing up for the long term in places where our projects operate. Our focus is on what matters and that means listening carefully and aligning our investments with the priorities identified by the residents and local leaders.

One focus is wildfire preparedness and grid resiliency. In practical terms, that means helping the community better withstand encroaching fire and recover from powder outages. We're exploring partnerships that expand access to backup power resources for critical facilities and trusted community locations.

We're also prioritizing workforce development, particularly expanding access to high quality careers in

the skilled trades. That includes support for women entering union apprenticeship and trade-readiness programs, veterans transitioning to civilian careers, and pathways to family-sustaining local jobs. We're proud to have our community benefits agreement in place to support women in the trades, and we see that as the beginning of deeper local engagement.

In addition, we're committing resources to early childhood education, K through 12 enrichment, wildfire resiliency, and conservation. These are long-term investments that support opportunity, economic mobility, and resilience across generations.

Now I'd like to hand the mic over to an active hazardous materials firefighter representing Fire & Risk Alliance, a nationally recognized fire protection engineering firm with extensive experience in battery energy storage systems.

Matt?

MR. QUINN: Thanks. Hi, everyone. My name is Matt Quinn, and I'm here today as a fire safety consultant. My own experience comes from the fire service. I've been over 20 years as a firefighter, fire officer, chief officer. And my perspective in the battery energy storage field, which is my expertise now, is very much from the emergency response perspective. And it also aligns well

with my own educational background, my degrees in chemical engineering, and my graduate degrees in public policy. So this has been the area that a lot of my efforts have come in.

And we can go.

It is a fairly complex thing going on. Garrett mentioned that there's a lot of advancements that have happened recently. He mentioned there's a lot of layered redundancies and safety features that come on in these sites. And he's absolutely right. But what I'm going to talk about is the two that are most critical and are what kind of set a site like we have here apart from things that we've seen in the past and are most important to understand.

Next slide.

So from the response perspective, the biggest difference with an energy storage system or any battery, is it an indoor or outdoor system? This is important because when a battery fails, when there is a problem with a battery, it produces flammable gas. It off-gases and produces flammable gases that are very buoyant and like to dissipate.

If it's outdoors, this is much less of a problem because it can dissipate and we know what we're looking for. It becomes more complicated when it's indoors. It

becomes very complex. And in the past, we've learned when things have gone poorly explosion could be possible if these things are inside buildings so it's not something we do very much anymore.

And this is what it looks like on the left there, that indoor BSS. Inside that shed there, there's a bunch of batteries inside.

Now, what we have here, this is an outdoor BSS system, it looks like, on the right. And instead of having a bunch of batteries inside one large container or one large building, what we have is batteries contained in smaller containers. And I'll show you what those look like on the next slide.

And this is important because each container, all it is inside is battery. So there's nowhere to walk inside. So it's a system of smaller batteries that are combined to increase their energy storage. You don't just make a bigger battery. You make a system of smaller batteries that are combined meaningfully.

So the basic thing that you have is a cell. That is the building block of all the batteries, just like the batteries we have at home. Just like those batteries, but very different in a way, which I'll talk about on the next slide. But when you have one building block as a cell, you combine them together and you can have a module about yay

big. A bunch of modules get combined together and you can have a rack. And what we see inside this container, it's about 20 feet long, it's just a bunch of these batteries that are connected together.

They're connected together in a very sophisticated way, which is important. Each cell has cell-level analytics and 24/7 monitoring. So there's a battery management system. This is the term that you'll hear that's very important, the BMS. It's a remotely monitored, computerized system that can see exactly what's going on in each one of these cells inside of these containers. That becomes critically important for responding firefighters and for identifying problems that could happen. That's what it looks like inside each enclosure, okay?

The next slide.

I only have a small time frame. Generally, I would go much longer, but I want to make sure that I hit the important things.

The idea that it's an outdoor system, very important.

The other important component is the battery chemistry. And this is a little bit less straightforward because these are lithium-ion batteries, but there are multiple flavors, many different flavors, we'll call them, of lithium-ion batteries, okay?

Garrett mentioned, these are LFP batteries. LFP stands for lithium iron phosphate. It's annoying. The F is for iron; right? Okay. What is more common in our everyday world that we'll see in our smaller, in our power tools, in our e-bikes, even our EVs, is the one on the left, nickel manganese cobalt. This is more common because it packs a little bit more, punches more energy in there. So as a result, it's a little bit more fire reactive. It is still unlikely to fail, but maybe it's a little bit more likely.

Okay, what's important here is that it has those three elements. Nickel, manganese, and cobalt are all actually contained inside this battery; right? Older systems would be predominantly NMC batteries. Smaller systems, predominantly NMC. What we have is LFP batteries and that's the state of the art. They are more fire safe, though they are a little bit less efficient from their storage standpoint, but it has huge environmental impacts as well.

So when we look at -- actually, we'll go to the next slide because I illustrated perfectly -- because when we look at things that have happened in the past, the fact that it's an NMC battery becomes hugely significant as it impacts the environment. And those two dynamics that I just talked about are the key differences that separate

this from the situation that we're most familiar with, this Moss Landing BS fire. This was an outlying setup that would not exist today. It came into existence before modern standards and safeguards were in place, as Garrett kind of referenced.

If you take a look there, I don't know if you guys can see, it was in a large pre-existing, it was a natural gas-fed power facility and they just filled it up with batteries on the inside. A huge building that was just filled with a bunch of batteries. So when there was a failure, there was no compartmentalization like we have here. It would move from one to the next. It was sprinkler systems involved there as well, which is another dynamic. But it was an indoor system, very different than the outdoor system we have.

It was also an NMC battery system, which has environmental impacts because those elements, those heavy metals, which are the concern that existed in there, were released into the environment and studies are ongoing to see the impact it's had on the local wetlands. And those chemicals, nickel, manganese and cobalt are not present in LFP battery chemistry, which is hugely important. So even if there is an issue with an LFP battery, those heavy metals are not produced.

Next slide.

So the things that are produced, and I'll come back to what those numbers on the top mean, but when one of these batteries does fail, we know what is produced. The vast majority of it are the things that are produced out of the fires. It's carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and hydrogen gas. So we know what we have, and I know the fire chief is here, so we can talk about how that will inform our emergency response because we know what we're looking for. The vast majority are those very light gases which dissipate readily.

Also, there can be trace of other types of gases we have on the bottom there. And HF, HC, potentially toxic gases are produced here. What's interesting is those things that are produced aren't necessarily integral components of the batteries. They're kind of in everything. So what you're seeing is that component of what's being produced in these batteries is the same as in residential fires. So what you're seeing in house fires, those same toxic chemicals are produced. And if you have like one of the more -- like a Home Depot fire or a large commercial fire, there could be even more of these things. So it's important that we know what's there and what's not there as we kind of dig into the emergency response side of things.

The last thing I'm going to say is it says there, UL

(audio cuts out) -- mentioned there's heightened standards that exist now, one of which is a live fire test. They set them on fire and take all the readings to see what's going on. And that is very much informing what our response procedures are.

He also referenced that these are designed to consume themselves. If there is a problem, because it's modular and there's one on fire, they're designed such that it won't spread to the next one. They're designed that if it burns, it burns right there and it won't go further. And there are redundant safety features in where if one doesn't work, the next one will work. And that is the importance of having such a layered system.

And I know the fire department's here, so they'll speak to their own plan on it. But hopefully I didn't go too long.

MR. LEHMAN: Thank you, Matt.

And just before we wrap up, I'd like to mention there's a sign-up sheet in the back. If you'd like to provide your contact information and reach out directly or get any information about the project, please sign up and we can communicate. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Garrett, before you depart from the podium there, I did have just a couple of questions for clarification --

MR. LEHMAN: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: -- that I think might also be helpful to the public. Can you give us the estimate of the number of batteries that would be used for the project?

MR. LEHMAN: No.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Okay.

MR. LEHMAN: I can tell you --

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: I know that's difficult to do sometimes.

MR. LEHMAN: -- right now, there are approximately 2,035 containers at the end of life for this project. I believe each container will have roughly 4,922 cells in it. But, yeah, I don't know the total number of cells off the top of my head.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: No problem. And then the number of years for the life of the project?

MR. LEHMAN: The life of the project is expected to be over 40 years.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Okay. Thank you. That was it.

MR. LEHMAN: Thank you, Commissioner Gallardo.

MS. WORRALL: All righty. Thank you, Garrett, for that. And thank you, Commissioner Gallardo. My name is Lisa Worrall and I'm the Project Manager for the CEC for

this Prairie Song Reliability Project. I will cover the CEC's presentation with this situated on the staff assessment for the proposed project. I'd like to make a couple of points up first -- up front.

Firstly, although we're engaged in this data completeness review of the application with the applicant, CEC staff analysis is in the early stages. That's why we're here today, engaged with the public now to get public scoping efforts and hear your comments and concerns. As part of staff's independent information gathering, we are looking for input on the scope of what our CEQA analysis should contain.

Secondly, while this is an accelerated process, a complete and independent environmental analysis will be conducted.

Next slide, please.

The CEC has an interdisciplinary team of technical specialists that will pair a staff assessment. A staff assessment is an independent technical and environmental review prepared by the CEC that is more comprehensive than a typical Environmental Impact Report, or EIR. The staff assessment includes a Draft EIR following the requirements of CEQA, California Environmental Quality Act, and CEQA guidelines. We will later show the topics in the environmental and engineering

impact analysis, some mandatory Opt-In requirements that are included in the staff assessment.

The staff assessment includes an environmental justice analysis of the proposed project's impact on environmental justice population, and this is based on the presence of a minority or low-income population, and considers whether the proposed project would have a disproportionately high adverse human health or environmental effect on that population.

And finally, the CEC -- the staff assessment will include compliance conditions and Compliance Monitoring Plan. This is to ensure that, should the project be approved, construction, operation, and decommissioning complies with all conditions of the certification.

Next slide, please.

The purpose of a staff assessment is to provide objective information regarding the proposed project's significant effects on the environment, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, their feasibility, and their comparative merit, and also provide an evaluation of the extent to which the application complies with additional licensing requirements set forth in the Public Resources Code. This information will be considered by the CEC Commissioners in deciding whether to

grant a certificate to build and operate the proposed project.

Next slide, please.

These are the topics CEC technical engineers and environmental specialists are analyzing to produce a staff assessment. The topics incorporate those in Appendix G in the Environmental Checklist of the CEQA Guidelines and include other topics required by the Public Resources Code.

The staff assessment will also evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project. In addition to a no-project alternative, the staff assessment will consider alternatives that would avoid or substantially lessen the project -- the proposed project's significant effects while feasibly attaining most of the proposed project objectives.

Next slide, please.

The staff assessment will also include an evaluation of the proposed project's compliance with mandatory Opt-In requirements, which will include a skilled workforce requirement and a community benefits agreement. Mandatory Opt-In requirements are not limited to those listed here on the slide and can be found in the California Code of Regulations Title 20, section 1879.

Next slide, please.

The CEC sent a notice of preparation or NOP of a

Draft EIR for the Prairie Song Reliability Project to the State Clearinghouse, also known as the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, or LCI, mailed the NOP to responsible and trustee agencies, and filed a copy with a Los Angeles County clerk. We also posted the NOP to the project docket and it is available for review at the docket.

Based on preliminary review of the application materials, the NOP identifies several topic areas with probable -- oh dear, internet is unstable -- probable environmental effects that will be evaluated further in the EIR. However, since we are still early on in the analysis, additional environmental effects may be identified as staff conducts a comprehensive environmental review.

The following slides identified some key topics for analysis in the EIR that staff has identified thus far. These topics include biological resources and worker safety fire protection, which includes battery safety.

Next slide, please.

CEC staff receive email updates when new files are posted to the project docket and are reviewing files on a regular basis as they come in. To date, the CEC has received over 160 comment letters on this project.

This slide represents some of the known areas of questions and interest raised by the public based on --

raised by the public based on comments received to date. This includes questions about fire, thermal runaway, battery energy storage system safety, toxic air emissions, conflicts with local land use designations and proximity to homes, transportations, corridors and water supply. Staff uses comments to help develop the scope and content of the environmental document and learn about the areas of potential concern within each resource topic.

Next slide, please. However, I believe we may be pausing for a break. So, yes, the next slide is a break.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: All right, we will be taking a break. So if you all need to stretch, stand up, go get a fresh breath of air, you can.

But I do want to remind folks that we have material in the back of the room with our staff. There's the agenda. There's an FAQ sheet on Opt-In program summary document that could be helpful for the proceeding presentation slides and the blue cards for the public comment.

Okay, we'll return at 4:05.

(Off the record at 3:56 p.m.)

(On the record at 4:08 p.m.)

MS. GREY: All right. Thank you so much, everyone, for coming on back. And we appreciate the opportunity to take that 10 minute break. This proceeding

is going until 8:00 p.m., so some of us will be here for quite some time.

But again, just wanted to reintroduce myself for folks who have just joined us recently. My name is Caroline Gray, and I'm a Senior Advisor to the Chair of the Energy Commission, Chair Hochschild, who unfortunately could not be with us today.

I want to emphasize that the single most important factor in our permitting decisions is safety. As you heard, our independent review process led by expert staff takes an exhaustive approach to every dimension of battery safety. We have never had a fire at a storage facility permitted by the California Energy Commission. And we intend to keep it that way. We look forward to analyzing this project's choice of site, design, technology, and more over the months to come.

I also want to emphasize that the battery safety is a top priority for the entire State of California, not just the California Energy Commission. Our agency is proud to be a part of the new California Battery Safety Collaborative, which includes senior leadership at CAL FIRE, the California Air Resources Board, the California Public Utilities Commission, and the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development. This group is taking an all-of-government approach to ensure that our battery

systems are safe and reliable for the communities that they serve.

As staff will subsequently discuss, as the industry has moved to new codes and chemistries, there have already been significant improvements in battery safety, but we don't take anything for granted. The state's Battery Safety Collaborative is committed to ensuring best-in-class safety in every aspect of a battery project's life, including permitting, installation, monitoring, and emergency planning. And that is the lens through which the CEC will review the battery project that's being presented to us today.

Next slide, please.

And with that, I'll pass to Dr. Alvin Greenberg.

DR. GREENBERG: Thank you, Caroline. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Alvin Greenberg, and I'm responsible for conducting the safety analysis for the California Energy Commission and preparing one section of the staff assessment, that being worker safety and fire protection.

I've worked with the Energy Commission as contract staff for over 31 years and have analyzed these issues for a vast array of energy projects, ranging from natural gas-fired power plants, solar photovoltaic and other solar projects, wind turbines, geothermal, coal

gasification, and more recently, several battery energy storage systems.

I've also conducted power plant compliance inspections and served as a safety monitor for the construction of a PV solar facility and for the demolition of some older solar facilities. Having a safety monitor during construction of any CEC licensed facility is one of our standard requirements.

Staff knows that safety is of great importance to all of you, and it's a priority for us. Working with my colleagues, who will be responsible for assessing potential impacts to public health, we are focused on conducting a thorough and professional analysis of this proposed project. And we will read every single comment received from the public before, during, or after this scoping meeting.

I work with Brett Fooks. He's the manager of the Safety and Reliability Branch in the CEC's STEP Division, and we are very aware that the public has raised several questions about battery energy storage fires that have occurred in the state. There are two incidents that I would like to touch on, the one at Moss Landing and the one at Otay Mesa.

Before I discuss these incidents, I will briefly describe what goes into a worker safety fire protection

analysis.

Next slide, please.

Worker safety is of paramount importance, as is public health. Construction and operation of a battery energy storage system, or BESS facility, is complex and represents dangers to workers. The presence of high electrical energy, trenching and excavation to prepare the site, the placement of electrical cables underground, working in the high heat of the desert, and the possible presence of a fungus that causes valley fever are but a few of the dangers workers face that must be mitigated.

Cal/OSHA is the state agency responsible for determining and enforcing worker safety and health regulations. However, as the permitting agency, the Energy Commission plays an important role in ensuring that workers have a safe environment -- (clears throat) excuse me -- during both construction and operation of the facility.

My assessment will review the applicant's proposed worker safety engineering and administrative controls, their personal protection equipment program, and make recommendations to the Commissioners to require additional protections as needed.

Fire protection is also key for all projects that come before the Energy Commission. Fire protection includes prevention, detection, suppression, life safety

protection and response, an assessment of the fire hazards, review of what the applicant has planned to address those hazards, collaboration with the local fire department, in this case, the L.A. County Fire Department, and proposing additional fire protection methods to the Commissioners for their consideration as requirements. We examine all potentials for fire, from small ones to larger ones that may occur.

When specifically reviewing a BESS project application, we examine the potential for a BESS fire, require that early detection methods are employed to prevent a BESS fire, require that fire propagation preventative methods are used, and we work with the local fire department to ensure they have the necessary staff, equipment, and training to address a BESS fire should that occur. Not every fire department in California is as knowledgeable and equipped as the L.A. County Fire Department.

The key to worker safety and fire protection is prevention. In preparation of the Worker Safety Fire Protection Section, CEC staff will review the history of BESS fires and the evolving strategies for BESS safety. The applicant has proposed battery storage systems that are in containers and would use lithium iron phosphate batteries. As I will explain in the next few slides, both

of these choices are improvements over older technologies and enhance safety.

We will also assess and consider potential impacts and available mitigation measures for the transporting of the battery storage containers to the proposed site.

Next slide, please.

This slide depicts Vistra Moss Landing Energy Storage Facility, a BESS facility not licensed by the California Energy Commission, and this photo shows what it was like before their fire. The fire occurred in the Phase 1 portion of the project, depicted in one of the purple rectangles.

Hilarie, could you please point to this Phase 1 portion of the project on the slide image? Thank you.

This BESS facility had a 300 megawatt, 1,200 megawatt hour capacity, and began commercial operation in late 2020. This project was a utility-scale battery energy storage system that used the lithium-ion nickel manganese cobalt, or NMC, chemistry that you heard about earlier and was located within an older converted turbine building hall. The fire started on January 16th, 2025.

Next slide, please.

The Gateway Energy Storage Facility located in Otay Mesa has a 250 megawatt, 1,000 megawatt hour capacity,

and began commercial operation in mid 2020. This facility was also not licensed by the CEC. The project is a utility-scale battery energy storage system that also has lithium-ion NMC chemistry and is located within a warehouse built for energy storage. That fire started on May 15th, 2024.

Next slide, please.

On the left you can see a picture of the Moss Landing Energy Storage Facility. Now, as I mentioned before, both Moss Landing and Gateway facilities became operational in the mid to late 2020s and are located indoors and use NMC lithium-ion chemistry. Since 2020, battery storage codes and the industry have evolved to make the currently proposed projects safer.

Two industry best practices I would like to highlight are the use of containers and a different lithium-ion chemistry.

As you can see from the picture on the right, recent battery energy storage projects have been placed in separate containers and not in a building. As discussed in the staff assessment for the recently certified Darden Clean Energy Project, the reasoning for this is that containerization minimizes the damage caused by thermal runaway fires and reduces the threat of fire propagation. In essence, each container has a smaller amount of stored

energy and if an incident were to occur, it could be confined to one container. Thus, the threat of the other containers catching fire would be minimized, unlike in a building application.

Next slide, please.

The second item that has changed is the battery energy chemistry that is used in utility-scale S. Looking at this slide, we see it simply illustrates the battery chemicals. This is not what the battery looks like. The applicants discuss this topic and I will expand on it.

One can see that an LFP battery consists of the elements lithium, iron, and phosphorus. And just in case anybody forgets their chemistry classes, why does F indicate iron? Because the atomic symbol for iron in the periodic table is Fe, short for the Latin word ferrum, which means iron. An NMC battery consists of nickel, manganese, and cobalt.

One of the additional safety measures afforded by the use of an LFP battery is that while nickel and cobalt are very toxic, they are both carcinogenic, iron and phosphorus are safe, even essential nutrients for humans. And this fact is an added bonus when the batteries are produced, recycles, or if waste is generated.

Moss Landing and Gateway used an NMC lithium-ion chemistry. The industry has moved primarily into the LFP

lithium-ion chemistry base. The primary difference between the two is energy density and safety. LFP has a lower energy density, but it also has a higher threshold temperature for thermal runaway. Both of these characteristics make it comparatively safer. The specific energy of LFP batteries ranges from 90 to 100 watt hours per kilogram, while the specific energy of NMC batteries ranges from 150 to 220 watt hours per kilogram.

The takeaway I want to leave with everyone is that containers help reduce the threat of a fire spreading, and the LFP chemistry helps to reduce the chance of a thermal runaway occurring, and it uses safer elements.

Next slide, please.

The CEC already has experience with permitting and overseeing the construction and operation of a wide range of utility-scale battery types and sizes. The Marsh Landing, Russell City, Sentinel, and Stanton Energy Projects are fully operational and range from 10 to 17 megawatts. The Henrietta Project has 99 megawatts, while the Border Project has 52 megawatts. The recently certified Darden Project, once built, will have up to 1,150 megawatts of battery energy storage, and it's currently under construction in the Central Valley.

I wanted to emphasize the range of CEC projects because we perform an independent, rigorous analysis for

any battery energy storage system project, no matter its location, its size, and with an emphasis on safety. The CEC looks at every aspect of safety to ensure that if a project were certified, it would not create a significant impact during the construction or operation of the project.

Additionally, we stay up to date with the latest codes, standards, research, and best practices for battery energy storage systems.

Next slide, please.

As you have heard before, we are just beginning our analysis after reading the application and receiving answers to questions posed to the applicant in the form of data requests. I do want to share with you a little bit of the process staff will follow and the new standards and requirements the CEC is implementing this year for all BESS projects under our jurisdiction.

The first step in our process is to identify each hazard that may be posed to on-site workers or the off-site public during both construction and the operation of the energy storage system.

Next, staff will examine and assess the chances of that hazard impacting the off-site public and the workers at the site by reviewing the following: information provided by the applicant about the battery chosen for use at this project, which in this case is the Sungrow Titan

2.0 battery; past accidents of this battery energy storage system and any other similar battery energy storage systems; engineering studies and published scientific studies and industry reports. Additionally, staff continues to review any available root cause analyses from past BESS incidences to learn what worked and what didn't work.

Staff will then address the hazards that require mitigation, assess whether the applicant's proposed mitigations are adequate and determine if additional mitigation is required. If additional controls are needed, staff will then propose additional mitigation in the form of a condition of certification, which is abbreviated COC, that becomes an enforceable requirement of the project if it's approved.

When evaluating proposed projects, CEC staff, management, and Commissioners are committed to ensure the safest possible production and storage of energy for all Californians.

Next slide, please.

Staff will evaluate this project against the most recent new safety standards and codes that will include the National Fire Protection Association, or NFPA, Code 855, the 2026 edition, UL Solutions, California Fire Code, the Los Angeles County Fire Department, and the California

Public Utilities Commission General Order 167-C that was adopted just this past March 2025.

Now, there are literally hundreds of different codes and standards that a project must follow during planning, construction, operation, and decommissioning, and they're really too numerous to mention here. But I would like to highlight a few of the more important and more recent safety and fire protection requirements.

Next slide, please, if you'll excuse me?

The NFPA is the nation's premier fire safety organization with a membership of over 50,000 fire department members, fire protection professionals, academics, and regulators. It's a global self-funded nonprofit organization that develops and maintains consensus-based codes and standards for fire, electrical, and related hazards. Its mission is to eliminate death and industry -- injury and economic loss from fire and other hazards by providing information, research, education, and advocacy.

Currently, there are 384 NFPA standards, of which one is dedicated to battery energy storage systems. The most recently updated standard of 855 applies to the design, construction, installation, commissioning, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of stationary battery energy storage system. This standard includes such

important requirements as emergency planning, training, system interconnections, and maintenance.

There have been several other updates from the 2023 edition, and some of the new requirements include the requirement for a hazard mitigation analysis for battery energy storage system installations, enhanced fire and explosion testing, including large-scale fire testing to better assess performance under worst-case test conditions, and the requirement for a thermal runaway propagation prevention system.

Because this is a consensus-based standard and not currently an enforceable code, staff will propose a condition of certification requiring compliance with NFPA 855, the 2026 edition.

Next slide, please.

These industry standards were developed by UL Solutions, formerly known as Underwriter Labs, a name most familiar with -- most people would find familiar as a label that can be found on electrical kitchen appliances, power tools, and even extension cords. UL is a 132-year-old company that researches safety and develops standards addressing the risks from fires and electrical shocks. OSHA and Cal/OSHA both require that almost all electrical devices and cables in workplaces meet the relevant UL standards.

UL 9540 is a certification that signifies that an energy storage system has undergone rigorous testing and evaluation to ensure that it meets the safety standards for electrical and electrochemical energy storage technologies. Staff requires this certification.

UL 9540A, a companion standard, provides a test method for evaluating thermal runaway propagation in battery energy storage systems and is required before a UL 9540 certificate can be issued. Staff requires this testing.

And UL 1973 covers a wide range of battery technologies, including lithium-based, and requires a range of safety performance tests. Staff also requires these tests and certification.

Next slide, please.

The California Fire Code was amended July 1st, 2024 to add regulations governing BESS placement and operation in California. These new regulations must be followed by all such projects, and it specifically includes requirements in Section 1207, which outlines the scope, hazard mitigation analysis, fire tests, and separation requirements for battery energy storage system installations, amongst many other requirements.

Staff is already working very closely with the L.A. County Fire Department and will also reference their

codes for compliance.

Next slide, please.

Also applicable is the newly adopted California Public Utilities Commission General Order 167-C, which establishes stricter standards for maintenance and operation of BESS and increases oversight of emergency response plans.

Next slide, please.

Here are some examples of mitigation measures that staff and the Energy Commission have required for battery energy storage systems, and these have been approved or will soon be decided by the Commissioners.

Deflagration panels or active ventilation systems such as explosion-proof fans and vents that open. These would either direct any explosion upwards rather than to the sides, thus avoiding impacting adjacent units and avoiding propagation, or remove any flammable gases before they can explode.

Thermal infrared cameras. These are used to detect heat anomalies before they induce a thermal runaway event.

A construction and operations and maintenance fire protection program. This is required by Cal/OSHA and includes several programs that protect workers and provide for fire protection.

A command and control center. This is to be used if a fire occurs, so that the first responders of the fire department can receive telemetry data from the units and direct operations from outside the battery area, thus protecting firefighters.

Next slide, please.

I would now like to pass the presentation back to Lisa Worrall.

MS. WORRALL: Thank you so much, Dr. Greenberg.

For biological resources, the proposed project site is located on the northern side of the San Gabriel Mountains, bordering the Antelope Valley and partially overlapping the Santa Clara River Significant Ecological Area, or SEA. The SEA is a conservation area formally designated by the Los Angeles County zoning regulations.

The figure to the right shows the regional location of the project site. The site supports a variety of native vegetation, including shrub and sagebrush communities, as well as California juniper trees woodland, a sensitive natural community. The proposed project could affect several rare plant species identified by the California Native Plant Society.

Additionally, the proposed project may cause direct and indirect impacts to special status wildlife, including species protected by the California Endangered

Species Act and the California Fish and Game Code, including Crotch's bumblebee, which is a state candidate species for listing under the California Endangered Species Act, Southern California ringtail, a state fully protected species, mountain lion, a recently listed threatened species.

Next slide, please.

Some of the probable direct and/or indirect environmental effects on biological resources from the construction and operation of the proposed project include impacts to special status plants and vegetation communities from removal and crushing during grading and development of the site and offsite erosion or sedimentation.

Impacts to special status wildlife from loss of habitat and potential injury or mortality to crutches bumblebee and other special status wildlife.

Disruption of nesting for special status bird species and common species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the California Fish and Game Code.

Other project effects, including disruption of wildlife movement and introduction of human-related influences, such as lighting, noise, dust, and introduction of invasive weeds.

The CEC staff is gathering information and conducting analysis to determine appropriate avoidance,

minimization, and mitigation measures in coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The project would result in impacts on, potentially, state jurisdictional waters. CEC is conducting analysis to determine the best appropriate management practices and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for jurisdictional waters in coordination with the California Department of Wildlife -- Fish and Wildlife. Sorry.

Staff is evaluating impacts to the SEA and its locally rare and protected resources and will be coordinating with the County of Los Angeles.

Next slide, please.

And now I'll turn the mic back over to Kaycee Chang.

MS. CHANG: Thank you, Lisa.

The CEC is in the early stages of analysis of the proposed Prairie Song Reliability Project now that the application is complete. Staff will use information gathered during this scoping process in the preparation of the staff assessment. For example, we have a court reporter here today transcribing today's meeting who will capture any verbal comments made here.

With certain exceptions, the staff assessment is prepared within 150 days of the application completeness determination. The staff assessment is anticipated to be

published in June 2026. There will be a 60-day public review period for the staff assessment and CEC will come back and hold a public meeting during that period.

Following the close of the 60-day public review period, staff may prepare and publish an updated staff assessment and will file the CEC Executive Director's recommendation on whether the CEC should issue a certificate to build and operate the project. A CEC decision on the proposed project will be made at a publicly noticed CEC business meeting.

And now I'll pass the presentation over to Fabi Lao.

Next slide, please.

MS. LAO: Good afternoon. Once again, I'm Fabi Lao. I'm the Equity Outreach and Engagement Lead with the Office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs. And today I will be presenting on how members of the public, California Native American tribes and others can participate in this proceeding.

Next slide, please.

Part of our office's mission is to facilitate public and tribal engagement in CEC programs and policies. We are a free resource available to anyone who wants to participate in CEC proceedings, including the Prairie Song proceeding. I will be sharing our contact information on a

later slide.

Next slide, please.

Now we'll talk about different ways to participate in the CEC's Prairie Song proceeding. There are multiple ways to participate. The first one is to follow the proceeding. Another is to comment on the proceeding. And a third option open to California Native American tribes is tribal consultation.

Next slide.

I will now go into more detail on how to follow this proceeding. One of the most popular ways to participate in our programs and policies is just to follow them. You can follow our proceedings by reviewing materials we post on our website, signing up for email updates, and by attending events like the one here today. Our events are almost always hybrid or fully virtual via Zoom, so the public can attend our events from anywhere via a phone or an internet connection.

On this slide, you see a snapshot of the CEC webpage for the proposed Prairie Song Reliability Project. It has information on the proposed project and project status. It has a place where you can subscribe for free email updates on this project under the subscribe section. And there is a link to submit written comments directly to the project docket. And there's also a link to the entire

project docket.

So what is a docket? The CEC has publicly accessible online dockets for its proceedings. This is basically a place where application materials, public comments, notices, agendas, and other documents are filed and available online.

On this slide, the image to the right is of the docket for the proposed Prairie Song Reliability Project. With few exceptions, all materials in the docket are linked and available for anyone to download and view for free.

Next slide, please.

Another way to participate is to comment. As in all CEC's programs and policies, any person can comment verbally at a CEC event or in writing. Please note that comments will become part of the public record with access available via any internet search engine. To comment verbally, just attend the event and wait for the instructions during the public comment period to make your comment. For hybrid events, you can comment in-person or via Zoom online or by phone. And coming up on our agenda is a public comment period.

The CEC also welcomes written comments. As I stated before, on the CEC website, we have what is called a docket for each project proceeding. Written comments can be submitted to the docket for the proceeding at any time.

But the most effective time to do so is during the announced public comment periods. On our website, you can submit a comment electronically by typing into our e-comment page or uploading a document such as a letter.

We also have email and paper mail options to submit a comment that are detailed in the notice for today's event. And if you need assistance commenting, you can contact our office, the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs, and it will have our contact information on my last slide.

Next slide, please.

The CEC has invited tribal consultation in this and other Opt-In proceedings. Patrick Riordan from the CEC's siting division is available for inquiries and other communications from California Native American tribes.

Next slide.

Thank you for attending this meeting and your interest in this proceeding. We're here to serve the state of California and your participation is a big part of this process. Here's the information for the office of the Public Advisor, Energy Equity, and Tribal Affairs. My office is here to assist you in participating in our Energy Commission's programs and policies. And again, just a reminder to please turn in your blue card, the Public Advisor table in the back if you would like to provide

public comment.

And now the Energy Commission welcomes public comment at this time. And before we move to the general public comment, we will begin with comments from government entities, including local, state, and federal agencies and California Native American tribes. If you represent a government entity, including a California Native American tribe, if you're in the room, please walk up to the podium.

If you're on Zoom, click on the raise-hand feature. It looks like an open palm at the bottom of your screen. And if you are joining us by phone, please press star nine to raise your hand.

We will start with commenters joining us in-person, then transition to our online and phone attendees. If you are here as a member of the public, we ask that you wait until we hear from government entities.

And I have here the blue card for Richard Stillwagon. You want to come to the podium, please?

MR. STILLWAGON: Thank you. Commissioner Gallardo and panel, thank you very much for being here today. I am Richard Stillwagon, the Fire Marshal for Los Angeles County Fire Department.

It is a pleasure to have the State of California come and be open and transparent with the community. I thank you for that. I think that government partnership

with the community is very important, both with our private partners and the community at large. And just your presence here today speaks volumes to be transparent, and I really appreciate that.

So as the Fire Marshal, my primary mission and objective is the safety of the public and my first responders, period, end stop. And so I am very happy that this Commission has reached out to Los Angeles County Fire Department. Our Fire Chief, Anthony Maroney, had proposed and committed to Board of Supervisors Kathryn Barger and the rest of the board that all Los Angeles County and California codes and laws shall be followed in this space. No corner shall be cut. So that is our governance directive that I want to partner with you in protecting my community members and our public safety personnel responding to any type of incident that comes into play.

Of particular interest for the public, I will just quickly say, I have 34 years in the fire service. I've worked at all ranks from firefighter, engineer, captain. I was also a supervisor for the petroleum chemical unit regulating all chemicals in Los Angeles County, anywhere from nuclear all the way down to battery energy storage and everything in between, particularly in the oil refinery fields. So I have quite an extensive experience in both the chemistry space and building new

projects and large projects. I am now the Fire Marshal where I conduct a broad scope across all of L.A. County and it's good to continue to bring public safety as our primary purpose.

So within the Acton community, they have specific risks and I just want to make sure those are identified. One is the threat of wildland fires, particularly wind-driven wildland fires in this 14 Corridor space. So that is an area that the Commission needs and must look at to make sure for the safety of the public and for this particular project.

The second is on-site BESS fires. Though we produce and put in every safety element possible, incidents still happen and they're going to happen. So we need to ensure those incidents are held small, they're kept to their site of origin and they don't expand into the neighboring field and/or off-site for the community threat. So that is the number two item.

Number three, earthquake and flooding. Those are two particular concerns that have to be looked at both on a seismic level and then the flooding element. We've got to make sure this isn't in a flood zone because battery technology and water don't mix very well. That would be a particular concern.

However, on the flip side, I'm looking at and

listening to what has been stated today. California is the inventor of CEQA. They are the environmental protectionists. They designed and developed all the codes and laws that are in California today. So partnering with the Water Board, partnering with the environmentalists to make sure this is the best project possible, I really encourage that we keep doing that throughout the state of California.

Adding the NFPA 855 2026 edition, L.A. County fought hard for that. We're one of the leaders in BESS technology safety. We're on the Codes Committees at the ICC. We are here on the Committee. We actually have a voting member of the Committee here in California. We are a leader in the nation, especially in Southern California. And thank you for partnering with us and drawing from that use to bring the best and local knowledge to the table for this project.

Finally, setback distances. Setback distances from the public is essential. So we need to understand the modeling. And what I heard today was both modeling for explosion and modeling for toxicity. Modeling for toxicity has been the missing element in the battery energy storage space. And the fact that this Commission addressed that item is huge. That is an advancement not only for this community and their protection, but all communities

throughout the United States. So thank you for bringing that to attention. That, again, is something Los Angeles County Fire Department has been advocating for.

And finally, water availability. We are in a desert. Water availability for this project is huge. We need to make sure we have the adequate water flow, not just to contain an incident, but it's more particular for like trucks that come on site and catch fire and/or those wildfire elements just for us to be able to do our job and keep this facility safe to where it doesn't become a problem for the public at large.

So those are my main concerns. I look forward to partnering with you. I do have my team here. I have two managers -- three throughout L.A. County here. And also my leading expert, Josh Costello. Josh Costello is the member that is on those committees and works with the state.

So I just wanted to bring my concerns from the Fire Marshal's perspective, really let you know what the significant hazards are for this community. I also wanted the community to understand we do know what those hazards are. And it is my job to protect on both sides. So I want to protect for my firefighters in that first response, early detection, keep things small, keep them stable, and also protect the community.

Thank you for your time. Any questions?

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Yes, actually, thank you so much, Fire Marshal Stillwagon. I'm sure you're incredibly busy. And so you taking your time to be here with us to help provide your insight is really valuable. And also that you brought others who are experts also to speak with us is really nice to have.

I do have a question for you. Given your emphasis on transparency and the items you listed out, is there anything that is keeping you up at night about this project in particular or, you know, the batteries in general? Because from what I understood from what you said, you are addressing other projects as well?

MR. STILLWAGON: Correct. We have several projects going on throughout Los Angeles County. We have now moved into the inner city space, so we're not just out in the rural areas anymore. These projects are going into the density of the population. And serving a population with 10 million people, that's incredibly important.

So now, no. Two years ago, yes. But we wanted to know in Los Angeles County in particular, what are the true hazards with battery technology with this new technology, the lithium-ion phosphate? And what it was is lithium-ion phosphate batteries produce a hydrogen gas and a carbon monoxide gas. Those are the two primary gases that come off the batteries. What we were concerned with

was explosions.

However, we were able to get the companies, the private industry, to start modeling those explosions, start doing the large-scale fire testing to where we could understand what is actually happening versus the shoulda, woulda, couldas. I don't like to regulate in an unknown space. If I know the hazard, we can regulate against that hazard and make sure that the community is safe.

One of the things we did here in Los Angeles County, we're the first in the nation, everybody else seems to be following suit, is we make sure that there is a blast wall that is built. This is a concrete-reinforced masonry wall that is designed to contain any blast on that facility, meaning it cannot endanger somebody walking by, a child riding a bike, a homeless person sleeping up against a wall. We want to make sure that the public is safe. The industry partnered with us in that and said, absolutely, we will do. The minimum wall height that we have is 10 feet to make sure that no shrapnel could go up and over and into harm's way also. So we wanted to make sure those walls were the height of and/or above the containers themselves.

The other item that we really pressed the industry for best practices was the deflagration vents that you pointed out earlier today, that when an incident happens, that when an explosion occurs, it goes vertical.

And if it has a relief valve, just like our propane tanks, it's not going to explode the cylinder, it's just going to relieve and let the fire come out the top. So that is a huge safety element. And then early gas detection to get a response coming immediately before those later stage events occur. We've also supported the ventilation systems within the containers.

So now that we know more, now that we understand, now that we're seeing the toxicity reports, we're actually seeing very, very low toxicity items. We believe on a fire service side that is because hydrogen burns at 1,700-plus degrees and is consuming all of the other chemicals in its burning process. So that is a huge benefit.

The smoke we are actually seeing, that carbon-producing side, is coming from the electrical components and the electrical wiring, those plastics, and not from the gases themselves. The gas of hydrogen is an invisible flame that you cannot see, you cannot smell, you cannot taste. So when we take that flame and we put it vertical and we put it straight up and it's out of harm's way, it's not going to now affect the neighboring container, then we're in a better place.

We searched nationally and worldwide and we found no containerized fires that spread throughout a field. They were always contained to their site of origin,

oftentimes to their container of origin, and where close groupings of containers were together, it stayed within that grouping. Here in Los Angeles County, we have a grouping of four. No more than four containers can be put next to each other because we don't want anything to go across the field of containers. We want to limit that exposure.

The other thing that the industry is doing very well is they are starting to containerize within the container to make sure that when a battery energy system starts to burn, it stays confined to one rack and doesn't spread across the other racks.

So we're seeing a lot of positive things. We are seeing the public safety element is now being met and is scientifically being met and not just guesses and assumptions. Here in L.A. County, we don't want to guess because people die with guesses. It is our commitment to the community to make sure we are going off a fact-based science and to ensure their safety and our firefighters' safety.

Does that answer your question, ma'am?

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Absolutely. Thank you. I do have one more for you.

So emphasizing safety, as we had mentioned earlier multiple times, safety is our priority as well. If

you're willing, would you be able to if something were to happen, if there were some issue with the proposed project, what does the response time look like? And like maybe you could share what would be the activities, like what would you all do if there's something that happens, whether it's a fire or anything else?

MR. STILLWAGON: Thank you for the question. That's a really good question. In this particular spot, it's really in the best location. There is a fire station. Fire station 80 is just around the corner. So an actual response time is probably 60 to 90 seconds. It is like that close.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Okay.

MR. STILLWAGON: Not response time of the alarm, I'm saying once you're in the truck driving, you're literally across the street down a few hundred feet and around the corner. So it is right there. Water accessibility will be there.

But furthermore, we're going to have a full response to these types of incidents based on the size of the facility and the potential hazards. We will learn more as we go throughout the process.

We also have hazardous materials teams here staged on Highway 14, Fire Station 150 down the road here. So that's a benefit for this community in this area that

protects both the highway infrastructure and then all of our chemical infrastructure.

So we do have a robust response mechanism that is in place here in L.A. County. We do have operating facilities. I can say that the operating facility that we put into place last year, we haven't had one false alarm nor incident. So that has been up and running for over a year. It's a pretty sizable project down in South L.A. in the inner city community and we haven't had one issue. So that is very, very positive in this space and moving forward.

Does that answer your question with that?

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: It does. Thank you so much. Again, really appreciate your sharing your experience, expertise, and also thank you for your service.

MR. STILLWAGON: One last thing I'll add, and I didn't hear it in the earlier presentation, one of the things L.A. County requests and actually demands is that the company does provide a comprehensive training program to all of our first responders for both battalions. This is going to be the desert side and the Santa Clarita side, so all first responders in the region know how to come and handle and mitigate these and also ongoing training. So it's not just a one time and gone. We want annual or every other year type of training to where we can always keep our

crews constantly refreshed for best practices.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Okay.

MR. STILLWAGON: Thank you. Appreciate that.

MS. LAO: Is this on? Okay, it's on.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Yes.

MS. LAO: Okay. Again, just a reminder that we're currently hearing from government entities first. So if you're a government agency or California Native American tribe and haven't yet raised your hand, please do so now. And if you're on Zoom, click on the raise-hand feature. It looks like an open palm on your screen. And if you're joining us by phone, please press star nine to raise your hand.

I see two hands raised. I see Carlos Torres. I'm going to unmute your line. You have to unmute on your end.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Someone's asking if they need to submit a card?

MS. LAO: Yeah, for the general public comment, you submit a card and it's in the back. Yes. Thank you for asking.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: And since they're standing, there's also material in the back that we have about the certification program, about the proceeding, in case that would be helpful for you all.

MS. LAO: Okie-doke, Carlos Torres, I'm going to unmute your line. Please state your name for the record, and spelling if possible, and the agency that you're with.

MR. TORRES: Good afternoon. My name is Carlos Torres, and I am the Executive Director at Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles, also known as WINTER.

MS. LAO: Okay, this moment is for government agencies, this public comment period.

MR. TORRES: Okay.

MS. LAO: For the general public comment, we'll start afterwards, so --

MR. TORRES: I will wait.

MS. LAO: Okay. Thank you.

Okay, I don't see any government agencies on Zoom, so we will open the floor to general public comment. And we are going to start with folks in the room. And if you're joining us in-person, please, again, if you haven't done so, please fill out the blue cards on the table in the back. And I'm going to be calling out your name, so please approach the podium, spell your name for the record. You're invited to also share affiliation and position on the project, if any, and then you may begin. We are asking for comments to be three minutes -- two minutes or less. And there will be a timer on the screen, and then you may begin.

June Perkins? Yeah. Mm-hmm. And next up after June is going to be Drew Mercy.

Yeah, just hold the button a few seconds.

MS. PERKINS: And thank you for being here today. It's really important for us in the Acton community. My name is June Perkins, J-U-N-E P-E-R-K-I-N-S. I'm an Acton resident since 2005. I am a member of the Acton Town Council, a member of the Agua Dulce Acton Senior Citizens Club, and a member of the Friends of Acton Library. I think that's enough.

There's things that I looked at to see what you had on the screen, I read it all, like the potential wildfire risk, because we are in a very high fire hazard severity zone. And also there's the hazards and hazardous materials and potential toxic exposure during a battery fire. We hope that never happens. And public health.

There's also potential evacuation during a battery fire incident, particularly those without secondary access. The last one was on climate change, greenhouse emissions, the known health and safety risks of lithium-ion batteries, including the LFP. And I thank Dr. Greenberg for really mentioning all those fields.

And my husband and I, we both have asthma when we came here. And I retired after 47 years being in the healthcare field. So if there needs to be a shelter-in-

place warning issued, the time duration is unknown. We don't know how long it's going to last and we'd stay indoors. Is there a safety factor with these chemical emissions, precautions, lifelong problem, effects on our animals as we are A1 and A2 zoning?

The evacuation of humans, livestock, pets, needed emergency supplies that we have to carry, and we're told -- I've been through the certifications. We are senior citizens living on two miles of a bit narrow dirt road. Above all, you mentioned the transport, emergency vehicles, all traveling together at the same time.

Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

MS. LAO: Thank you.

And Drew Mercy, please spell your name for the record and any affiliation, if you have any. You may begin.

MR. MERCY: Thank you. Drew Mercy, D-R-E-W M-E-R-C-Y. I'm the Executive Director for the Antelope Valley Economic Development and Growth Enterprise. We're the regional EDO serving Northern Los Angeles County and Southeastern County.

AV EDGE is in support of this project. A big part of our needs in the future are grid stability. Without battery storage, we cannot grow economically and provide local jobs. Our community is home to 500,000

residents and of that 500,000, 100,000 commute mostly to L.A. and some of the worst commutes in the nation. Every job we can create up here is a green job because it gets people off of that freeway upwards of an hour and a half to two hours each way.

Prairie Song is a vital part of that economic design. Energy storage is vital to stabilizing our clean energy supply needed for infrastructure and future job growth. It makes sense to situate this project in connection with the Vincent Hill substation and in such close proximity to the fire station. This allows for the most efficient grid access without extraneous cost or environmental impact.

Coval Infrastructure has approached this the right way. Through community engagement and prioritizing safety, they are minimizing community impact in a rural community with a strong commitment to supporting Acton and the greater Antelope Valley region. They are ensuring local workers with the best available training are hired.

On behalf of the Antelope Valley Economic Development and Growth Enterprise, I respectfully ask for your support for this project.

MS. LAO: Thank you.

Next up is Katherine Sky Tucker, followed by Ruthie Brock, and then Stephen Brock. And please spell

your name for the record, state any affiliation if any, and you'll have two minutes, and the timer's on the screen.

MS. TUCKER: Hi there, I'm Catherine Sky Tucker, first name Catherine, K-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-E, middle name Sky, S-K-Y, last name Tucker. Thank you for letting us speak and to give you some of our viewpoints on this project.

I am a 24-year resident of Acton. I served eight years on the Acton Town Council to help preserve the area in accordance with the regulations of the Acton Community Standards District. I have a 12-acre ranch about one mile south of the Prairie Song Project. I raise Navajo churro sheep to help preserve the breed. This is my primary residence. I have no other property. My property's on a well.

We are located in a very high fire hazard zone. Wind-driven fires scare us to death, okay? Homeowner's insurance is already high or not attainable. This project would greatly increase the risk of fire and make it harder to retain homeowner's insurance.

If the project is built, I'm afraid I won't be able to sell my property. Who would want to buy property that is near a huge toxic fire hazard and eyesore? I'm sorry, LFP batteries do release HF also. If there is a runaway fire, I greatly fear for the adverse health effects from toxic smoke, which includes HF and adverse impact to

the Santa Clara Riverbed.

It is also difficult to evacuate livestock during a toxic fire event. We are located near the Santa -- we are located in the Santa Clara River significant ecological area. These areas are officially designated within L.A. County to preserve irreplaceable biological resources. One of the transmission line routes to Prairie Song goes through the SEA and the project is adjacent to the SEA. A runaway fire could easily spread to the SEA and destroy it. We don't have water to put out a fire if one occurs. Most people are on wells. They use hauled water or on AB Waterworks District 37.

The project would ruin the rural nature of the area. This is why people move to Acton for the rural lifestyle. BESS projects should be located away from human habitation, livestock and SEAs.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

Please spell your name and affiliation, please state it, and you have two minutes.

MS. BROCK: My name is Ruthie Brock, R-U-T-H-I-E B-R-O-C-K. I'm with Acton Takes Action. I had prepared comments and I heard so much, I had to respond.

Let's talk about the non-safety of LFP. We've talked about the safety, so let's talk about the dangers. LFP do release toxic chemicals when they burn. They might

react at 80 degrees C higher than an NMC, but they do react and when they burn and they vaporize the electrolyte within the battery, they are toxic. So let's be real about that. And they produce 50 percent hydrogen gases instead of 30 percent that NMC produce.

Overcharging can degrade these batteries greatly. The SEI film and separator breaks down and you get a free exchange of ions and boom, you've got a problem.

Now, UL 9540 test standards test at 12 miles an hour. That is not real life in Acton. 12 miles an hour is exceeded every day in the east part of Acton. People laugh because it's so true,; right? These firefighters know. And that's the test standard is 12 miles per hour. So to take a UL certified battery, UL 9540 certified battery and say that it's going to be safe in Acton is just not going to fly. It won't.

Batteries also have a manufacturing -- they have quality control issues. The Marengo BESS in Chicago, Illinois had LG Chem batteries delivered and they started reacting during the testing and the commissioning basis. And the batteries went into thermal runaway and they contacted LG and said, hey, your batteries are bad. Well, let's send you some new ones. Well, guess what? The new ones got installed and they reacted too. LG Chem are UL certified batteries. Fun fact.

Okay, GL 167-C finally has an enforcement mechanism for reporting failures. Prior to that, EPRI was tracking the BESS failures and they even admit that they're underreported because there was no mechanism of enforcement for mandatory reporting. The declining BESS numbers therefore are not true.

And management systems can fail. Every battery is a potential point -- every cell is a potential point of failure and every battery system can also fail. If those systems fail, a perfect battery can then have an issue and go into thermal runaway and burn.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MS. BROCK: And the 14th freeway would be shut down in an event.

MS. LAO: Next up, Stephen Brock followed by Ken Perkins. Please state your name for the record and you have two minutes or less.

MR. BROCK: Yeah, my name is Stephen Brock, S-T-E-P-H-E-N B-R-O-C-K. I'm a 34-year resident of Acton. I was a firefighter specialist for the Los Angeles County Fire Department for three years and in my last 10 years was with Hazmat.

I read the Prairie Song Project and there are 240,000 gallon storage tanks and no municipal water supply. I do not believe that it's adequate to deal with this

battery container fire if only applying water to adjacent containers. All that water is going to go into our aquifer and animals cannot use it. And that's where people are (indiscernible).

So firefighters' water supply and that one and three quarter inch hand line following 125 gallon per minute will be adequate to cool containers adjacent to the burning container. If that container is 200 feet away, the incendiary quarter line will not reach that fire. Now, you can use a deck gun, but it's a thousand gallons a minute. And they'll be gone in no time and they don't have municipal water.

So, you know, and then putting 2,200 containers in this little town will ruin it.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

After Ken Perkins, we have Joe Sullivan. Please state your name for your record. And we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MR. PERKINS: Hi, I'm Ken Perkins. I'm a longtime resident of Acton. And the reason we moved out here was because it was a very rural place and everything else. And one thing that's very delicate here is our water table. And I do know that if -- some batteries are -- you can't put them up with water and the lithium

batteries will burn under water for four days straight. And I'm just kind of worried that there was a battery problem, would our water be contaminated? And that's one of my main worries. And everything else, they seemed like they did their backup work on it.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

After Joe Sullivan, we'll have Jeffrey, and Jonah Henry. Hopefully I'm reading that correctly.

MR. SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, Commissioner Gallardo, panel and staff. My name's Joe, J-O-E, Sullivan, S-U-L-L-I-V-A-N. And I am speaking on behalf of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 11, and the National Electrical Contractors Association of Greater Los Angeles. This represents approximately 350 electrical contractors local that partner with in the neighborhood of 10,000 union electricians. And we too, our top priority is also safety. And we express our support for this project. We realize that the burden is, would you be willing to live next to this project? It's important to us because we have members that live in this community.

And I should add that at our training center, we have 140,000 square foot training center with 1,500 students that go to the school there. And we have a microgrid and a significant battery energy storage

installation, which can power that school offline. And it's, you know, on campus next to the school.

Our contractors partner with the most highly skilled electricians, highly skilled and trained electricians, to build advanced electrical system. And this includes battery energy storage systems across Los Angeles County, which we do regularly. And I should add that L.A. County has the most stringent -- well, we build them across the nation, but L.A. County has the most stringent standards in the nation.

We have representatives, at least the National Electrical Contractor does, on every major code body in IBEW and NECA, train first responders and building engineers in safety. So we value this.

This project normally is important for resiliency and sustainability in creating, achieving the state's goals, it also creates high road local careers that pay family sustaining wages and benefits.

Furthermore, it creates apprenticeship opportunities. We have to bring new people into our school and we do outreach to organizations like WINTER, Anti-Recidivism Coalition. We have multiple outreach coordinators to make sure that we are representing this community properly. And our apprenticeship program, it's a five-year education at no cost where they come out skilled

and trained and move into the middle class.

And then lastly, I'd like to add that these projects, they create further economic opportunities in that we can't keep building solar if we're going to curtail it. We can't add EV charging onto the grid. We can't decarbonize without battery energy storage. So this is one domino that leads to economic advancement above and beyond it.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

Jeff Bree? Thank you.

MR. BREE: Good afternoon, my name is Jeff Bree. I'm a 22-year member with the Ironworkers Local 433.

We strongly urge the California Energy Commission to move forward with full approval of Prairie Song Reliability Project. Because of the powerful project labor agreement, this project will be built by Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita Valley residents, veterans, apprentices, and folks who may need a second shot at life. These projects are vital to helping easing traffic, cleansing our air, creating local jobs, and keeping members closer to the home when they go to work.

Our members are the best skilled and trained workforce in the country who have passed their rigorous apprenticeship. Prairie Song Reliability -- excuse me --

Reliability Project extensions will be built the way they should be, not just by the best skilled and trained workers in the country, but by the people who live in the community. This agreement is a game changer, not just for our members, but for the residents of the two valleys.

Thank you for your support and let's get building.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

Next, we have Jonah Henry, followed by Russ Fawkes, hope I'm not mispronouncing your name, and then Wayne Wilson.

Can you please spell your name for the record? And then you'll have two minutes or less.

MR. HENRY: Good evening. My name is Jonah Henry, J-O-N-A-H H-E-N-R-Y. I'm a resident of the City of Los Angeles in Jefferson Park, and I'm a volunteer organizer with Sunrise Movement Los Angeles. We are a youth-led activist organization that is fighting to stop the climate crisis and create new means of good paying American jobs in the process.

I'm here in support of this project. It is difficult for me to put into words the positive effect that a facility of this size would have on the renewable energy transition in Southern California.

I can say personally, as someone who has been

tracking energy issues in Southern California for the past few years and cares really deeply about this, I literally almost sobbed when I saw the application for this project. I was so relieved and so happy that a facility of this size, 9,200 megawatt hours of lithium-ion battery storage, could potentially be coming to Los Angeles County.

This is so transformative. Like, these are the sorts of facilities that allow us to close down the polluting methane-fired power plants that are releasing toxic emissions into low-income communities, communities of color, and destroying our planet. And it is difficult for me as a young person to imagine a future where we have a livable planet if government agencies are not approving projects like this.

I think the comment that I wanted to deliver today is not so much addressed to the CEC, but more so addressed to the residents of Acton. I have not lived in Acton before. You know, today, I freely admit today coming here to give this public comment. It's my first time ever coming to Acton. I am not immersed in the community. I don't understand what the community's perspective is on industrial development, what the community's perspective is on climate change. I don't understand the nuances of the reasons that some residents of Acton might be opposed to this project.

But if there's one comment I could deliver that I think would be like respectful, given that lack of knowledge, is I would really encourage you all to consider like the future generations of the Antelope Valley, of the County of Los Angeles, and not just the impacts that this would have on existing residents. Wildfire risk, I think we can all agree, is the greatest threat to Acton's safety. And we know that climate change is the single greatest contributing factor to wildfire. And so solving the climate crisis requires approving facilities like these.

Thank you for considering my comment.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

Next up, we have Russ Fawkes. Please spell your name for the record. And we're asking for comments to be managed two minutes or less.

MR. FAWKES: My name is Russ, R-U-S-S, Fawkes, F as in Frank, -A-W-K-E-S. I'm a longtime Acton resident with a wife, children, and grandchildren who are all potentially negatively impacted by the Prairie Song BESS. I am vehemently opposed to this project.

The shortcomings and disastrous potential of the Prairie Song BESS have been vigorously defined and exposed by Save Our Rural Town and others. The California Energy Commission project docket contains far more damning evidence than can be shared verbally today. Read it.

I need you to understand that in our high fire area, I'm very concerned about thermal runaway and devastating wildfires. We've already been excluded from regular fire insurance and are left with the market of last resort, a FAIR plan with their inferior coverages.

I worry about air and water pollution. I worry about the impact of property values and the loss of our rural lifestyle. All these disastrous consequences loom and from a resident's perspective, there are no positives.

The safeguards proposed are dubious at best. The threats to our community are real and confirmed in expert testimony. Please take the written and verbal comments of our residents to heart and deny this application.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next up, we have Wayne Wilson. Please state your name for the record. We're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MR. WILSON: Thank you. My name is Wayne Wilson. I've lived in my Acton home for 32 years and I may soon have a gigantic lithium-ion BESS facility 30 yards from my home.

We love our semi-rural lifestyle here. And Noemi, I really appreciate you recognizing the beauty of it. We want to keep it beautiful, not industrial. That's really important to us too. Acton is beautiful. It's

supposed to be protected by L.A. County zoning laws. We're supposed to be A1 and A2. This thing shouldn't even be allowed. I don't know how that's happening.

But in addition, we are a high wind, high fire risk area and we know that these lithium-ion batteries are prone to catching fire. It does happen in a way that's very difficult to extinguish. These fires do put out toxic chemicals into the air when they burn. That's a great concern to us.

Forty years. I've just heard today, 40 years these things are going to last. And this technology is already out of date. I know everybody's trying to do it, but then talk to Bill Gates about power and energy. He's the guy I talk to these days. Small nuclear reactors, that's the way it's going to go.

So this site around Soledad Canyon Road is right next door to homes and an RV park. And two weeks ago, we had a wind that was so strong, it tore branches from the trees, knocked down fences, including ours, uprooted a telephone pole on the very property we're talking about for this BESS project. It fell down. We had to call it in. Imagine a toxic chemical battery fire in wind like that.

I need to mention as well that this battery storage site will sit in the very center of a very narrow corridor that connects the Antelope Valley and the high

desert communities to L.A. It's a half mile, a half mile. You have four transportation avenues within that half mile. The railroad, Soledad Canyon Road, where I live, the 14 Freeway and Sierra Highway are all within that half mile. And this project sits right in the center of it. So Ruthie, yeah, it's not only going to close down the freeway, it's going to close down all of those streets and the railroads probably. So all that's going to be a disaster.

So the potential for serious impact on our community is huge and it's just ugly. We're not an industrial place. We're a wonderful, beautiful rural area and this doesn't belong here, so --

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MR. WILSON: Oh, I'm done. Thanks.

MS. LAO: I have Dawn Deans, followed by Roland Gutierrez, and Kelly Tent. I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly. Oh, Teno, oh, there we go. Thank you.

Dawn Deans. Please spell your name for the record. And we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MS. DEANS: My name is Dawn Deans.

MS. LAO: You have to look --

MS. DEANS: Here?

MS. LAO: Yeah, so they can hear it on Zoom.

MS. DEANS: Okay. D-A-W-N D-E-A-N-S. We live at 32434 Michigan Avenue, Acton, and strongly oppose the installation of the Prairie Song BESS Project in our small community of Acton for the following reasons.

Very high fire risk zone. Acton is a high fire risk area and experiences excessive heat and high winds. This project will further increase that fire risk as has been documented by actual fires of the other BESS projects in lithium-ion batteries.

Negative public health effects. There will be adverse health effects to Acton residents that has been documented that these chemical fires smolder and burn for days resulting in the release of toxic smoke and hazardous chemicals into the city of Acton and other surrounding heavily populated areas.

Negative impact to homeowners insurance costs. We currently pay $6,300 per year for homeowners insurance with a $28,950 deductible which will increase if this project is completed due to its volatility.

Negative impact to groundwater in nearby Palmdale Lake and State Water Project, or as some refer to as the Aqueduct. Many in Acton rely on wells as their water source and toxins released will seep into groundwater sources.

In addition, high winds will carry toxins to the

nearby State Water Project, a drinking water source for many up and down the state of California, and Palmdale Lake, a drinking water source for the entire east side of Palmdale. These water sources will become contaminated with these toxins and become unusable drinking water sources.

In closing, we don't feel the owners of this project have adequately addressed mitigating even a handful of the negative impacts of this project, most likely because there is simply no way to mitigate all of them. We recommend this project be moved to a remote area where there will be no impacts to the lives of humans and animals alike.

As a 10-year Acton residence, we will continue to band together with other Acton residents and oppose and fight the installation of any BESS project in our quiet rural community.

Thank you. And I have a written record if I need to drop it off. Do you want the written copy to be included in the record?

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: We done need it, but if you want to leave it with us, we will accept it.

MS. LAO: Next up is Roland Gutierrez, then Kelly Teno, hope that pronounced it right this time, and then Laney Clevenger-White.

And we're asking to please spell your name for the record and you have two minutes or less.

MR. GUTIERREZ: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Roland Gutierrez, G-U-T-I-E-R-R-E-Z. I am a 20-year member of Sprinkler Fitters U.A. Local 709 here in Los Angeles.

On behalf of Local 709 and the LA/OC Building Trades Council, we strongly urge the California Energy Commission to move forward with full approval of the Prairie Song Reliability Project. Our apprenticeship program that we have at Local 709 is currently training approximately 200 apprentices and they need this on-the-job experience to continue their education. This PLA will allow those that live in the two valleys here in Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley to work close from home instead of having to commute into Los Angeles.

Our fitters are the best-skilled and trained workforce in the country and we -- who have passed their rigorous apprenticeship programs to get to the journeyman card. All of our Sprinkler Feeders in U.A. Local 709 carry the state-required CAL FIRE installation certification card.

The fire suppression systems that we install from residential to commercial don't use just water. We also install specialty systems designed for specific hazards,

like the Prairie Song Project. We work with our trading partners to be on the cutting edge of the fire suppression industry. We have a long-standing relationship with L.A. City, L.A. County, and the State Fire Marshal to ensure that what we install not only benefits a specific project and first responders but also the community at large.

The Prairie Song Reliability Project will be built by skilled and trained fitters, construction workers from the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley communities and we urge you to approve the project.

Thank you very much.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

Next up we have Kelly Teno. Please spell your name for the record.

MS. TENO: Hello. My name is Kelly, K-E-L-L-Y, Teno, T-E-N-O, and I'm a 34-year resident of Acton and a 10-year member of the Acton Town Council.

I oppose the Prairie Song BESS Project in Acton. This project is massive and will cover close to 103 acres, close to many homes. This will cause significant visual issues for all of Acton. It will be seen from the 14 Freeway and is near two scenic drives.

Fires involving LFP batteries are not easy to extinguish and will release toxic gas. This could be a significant issue for all of Acton if we are, especially if

we are having a high wind event which happens very often. The toxic gases could spread over Acton.

Acton is a community with lots of animals which include horses, goats, chickens, and many animal rescues. Not all have the means to evacuate their animals. This could also be an impact because most of the roads out of Acton are two-lane roads or the 14 Freeway which could be closed.

I feel that green energy goals should be met without sacrificing public safety. These are all things that need to be properly mitigated by placing this and other LFP battery projects away from communities like Acton and away from people.

In closing, the Acton Town Council would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with Chair Hochschild, I hope I pronounced it correctly, when he visits Acton.

Thank you very much.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

Next up we have Laney Clevenger-White, and then followed by Christina Weyer (phonetic), I'm hoping I'm pronouncing that right, and then Doug Bayer.

Please spell your name for the record.

MS. CLEVENGER-WHITE: My name is Laney, L-A-N-E-Y, Clevenger, C-L-E-V-E-N-G-E-R, and sometimes White, W-H-I-T-E. I've lived in Acton since 2019 and I moved from

the Valley and I love my town. I love this town. We all know what it is because we live here. So I just want to touch a little bit on the character of the people that live here and what they do.

We've got Tammie Necessary and the Acton Illegal Dumping Task Force. These people, and they're not young-young, people go out and they climb the canyons and bring up everybody else's crap that they throw over into the canyon. They clean up the streets. They clean up the roads. And they do that because they love our town.

Then I'm going to speak for the Acton Women's Club. It's a longtime organization and we generously support the community with scholarships and other community needs through the Acton Women's Resale Shop. And they not only provide quality merchandise donated by the local people but it provides a place for people to come. I've often heard that they come there for therapy. We hear lots of intimate stories.

And then we're all blessed to have Ruthie Brock and Jacki Ayers and the Town Council. If there's anything that needs to be taken care of to protect our town, they're the people that are on top of it. They do that because they love our town and they love the people in the town.

Acton is a gem. It's a very special place. And I think I can safely say that we all want to keep it that

way.

So now, Prairie Song. Prairie Song is a song of fear and greed. Prairie Song is a song of potential danger. The lithium-ion batteries have a good track record all over the world, a track record of fires cannot extinguish quickly. Batteries, small batteries, large batteries, small fires becoming big fires, large fires becoming even larger, more dangerous fires and potentially destroying everything in its path.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MS. CLEVENGER-WHITE: Oh, shoot. I have good things to say. I'm just going to say, Prairie Song is a song we choose not to sing.

MS. LAO: Next up we have Christina Weyer. Hope I'm pronouncing that right. Is it Meyer, Christina Meyer? I don't see any Christina. Okay, we'll come back to her.

We have Doug Bayer next. Please spell your name for your record and we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MR. BAYER: My name is Doug Bayer, that's D-O-U-G B-A-Y-E-R. And I have lived in Acton for 33 years.

I was a Los Angeles City firefighter for 35 and a half. I held the rank of engineer for 28 of those years. My primary responsibility as engineer was to drive the fire engine and pump water out of fire. So I guess you could

say I have a little bit of experience in pumping water and lighting fires.

I have some serious reservations about putting a BESS at that location or actually anywhere in Acton. The way I understand the proposed plan for mitigation of a BESS fire is to stay back 300 feet and cool the surrounding containers using a one and three quarter inch handheld hose line with a smooth bore nozzle. There is zero chance of a one and three quarter inch handheld hose line making it 300 feet.

The only option would be to use a wagon battery. That's a deck gun that's mounted to the top of a fire engine. That uses a thousand gallons a minute. Those eight gallons 80,000 gallons of water that you have stored on site will be gone in 80 minutes and these fires last way longer than 80 minutes.

Now, I know L.A. County has water tenders that they can dispatch, but the water tender shows up and it's out of water in three minutes. It turns around and goes to a fire hydrant somewhere and it's going to be back in about 30 minutes to use its three minutes of water again.

So, also, because there's no way that you can only cool off the surrounding containers because you're squirting your water so far, the groundwater is going to get contaminated. And then we're going to have another

Erin Brockovich's Hinkley, Aaron Acton.

So please put this somewhere in the desert where it won't affect the people, the livestock, the freeway and the train.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next up we have to Susan Bayer, Susan Bayer, and followed by Patricia, apologies if I'm mispronouncing it, Akkad.

Please spell your name for the record. We're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MS. BAYER: Sure, it's Susan Bayer, S-U-S-A-N B-A-Y-E-R, and I'm a 33 year resident of Acton. I raised two children here and they are raising my five grandchildren here in Acton. And I have many concerns about having a BESS in our town.

My primary concern are the toxins, like everybody else here, that will be released into the air and the groundwater. Whether you're on a well, which most of the people here in Acton are, or on county water, our water will be poisoned by the gases during a BESS fire.

Our community is made up of young families, elderly, retired people, ranch, livestock animals as you've heard that are all housed outside. You would be putting our community at a great risk in creating many another Hinkley or the latest Moss Landing event where there were

toxins released into the air from the batteries and the water.

Having this risk will not only impact our air and water but also greatly impact our housing market along with further impacting our ability to acquire fire insurance in an already severe high fire risk area. Many homeowners either are paying close to $20,000 a year or have opted to not even have fire insurance.

Having a BESS is a risk in our community with no benefits. We have no benefits that outweigh our risk. That will not be -- we will not be getting an extra four hours of electricity if the power goes out. Vincent Substation does not provide electricity for Acton.

With that said, Acton's not the right community for a BESS. There has to be a better place that's not close to a community or an extreme high fire hazard location.

Thanks for taking the time and listening to our concerns.

MS. LAO: Next up, we have Patricia Akkad, I guess, yeah, apologies if I'm mispronouncing it, followed by Helix Gautamus. I'm going to say apologies if I'm mispronouncing it. Patricia, please spell your --

MS. AKKAD: I'm Patty Akkad to everybody here, P-A-T-T-Y A-K-K-A-D.

I think these BESS facilities are the thing of the future. Just definitely, please, not for Acton.

I have a graph here that tells the different countries. Almost every country in the world has BESS facilities. Who's the biggest one? China. Well, who's the second? U.S. And we're trying to catch up to China. But please, please, don't bring it to our rural area. Please build it out in the millions of acres that are in the desert that are not going to be occupied by people or animals or anything. We have millions of acres, I'm sure, between California, Nevada, and Arizona to have many, many BESS facilities.

I'm a 40-year Acton resident. I have participated in several fires where I was helping evacuations with horses, families, and children. It's of deepest concern to all of us, not to mention our fire insurance and all the logistics of that. But it's just so dangerous.

Now, I have traveled in England. I used to live there. I saw a BESS facility next to the train tracks out in the middle of nowhere. I saw in Spain, near Seville, between Malaga and Seville, a big BESS facility. Spain is second only to England in Europe. But it was out in the middle of a rocky area. No houses will be built there. No animals will be raised there. Even in Lebanon, they have

one. And it's in the Beqaa Valley. It's not anywhere near homes or agriculture.

So I'm begging you to, please, build your BESS facilities but please not here. Not in Acton.

MS. LAO: Next up, we have Myllex Guadamuz, followed by Nancy Saldez (phonetic).

And please spell your name for the record.

MR. GUADAMUZ: I'll be speaking on behalf of the next four people because we're from the same organization. And I wanted to be respectful of the instructions where it says one person per organization. So I'll be speaking on behalf of mine.

MS. LAO: Okay. Thank you.

MR. GUADAMUZ: So my name is Myllex Guadamuz, spelled M-Y-L-L-E-X G-U-A-D-A-M-U-Z. And on behalf of the Apprenticeship Readiness Fund, the nonprofit arm of the LA/OC Building Treats Council, we're urging you to approve this project.

Inclusive progress means ensuring that the major energy investments are community-driven and provide board-based benefits. With $7 million-plus reserved for local community benefit programs, this project ensures that regional development is equitable and resilient. This investment supports job creation, economic development, and energy resilience for the entire Antelope Island region.

Infrastructure should not -- should do more than just power the grid. It should uplift the people who live and work in the surrounding areas.

The Apprenticeship Readiness Fund is dedicated to providing equitable access to high-quality union level careers in building trades. This project directly advances that mission by supporting 200 training programs for women entering the union building and construction trades. These working investments -- these workforce investments create long-term, life-changing career pathways for individuals throughout our regional workforce.

Supporting infrastructure of this scale and magnitude ensures a steady pipeline of work for those entering our apprenticeship programs. And I can speak on behalf of my union brothers here that are here today, that there is nothing more rewarding than seeing an individual that came from a justice impacted background, that came from a homeless background, that was a drug addict, walking them through the process of giving them a second chance to kickstart their careers in the union trades. Nothing comes to seeing that process develop to where now they're making a lot more money and we're paving the way to the new generation of union workers.

So I urge you to recognize the value of this project, that this project brings to workforce development

and the regional economic equity. Thank you so much.

MS. LAO: Thank you. Next the next four are from the same organization; correct? Okay. Just wanted to be sure.

So next up we have Tommy Faavae. Sorry. I'm trying to read handwriting over here. Please state your name for the record and you have two minutes or less.

MR. FAAVAE: Yeah, thank you. My name is Tommy Faavae, T-O-M-M-Y, Faavae, F, as in Frank, -A-A-V, as in Victor, -A-E. I'm here representing International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 11. And we have some of our members that's here today. But I wanted all of our members in the Building Trades Council, our members of the IBEW and our Apprenticeship Readiness Program, to stand. Because this is what it means to us when it comes to, you know, ensuring that we uplift our apprentices, we uplift our pre-apprentices that are coming to trade, and then our journeymen that can work on these BESS projects.

I can tell you two things, that when it comes to IBEW, we, you know, we are set on the pathway of making sure that these BESS projects are safely, professionally installed. And we represent the electrical workers on the construction side, but we also represent our utility workers that are on the high voltage side.

So two things to think about when it comes to California state law. There's high voltage standards that are in place for our utility workers. Once when we install these type of systems, we pass it on to our utility workers that tie in to interconnect and gen-tie of these distribution lines. That's our utility workers. And they go off a high voltage standards that is state law. For us, for electrical workers, there's state law, there's NFPA 70-A, 70-B, C, our NEC Code of 855. We practice that every day through our apprenticeship curriculum and our journeyman skilled -- that are skilled and trained to work on these facilities.

So we urge the Commission. Thank you for coming out, Commissioner Gallardo and the CEC staff, for hearing us today. I know this is first meeting and we're going to have many more meetings to come. But we look forward to -- for you to, you know, support this project, the Prairie Song Reliability Project.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next, we have Larry Sanderson, followed by Mylessa Nickelson.

Please state your name for the record. We're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MR. SANDERSON: My name is Larry Sanderson, L-A-R-R-Y S-A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N.

I just wanted to, as a longtime resident of Acton, 36 years, I'd like to oppose this project. A lot of what has already been said, the risk of the fire, the threat to the Santa Clarita water, as well as water quality in the Santa Clarita Valley, because this will pour right directly into it. It's not 50 feet away.

So the infrastructure in Acton, we've already discussed that. We don't have access to many roads. The 14 Freeway, the railroad will be closed. There will be no access at all. Environmental impacts are obvious. And the economic hardship, which I will impose myself greatly, is because I live 50 feet behind Fire Station 80. So I'm 127 milliseconds away -- or 120 seconds away.

That's all that I have. Thank you.

MS. LAO: Mylessa Nickelson. Did I pronounce it okay?

MS. NICKELSON: Yeah.

MS. LAO: Okay.

MS. NICKELSON: That's good enough.

MS. LAO: Okay.

MS. NICKELSON: I really don't need this microphone, but I'm going to use it anyway, because I got a real good message for you, IBEW folks. I am a Local 11 signatory. I don't want this thing here and I'm going to tell you why.

I asked Mr. Garrett how long it's going to take to construct. Two years. Six months of that is going to be commissioning. So that's Local 11 and other union members working for a year and a half. After that, eight people. You are sacrificing our safety for the jobs of eight people for 40 years. That's how much economic impact it's going to bring.

So don't be fooled by the red herring about, well, we're going to bring jobs. No, you're not going to bring jobs.

I'd like to talk to you. You don't know our community. You haven't lived here during the fires. You have no idea the smoke that all goes up into the air that you say you don't want us to breathe. We don't need it here. Stick it out of Mojave. I go to Tehachapi every now and then. There is nothing out there. There isn't even junipers out there. Our junipers are filled with oil and they burn like matchsticks.

I'm willing to bet my ranch that none of you has evacuated a horse during a fire emergency. And yet I have over two dozen in the 46 years that I have lived in Los Angeles County. Not only my own, but other people's. When the fire hits, all of us horse people start going. And I'm sure you can imagine the horses are panicking. The humans are panicking. The paint is melting off the trucks. The

tires are starting to melt to the ground. But we're okay with that. Do you want to know why? Because CHP will not let us in to get those animals or get our sick friends or get anything else once that fire starts. Sometimes the sheriff's will let us in, but CHP won't. So if you're not on site when that thing starts, you are SOL and your animals are done for.

And the last thing I want to say, with all due respect to our wonderful fire community, I wave hi to you all the time, Altadena, Altadena. They had the same L.A. County Fire Department that we have. Altadena.

MS. LAO: Next up, we have Jacqueline Ayer, followed by Anne Williams. Oh, yeah, the first one is Jacqueline Ayer.

MS. AYER: Okay. Thank you. Don't call me late for dinner.

MS. LAO: Can you please spell your name for the record?

MS. AYER: Yes, J-A-C-Q-U-E-L-I-N-E A-Y-E-R. Thank you for this opportunity.

I have heard a lot of people say that this is a necessary project, it's essential for the state of California. Maybe that's true. But what isn't essential is that it be placed in your homes or in Acton. The placement of this project in Acton is not a necessity. It

is a convenience for the developer.

So I am speaking today as the director of Save Our Rural Town. I have a bachelor's degree in physics from Vassar College and a master's degree in mechanical engineering from Berkeley. I have more than 40 years of air quality and environmental compliance consulting experience. And I have particularly concentrated on air pollution emission quantification, control, and risk assessments.

I have managed pollution control and assessment projects on behalf of the EPA, the DOD, the California Energy Commission, and private industries. Over the last 20 years, I have participated extensively in electrical infrastructure siting applications and development projects. And I've provided expert witness testimony to the PUC, the FERC, the Commission, and the Public Utilities Commission.

Accordingly, the information that I provide today on behalf of SORT in this proceeding is considered substantial evidence as that term is defined in CEQA.

I have conducted a detailed analysis of the risk assessment that the developer submitted to the Commission last Friday and found that the emissions rates claimed for the number of -- for a number of the toxic compounds are not supported by substantial evidence. And as such, the

Commission cannot rely on the developer's risk assessment to draw any conclusions regarding the public safety impacts of the BESS project.

For instance, the risk assessment assumes that the total hydrogen fluoride emissions emitted from an entire deflagration event is only 38.7 pounds, however -- and the hourly emission is only 1.4. This is nearly 20 times less than what published literature states will be present. This means that the hazard quotient is not 0.6, as the developer stated. It's actually almost 20 times higher, and it is a significant impact. Actually, with this single deflagration event of this for a Sungrow BESS will result in 662 pounds of HF and about 38 pounds an hour.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MS. AYER: Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next up, we have Anne Williams. Please spell your name for the record.

MS. WILLIAMS: Hi. My name is Anne Williams, spelled A-N-N-E W-I-L-L-I-A-m-S. I live on Michigan Avenue in Acton and strongly oppose the installation of the Prairie Song BESS project in our small community of Acton for the following reasons. Of course, these reasons have been reiterated by everyone, but I will stress them again.

The very high fire hazard severity zone. Acton

is a high fire risk area and experiences excessive heat and high winds resulting in power shutoffs from Edison. This project will increase that fire risk even more, as has been documented by actual fires of other BESS projects and lithium-ion batteries.

The negative impact to our home values. The project's located very close to homes and has negatively impacted our home values and the ability to even sell some homes. Who's going to reimburse us for that?

Negative impact to homeowners insurance. Our homeowners insurance was canceled or we'd have to pay approximately $20,000. And so we had to go to the California FAIR or unfair plan, whatever you want to call it, for our homeowners insurance and will surely face an increase cost due to this project.

There's nowhere safely to evacuate, as it's been mentioned. We have Soledad Canyon, Sierra Highway, the 14 Freeway. If there's an evacuation due to this project, high winds in the area will carry toxic substances to nearby Palmdale, Antelope Valley, Agua Dulce, and the entire Santa Clarita Valley. How will we even evacuate? Especially with all the livestock that we have enacted.

My nephew has a pig farm with a hundred pigs, and also does 4-H and has several animals and helps the kids learn the feet 4-H and they do different, you know, fairs

and stuff. There's no way he could evacuate all those animals.

The excessive noise to surrounding homes.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MS. WILLIAMS: Oh wow, that was fast.

MR. LANCASTER: And we have seats up here in the front for those folks who is coming in if they would like to take a seat.

Next up, we have Michael Goodnight, followed by Laura Wilson.

And please spell your name for the record, and you have two minutes or less.

MR. GOODNIGHT: Mike Goodnight. I've lived in Acton for 33 years.

MS. LAO: Oh, can you please use the mic so people can --

MR. GOODNIGHT: You want me to hold this?

MS. LAO: Yeah, because people online can hear you with the microphone and the co-reporter.

MR. GOODNIGHT: Okay. Hello folks. 33 years in Acton. We live on a five-acre property. We are fully dependent on our groundwater. We have no other sources of water.

I am extremely concerned that in the event of a thermal runaway, despite the best efforts of our well-

intended Energy Commission and all the other officials that are involved in making these decisions, I'm very concerned that our groundwater would be permanently contaminated and I would no longer have water service on my property, which would make it virtually worthless.

And the other concerns I have is, I can't think of an area, and I'm not sure that the Commission has visited, but I can't think of an area that would be a poorer decision to base a BESS facility. We have no opposition to these types of facilities, but we worry a lot about putting one in a high fire district area where we can barely afford our insurance. Most of our neighbors, some of my neighbors, have had their insurance already canceled. We have Santa Ana winds.

The San Andres earthquake fault is three or four miles away and you're putting these solar systems, these battery solar systems, in the very critical corridor that affects all the highways and railway access from the Antelope Valley to Santa Clarita and L.A. How will people over three, four, five, seven, eight days, no matter what, however the extended period of time is, how will all that traffic, the thousands, tens of thousands of commuters, how will they get to work? How will they get back? Anyway --

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MR. GOODNIGHT: -- I think you got the point.

It's a bad spot, a real bad spot. Put it someplace else.

MS. LAO: Next up we have Laura Wilson. Please spell your name for the record and you have two minutes or less.

MS. WILSON: Thank you. My name is Laura Wilson, L-A-U-R-A W-I-L-S-O-N. I live across the street from where this project is going to go in, right across the street. We live near, south of Soledad Canyon Road, near Valenta. I'm very, very concerned about the safety of this project.

Where will the water come from for this project? All of us on this end of Soledad Canyon Road live on wells or have water brought in. Where will the water come from? It shouldn't come from our water.

I have a question for you. As I listened to your presentation, why weren't the Moss Landing and Gateway Projects licensed by you?

I have a question. I am against this project. Please put this out in the desert. Yes, we support the union people. Yes, we support all of you. You can go work there, but put it out in the desert.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next up we have Kathy Coughlin, followed by Thomas Coughlin.

And please spell your name for the record. It's on. It's on.

MS. COUGHLIN: It's on?

MS. LAO: Yeah.

MS. COUGHLIN: My name is Kathy Coughlin. That's K-A-T-H-Y C-O-U-G-H-L-I-N. I have been an Acton resident for the past nine years. Acton is where me and my husband decided to retire. It's beautiful.

I'm opposed to the Prairie Song BESS being located in Acton because I am worried about the potential fire risk, as everyone else. It will pose to our already very high fire hazard area. The proposed location of the Prairie Song BESS is in a corridor that receives hurricane force winds. Acton itself is a windy area, and wind and fire are deadly. If or when, probably when, there is a battery fire, it would be capable to burn our whole town down and areas beyond.

The insurance premiums have already skyrocketed due to the very high fire risk in our area. With the addition of the Prairie Song BESS, we may lose our fire insurance altogether.

I'm also very worried about the toxic fumes and contaminants put off by a lithium battery fire. The wind could carry those toxic contaminants for several miles through the air and affect our whole valley and beyond. Those toxic fumes and contaminants would be detrimental to our lives and that of our animals. It wouldn't even be

safe to eat our own fruits and vegetables being grown on our property. And those toxic contaminants would leach into our soil and affect our groundwater. And what about the risk of the cancers these toxic contaminants would cause? It's a disaster waiting to happen.

Please think about our safety. Do not locate the Prairie Song BESS in Acton.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next, we have Thomas Coughlin. Thank you. Please spell your name for the record.

MR. COUGHLIN: Tom Coughlin, C-O-U-G-H-L-I-N.

First of all, I see my fellow union members here. I'm union, 32 years, retired, live in Acton. Moved out here. If it wasn't for the union, I would not live here.

But I have to tell you guys, you're not telling the truth on some of this stuff. You say it will be just Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley union members. No, you know how the books work. It doesn't work that way. They pull from the books, no matter where you live within that area. So not true at all.

As for the fire department, we love you guys. We have one fire department here. It's a very small fire department. My neighbor fell on the ground three months ago, took 15 minutes to get to their house. We're less than five minutes away. I understand you bring in other

companies and other stations and everything, look at the time it will take for them to get here. If one of those catches on fire, they will shut down the freeway. They will shut down Soledad. They will shut down Sierra Highway. They will shut down Angeles Forest. They will have a hard time getting into the area.

Another thing is location, location, location, location. You've been told this all your life when you talk about real estate and everything like that. This isn't the location for it. I'm all for giving the work to the union members, but it needs to be moved out of our area.

You're going to shut down the freeway from when one of these things catches on fire. You're going to shut down the rail system. You're going to shut down all the inlets, outlets for this area. Another gentleman said we have 100,000 people that travel the 14 into the valley. It will be shut down. There was no way for them to get home to their families.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

Next, we have Melissa De Santis. Please spell your name for the record.

MS. M. DE SANTIS: My name is Melissa DeSantis spelled M-E-L-I-S-S-A D-E S-A-N-T-I-S.

Acton is my home, my sanctuary. We moved here

three years ago seeking peace and safety, but now Prairie Song threatens to take that away.

In response to the catastrophe at Moss Landing, residents were told to seal themselves inside their homes. In Acton, this would be impossible.

Most of us own livestock. In the event of a BESS fire, exposure to toxic gases would be inevitable as we work to evacuate our large animals.

Death and life-altering illnesses would be inescapable in our community. Imagine the legal and moral consequences of such an irresponsible development.

I'm so grateful to live in this beautiful historic rural town. Our ranch is my dream come true. But if Prairie Song is approved, I will be in fear for my life and the lives of my loved ones. There is no place like Acton in all of L.A. County. This hidden gem of country living must be protected.

Please withdraw your support of these development plans. Prairie Song does not belong in Acton.

MS. LAO: Next we have Aurora Gadbury. I hope I'm not mispronouncing it. And after that, we have Bethany De Santis.

And please spell your name for your record.

MS. GADBURY: Aurora Gadbury, A-U-R-O-R-A, last name Gadbury, G-A-D-B-U-R-Y. Thank you for inviting us

here today.

I just want to say I'm a little hot on this topic and I'm not as funny as some of the other people that were here. But when I talked to Ruthie, who sent something out, and I went full research monkey on this the other night. So I can't cover all those things.

But I just want to say, has anybody looked at the CAL FIRE map for Acton on this board sitting here today, the fire hazard map?

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: This is your opportunity to speak. We don't want to --

MS. GADBURY: Well, this --

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: -- waste any of the time.

MS. GADBURY: -- no, I'm asking because you're -- and everybody's just giving me like the, you know, deer in the headlights. Okay, so basically it is a high fire area. The area north of us is an extremely high fire area.

I've been in two fires. I've evacuated from the Station Fire. I've evacuated from the Sand Fire shortly after I lived here. I'm a CERT trained person from L.A. City and also from L.A. County, as well as a Cal/OSHA 10- and 30-hour certified trainer.

So anyway, I just wanted to say this BESS project that you want to plan to build -- or that they want to plan to build here will exponentially increase the impact and

financial burden to the community, people that live here, as well as the hazards.

Now, I think that these people want to build this here because they only want to do a transmission line from 1.2 to 1.8 miles when they don't really want to incur the expense of having to do it from somewhere in the Mojave. I'm working on the Metro Rail Purple Project, so, you know, Purple Line extension, so let me tell you, you can bore through and you'll have to pay for it. We shouldn't have to. And Southern California Edison is a privately investor-owned utility. So we don't see any benefit from either of those things.

You know, they're planning a stormwater retention. Many people have talked about, they're on the well, so this is going to take away from those, you know, from their groundwater recharging, which is also a problem. And about the business interests that are involved in all of this, that are supporting this, a lot of them don't live here. The union, I used to be with the IBEW. We can talk about that later. I've been in construction for 25 years, public works construction inspector, worked in public works, engineering and construction.

So, yeah, I'm opposed to this. And I think that there's a better place to do this.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MS. LAO: For people in the back, there's seats up front, if you would like to take a seat.

Next, we have Bethany De Santis, followed by Heather La Bella.

And please spell your name for the record.

MS. B. DE SANTIS: Bethany D-E S-A-N-T-I-S.

I'm a physics student at COC and I've lived in Acton for three years. I have no objection to the construction of BESS facilities. However, the Prairie Song Reliability Project is a serious threat to the health of Acton residents. I cannot think of a worse potential location.

Acton is a known high fire risk area. We deal with extremely high winds and dry, hot weather every summer. And the threat of fires is ever present.

The BESS site in Moss Landing was a total disaster. 55,000 pounds of toxic metals were released as the fire burned. How can we be assured that the same catastrophe won't be repeated in Acton? It's still unclear what event triggered the thermal runaway at Moss Landing and there are no long-term studies on the environmental damage and health risks these facilities pose.

Hydrogen fires are extremely difficult to manage. It's common practice to just wait for the fire to burn itself out. That is not realistic in a place like Acton

where the landscape is dominated by dry brush and fires spread easily. Are you willing to sacrifice the health and safety of the people of Acton for your project?

The facility you want to build will contain thousands of lithium-ion cells. The failure of even one cell triggers thermal runaway which spreads from one cell to the next in a devastating chain reaction. These fires can start in seconds and burn for days, polluting the air and groundwater.

Please keep our community safe and consider moving the facility to an isolated area.

Thank you for your time.

MS. LAO: Next, we have Heather La Bella, followed by Ann McKeown.

And please state what you need for the record.

MS. LA BELLA: Hi. My name is Heather La Bella. I'm a local 399 Teamster that lives here in Acton. On behalf of all the Teamsters living here in Acton, we do not support this.

I'm also a volunteer with Acton Firewise and we help reduce wildfire risk, improve emergency preparedness and enhance community safety through education mitigation efforts. On behalf of the community, we attended the L.A. County Fire Department Defensible Space Hearing in Lancaster that was held February 19th and I directly asked

them how they felt about this project coming here to Acton and their direct response was, "It will burn very well." Okay. I'll meet with you after this if you'd like.

But let me tell you about Acton. Acton possesses a higher than average concentration of both seniors and veterans relative to Los Angeles County. Approximately 20.4 percent to 20.6 percent of our population are 65 and older. That just makes me nervous because I care about our veterans, I care about our seniors here, and they are the ones in danger. They cannot evacuate.

Our roads are single dirt roads and when you go out on the 14 Freeway, we have 169,000 vehicles per day that travel this road. This needs to go to Lancaster or further up because if you take this up to Lancaster, you're only 40,000, 40,000 to 41,000 vehicles that travel daily on the 14 that way. It cannot be in this town. Our veterans, our seniors cannot evacuate. This is just disaster. We have 319 wartime veterans living in Acton. I'm sorry, I get nervous. But this -- we have a higher than average in Los Angeles County, roughly 14.25. The statewide average is 15 percent. We're at 20.6 percent, okay?

Please think of our seniors. Please think of our veterans. Yes, we all have animals. We also have the water issues. But please, we go to their homes.

I'm out of time. I'm sorry. I get so nervous.

MS. LAO: Next, we have Ann McKeown. Ann, please spell your name for your record.

MS. MCKEOWN: Sure, Ann, A-N-N, last name is McKeown, M-C, capital -K-E-O-W-N.

And I want to start by congratulating you. You have done something that nowhere else in this country has happened. And when I look at this room, I'm president of the local Democratic Club, and the Democrats and the Republicans are standing side by side, firmly united in this. If you could bottle it, you would be really successful.

But I want to continue talking about agreements. I am not hearing people say they hate battery storage. I am not hearing people say we don't need to stabilize the electric grid; right? Am I right? Okay, what I am hearing is this is the worst place.

And I have wondered and wondered and wondered, why would they pick Acton? Why would you pick Acton? Well, land is cheap. The power station is close. But we're worth more than profit. People say $20,000 for insurance, $10,000 minimum.

Really, we're going to support you building this thing. Just not here. And it's not a not in my backyard thing. It is that I have watched flames from my window, where I live three miles up a dirt road that is U-shaped.

I can't get out unless I hike. It's very real.

When they kill our power, we lose our water because we are in wells. And what gets the water 400 feet out of the ground on our property? Power. We have a water storage tank. It would last, by the calculations of the gentleman who spoke, five minutes, five minutes.

So please, please, please build it, and please, please, please don't build it here.

MS. LAO: Next, we have Don Wright. And please spell your name for the record.

MR. WRIGHT: Hi, again. Good evening. My name is Don Wright. D-O-N W-R-I-G-H-T. I'm a 25-year resident of Acton and a retired 34-year fire veteran. I retired as a battalion chief from the City of Glendale. I have a couple of issues to talk about this evening.

First and foremost, from the fire side, I've read some information about the planning for mitigation for fire. When they talk about fire flow, it's right spot on. A single hand line is not going to reach 300 feet. It is not going to do the job. You're going to need bigger appliances. And they use 1,000 gallons per minute.

You're not going to use one appliance if you have a fire in one of these facilities. You're going to use multiple appliances because you don't want to cool everything around. So it's going to be thousands of

gallons per minute. No municipal water supply and 80,000-gallon storage proposed facility is not going to be adequate to maintain a good solid fire flow throughout the course of that incident.

Let's talk a little bit about lifestyle here in Acton. We live here because it is a wonderful community. It's a rural community. We raise children here. Our grandchildren are now here. To see this change, to see an industrial facility dropped in the middle of this community will change it entirely. I don't believe zoning is currently in place to put this type of facility here and this may require a zoning change. And that seems disingenuous completely for those of us who have moved here. Property values for those of us who have moved here are going to fall precipitously. We're going to see our livelihoods that we put into our homes wiped out by this.

Moving on quickly, I can see, I heard from our union brothers, and I was a union member, that this is a great thing. Everyone standing up and supporting this project today doesn't live here. They are looking for the opportunity to come and make their living here and then --0

MS. LAO: Thank you

MR. WRIGHT: -- be gone in 18 months.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MR. WRIGHT: You're welcome.

MS. LAO: And this is just a reminder, if you'd like to make a public comment, please fill out a blue card. It's on the back table.

Next, we have Don Laird. Please spell your name for the record.

MR. LAIRD: My name is Don Laird, L-A-I-R-D. My name is Don Laird. I've lived in Acton since 1988. I'm speaking today to strongly oppose the proposed Prairies Song Project.

Acton is a rural community located in a very high fire hazard severity zone. We live with the reality of wildfire risk every single year. Lithium batteries are known to experience thermal runaway events, fires that burn extremely hot, release toxic chemicals, and are notoriously difficult to extinguish. Placing an industrial battery facility in a community already vulnerable to wildfire is not responsible planning. It puts residents, first responders, and our environment at unnecessary risk.

Beyond the safety concerns, the project is fundamentally incompatible with Acton's rural character. People move here and stay here for open space, clean air, dark skies, and a quieter way of life. And an industrial energy storage site brings noise, visual blight, and heavy infrastructure into a community that has fought for decades to preserve its identity.

I've lived here for nearly four decades. I've seen how hard this community works to protect what we have. At this stage in my life, like many longtime residents, I don't have the time, resources, or physical ability to recover from a disaster caused by a facility that never should have been placed here. Acton is not the right location for a lithium-ion battery facility. The risks are too high.

The state is telling me the county can make millions taxing the energy. Southern California Edison can make millions transporting the energy. The owner can make millions storing and selling the energy. And outside cities can get cheaper energy because of this plant, while my community just absorbs the risks.

Thank you very much.

MS. LAO: Next up, we have Chuck Mercier.

MR. MERCIER: My name is Chuck Mercier.

MS. LAO: Please spell your name.

MR. MERCIER: Chuck, last name is Mercier, M-E-R-C-I-E-R. I moved here, bought property in '81. Finished our house in '82. Our five children, they weren't all born yet, but three of them -- well, two of them were born after we lived here and they've all graduated and went to school out here.

This project, I'm completely against it. This

location, I don't think anybody used common sense. Common sense seems to be very lacking today big time. Antelope Valley and Palmdale, the commuters, I'm not going to go over what everybody else has gone over, because I could just say ditto on all that stuff.

The cost for the company is -- the reason they're doing it is because it's cheap for them. They only have to go a couple miles. I mean, I hear that information. As soon as I heard where they're putting them, I'm thinking, yeah, they're going to put it where it's cheapest, and they can make the most money. Corporate America.

This is a red flag area. They don't have chemicals to fight these fires. Water makes it worse. All they're doing is trying to cool the stuff around it.

I-15, two summers ago, how many people got stranded in the desert? I had friends riding motorcycles. They got stranded in the middle of the desert. They had to try to go through on the side roads just to get to the 115 degree temperature.

103 acres of lithium batteries. Wow. That's incredible. And there are no ordinances, right, for the L.A. County, I'm assuming? And a big question is why? If you would please put yourself in our shoes, where we live.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: We'll go next to Zoom, seeing that

there's no more raised hands or blue cards in the room at the moment. So if you're joining us via Zoom, please let us know if you would like to make a comment by using the raise-hand feature. If you're online, you will click on the open palm at the bottom of your screen to raise your hand. And if you're joining us by phone, please press star 9 to raise your hand.

Okay, I am going to open up the line for Tasia Kieffer. Please unmute on your end and please state your name for the record. And we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MS. KIEFFER: My name is Tasia Kieffer, T-A-S-I-A K-I-E-F-F-E-R. Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Tasia Kieffer. I'm the Senior Advocacy Manager at the L.A. County Business Federation, and we wish to express our strong support for the Prairie Song Reliability Project. This project will be a $1.9 billion investment in the energy infrastructure of Los Angeles County and will serve as a cornerstone for regional grid stability and a major economic driver.

And with the push for electric vehicles and the increased frequency of extreme heat waves, the current grid is under unprecedented stress. Prairie Song provides 9,200 megawatt hours of storage capacity to discharge clean energy exactly when the grid and our businesses need it the

most.

And in terms of economic and fiscal impact, this project is projected to generate $98 million in construction-related tax revenue and an additional $248 million over its operational life. And $7 million will be reserved for local benefit programs that are focused on economic resilience and environmental beneficial programs.

And so for these reasons, we ask that you support moving forward with the Prairie Song Reliability Project that is specifically designed to assist with peak demand and enhance reliability for the greater Los Angeles Basin.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next up, we have phone number ending in 869. I will open up your line. Please unmute on your end. Hold on.

MR. GOLDBERG: Hello?

MS. LAO: Yes.

MR. GOLDBERG: I'm on Zoom. Can you hear me?

MS. LAO: Yes, we can hear you.

MR. GOLDBERG: Okay. Yeah. Hi. My name is Perry Goldberg. I'm a local resident of Acton. I love Acton. I love my friends in Acton. And I oppose this project for many of the reasons that my neighbors have passionately explained. My comment today, though, is focused on some practical issues that are relevant if the

Commission decides to approve the project.

I think people in the room can disagree about whether the risk of a very serious fire is high or low. But one thing we know for sure is that the risk is not zero. And we can't just plan for the kinds of accidents that have already happened. We need to plan for other foreseeable events that could cause a disaster.

A 9.2 gigawatt-hour storage facility would be a very obvious potential target to any bad actors who are seeking to cause harm. In an era of escalating tensions globally, this is a risk that needs to be considered.

We also know that such a fire would cause massive harm. Acton's groundwater needs to be adequately protected. We can't let anyone play Russian roulette with our groundwater. The developer claims that the metal battery containers themselves act as secondary containment. But in a thermal runaway fire exceeding 1,800 degrees, these containers would warp and melt. And our aquifer needs better protection than that.

Project approval, if it happens at all, it should be conditioned on a dedicated secondary containment budget for liners. $19 million is a reasonable amount. That would be less than one percent of the budget.

And then what if, what if the worst happens? Who bears the consequences? I think it should be not the Acton

residents, not the California taxpayers. There should be adequate insurance, at least $750 million of environmental protection, which is the kind of damage that would be caused.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Okay, let's try this again. For the number ending on 869, I am going to open up your line. And it's not working. Here.

MS. GIBSON: Hello. Can you hear me?

MS. LAO: Yes. Go ahead. Please spell your name --

MS. GIBSON: Hi.

MS. LAO: -- for the record.

MS. GIBSON: Yeah, M-I --

MS. LAO: And we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MS. GIBSON: Okay. Thank you. M-I-K-A-Y-L-A G-I-B-S-O-N, Michaela Gibson. And I'm speaking on behalf of VICA, the Valley Industry and Commerce Association.

We are proud to support the Prairie Song Reliability Project. This is a 1,150-megawatt battery energy storage system with approximately 9,200-megawatt hours of capacity, exactly the kind of large-scale infrastructure California needs to maintain grid reliability. By connecting to the existing Southern

California Edison Vincent Substation, the project will strengthen stability in the Los Angeles Basin and help meet peak demand without overburdening ratepayers.

It also represents a $1.9 billion investment in the Antelope Valley, creating more than 300 construction jobs, 50 permanent roles, and generating an estimated $600 million in public revenue over its lifetime. For our business community, that means reliability, economic activity, and long-term regional competitiveness.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next up, we have Jose Centeno. I will open up your line. Please unmute on your end.

MR. CENTENO: Hello. I'm sorry. Can you hear me?

MS. LAO: Yes.

MR. CENTENO: I'm sorry.

MS. LAO: Please spell your name for the record.

MR. CENTENO: Yes, this is Jose Centeno, C-E-N-T-E-N-O, and I am representing the Association of Rural Town Councils.

For the last two months, we've been working with L.A. County as they develop their ordinance on renewable energy. They have not released the draft. We have been working directly with them and have been asking not to put this BESS storage systems in a very high fire area. So now

with the CEC coming in and pretty much making it easier for these developers to come into these areas, it's just a slap in the face to the rural communities.

I want to address the applicant. The reason there is a benefit of not putting these projects in the very high fire area, because when a fire happens in the area, particularly like the one in Juniper Hills, the Bobcat Fire, where there was tornadoes created by the fire, so when a fire happens like that in Acton, it's going to burn your facility and the fire department are not going to be there to protect it. They're going to be protecting the residents.

Thank you so much.

MS. LAO: Next we have Enrique Huerta with Climate Resolve. I am going to open up your line and we'll have to unmute on your end.

MR. HUERTA: Enrique Huerta, E-N-R-I-Q-U-E H-U-E-R-T-A. Good afternoon, Chair Hochschild and members of the Commission. I'm with Climate Resolve, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit.

We thank you for the opportunity to support the Prairie Song Reliability Project. This project aligns with our goal to strengthen communities against extreme heat, providing critical energy reserves when energy demand is high, reduces the probability of rolling blackouts, which

disproportionately affect low-income communities of color.

For these reasons and more, Climate Resolve supports this project and kindly ask you to approve the Prairie Song Reliability Project.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Commissioner, we have one more here.

Okay, we're going to go back to the room. And we have Karen Stueve. Stueve? Okay.

MS. STUEVE: Hi. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to speak.

MS. LAO: Please spell your name for the record.

MS. STUEVE: Yes.

MS. LAO: And we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MS. STUEVE: Sure. It's Karen Stevie, S-T-U-E-V-E.

The decision to place a BESS in Acton when the overwhelming majority of residents oppose it may have been based upon the calculus of relatively low land prices and the powerless voting bloc of rural areas. But this decision does not factor in future repercussions. If you install a highly flammable BESS and there is groundwater contamination or a Paradise-style fire, your names will be indelibly associated in history with this disaster. Everyone knows the name Hinckley today. Do you want your

name associated?

Yes, and I think that's it. Thanks.

MS. LAO: We have, next up, John Vidic. Please spell your name for the record. And we're asking for two minutes or less.

MR. VIDIC: John, and then V-I-D-I-C. Okay. My name is John Vidic. I'm a degreed chemical engineer, and I've been practicing as an environmental engineer for 40 years. And I have some comments.

Several experts today have said that when a BESS fire occurs, all the hazardous compounds are destroyed and disappear. This is simply not true. The fluorine and the electrolyte is not destroyed by the fire. Instead, it's converted to highly toxic hydrogen fluoride. And according to the safety data sheet provided by the developer, the lithium salt used in the BESS is LiPF6, or lithium phosphate hexafluoride. The electrolyte is 35 percent of the entire battery mass. And most of the LiPF6 during a BESS fire, every molecule of lithium phosphate breaks down and forms six molecules of hydrogen fluoride. Every BESS fire at this facility will release at least 662 pounds and not the 39 pounds that developer claims. The hazardous consequences of this event exceed 10 and is therefore very significant.

I suggest you guys get some better chemical

engineering advice when analyzing this project.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: Then, I have three cards with comments for folks who couldn't stay. So, I will read them, so they'll be on the record.

The first one is from Hsu Heitsai, that's H-S-U H-E-I-T-S-A-I. And I'm going to go ahead and start reading the record.

"My name is Hsu Heitsai, a resident of Acton. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

"I oppose the Prairie Song Battery Energy Storage Project. Acton is a rural residential community, not an industrial zone. We support clean energy, but not at the expense of our communities and our safety. Acton residents should not bear the risk of massive regional energy projects placed next to our homes. Grid reliability is important, but location matters. I respectfully ask you to reconsider this site and stand with the people who actually live here.

"Battery storage fire can burn for days and require emergency response. Our small rural town does not have the resources. Before approving a project of this size, community safety must come first. I urge you to put residents ahead of developers and unite this project.

"The battery facilities' fire recorded as following for your reference: one, Moss Landing battery fire, California, 2021-2022; Macon (phonetic) BESS Fire in Arizona in 2019; and Victorian Big Battery Fire in Australia, 2021."

That's the end of that comment.

The next comment is by Traci Foster, that's T-R-A-C-I F-O-S-T-E-R. And I'm going to start and read the comment right now.

"Hi, my name is Tracy Foster. I am so upset that a project of this magnitude would be considered for our community.

"Electric battery fires are so devastating to the air, the soil, and the water table. I live on five acres with a well. This would be devastating for us.

"Plus, we are a very high fire risk area. Why would you want to build here? A battery storage facility fire would wipe us out and our surrounding areas would be highly impacted by all the toxins.

"This whole project scares me to death. Please reconsider."

And the last comment I have is by Kaila Coe, that's K-A-I-L-A C-O-E. And I'll start reading the comment right now.

"Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Kaila and I

have a 10-month old. We live less than one mile from the proposed site.

"Are the residents who live closest to this facility receiving free electricity in exchange for bearing the highest level of risk?

"If there is a lithium-ion battery fire, which can burn for days and release toxic smoke, will residents and their animals have a place to be evacuated that can fully bear the need of the residents here?

"When we return home, would you pay for smoke remediation, air quality testing, and environmental cleanup to ensure our homes, soil, and water are safe for ourselves, animals, and children?

"For those who do have insurance, would you cover the inevitable increase in premiums? And if insurers decide to withdraw coverage altogether because of proximity to this facility and a wildfire later devastates our community, would you rebuild those homes?

"Will there be a dedicated trust fund to cover long-term health care costs if residents develop respiratory illness, cancer, or other conditions potentially linked to chronic exposure or a catastrophic failure?

"I am not willing to raise my child as a case study to

find out what the long-term health consequences are of living next to hundreds of batteries is. And if illness occurs, who pays for the medical bills, the lost income, the long-term care? Again, not the developer, not the Commission. The burden falls on us.

"If I no longer feel safe and want to move, would you compensate homeowners for the difference between what our homes would have been worth without this project? Because let's be honest, who pays full market value to live next to a bedside in a wildfire zone?

"This project privatizes the profit and socializes the risk. This benefit goes to the grid, to the developer, and to broader energy policy goals. The risks, safety, health, financial burdens stay with Acton families. This is not equitable. It is not responsible or safe siting. And it is not fair.

"Clean energy should not come at the expense of the concentrated risk placed on one residential community, especially when safer siting alternatives exist."

I'm going to go back to in Zoom. Okay. Okay. And I see that we have two hands back in Zoom. I'll start with Quinton Garrard, I'm hoping. I'm so mispronouncing things today. My apologies. I will open up your line. And there you go.

MR. GARRARD: Oh, hello.

MS. LAO: Yeah. Yes. And please spell you name for the record.

MR. GARRARD: Yes, definitely. Hi. My name is Quinton Garrard, Q-U-I-N-T-O-N G-A-R-R-A-R-D. And I'm a community organizer on the Climate Team for the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy. LAANE is an organizing and advocacy institution committed to economic, environmental, and racial justice.

We support the construction of solar and wind and energy products and associated battery energy storage systems that are completed using high road labor and environmental standards. These projects represent critical opportunities to advance our vision of a new economy rooted in thriving communities and a healthy environment for all Angelinas.

Thank you. And I yield the rest of my time.

MS. LAO: Okay. And next we have Tom. I will open up your line. Please unmute on your end.

MR. SMITH: Hi there.

MS. LAO: And please spell your name for the record.

MR. SMITH: Hopefully this is working.

MS. LAO: It is.

MR. SMITH: My name is Tom Smith, and I do not

want this in my neighborhood. Is there a reason why this cannot be stored at the same place that the solar is generated? Because there's just too much risk in this neighborhood to bring it in locally. I realize they're being greedy because, yes, if they can store electricity closer to where it's being used, it will be more efficient. However, I think the risks in this particular community are a little too much.

I yield my time. Thank you.

MS. LAO: And that concludes our comments on Zoom.

MS. CHANG: Thank you, everyone, who has made comments so far. For those joining us now in the room, there's more chairs at the front if anyone wants to see up here. And if you would like to make a comment, please fill out a blue card with the Public Advisor's table at the back.

As we do have quite a few members of the public join us after the staff presentation we provided, we would like to briefly recap some of our presentation that is of interest to the community before returning to new public comments. We don't have slides to accompany this, but there is a copy of the slides behind at the back of the room with the Public Advisor's Office as well.

So first, with regard to battery energy storage

systems, or BESS, B-E-S-S, there are several differences between earlier BESS models and the current lithium iron phosphate, or LFP, models that have more safety enhancements. The differences include different battery chemistry, LFP instead of nickel manganese cobalt, or NMC, outdoor enclosures instead of indoor batteries, engineering controls such as flammable gas detectors, smoke detectors, flame detectors, and heat detectors, better administrative controls such as training and clearly designated responsibilities when battery cell anomalies are detected.

The CEC has experience with permitting and overseeing the construction and operation of a wide range of battery types and sizes, including utility-scale applications. The CEC performs an independent, rigorous analysis for any battery energy storage system project, no matter its location or size, with an emphasis on safety. The CEC looks at every aspect of safety to ensure that if a project were certified, it would not create a significant impact during the construction or operation of the project. Additionally, our staff stay up to date with all the latest codes, standards, research, and best practices for battery energy storage systems.

With regard to biological resources, the proposed project site is located on the northern side of the San Gabriel Mountains bordering the Antelope Valley and

partially overlapping with the Santa Clara River Significant Ecological Area, or SEA. The SEA is a conservation area formally designated by the Los Angeles County Zoning Regulations. The project site includes native scrub, sage bush, and California juniper woodland, a sensitive natural community, and rare plant species which may be impacted by the project.

Additional project impacts may include impacts to special status wildlife, including Crotch's bumblebee, Southern California ringtail, and mountain lion. Waters of the state may also be impacted.

Construction and operation could lead to habitat loss, plant removal, wildlife injury, nesting disruption, and human-related disturbances from lighting, noise, and invasive weeds. CEC staff is working with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and Los Angeles County to develop avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures.

Now I would like to hand the mic back to Fabi.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Actually, we're going to take a break for 10 minutes. Some of the staff need to move and twist, and I assume that the audience may too. So if you are willing to give us your grace and allow us 10 minutes, that would be really helpful. And we'll get right back to public comment.

(Off the record at 6:47 p.m.)

(On the record at 7:06 p.m.)

MS. LAO: Okie-doke, so we're going to continue with public comment. We have four more new blue cards.

So if Mark Kulla can please come to the podium, and will be followed by Monica Kulla. And if you could please spell your name for the record, and we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less. Oh, oh, sorry.

MR. KULLA: (Indiscernible.)

MS. LAO: There we go.

MR. KULLA: I'm a fairly new resident to Acton. I was raised in Las Vegas. So I'm kind of used to (indiscernible).

MS. LAO: Oh.

MR. KULLA: Yeah?

MS. LAO: Yes.

MR. KULLA: Mark Kulla, M-A-R-K K-U-L-L-A. Thank you. I'm kind of used to alternative energy being brought in. It's a little different here in a rural community.

This isn't an abstract policy debate about renewable energy. This is a risk allocation decision, and the risk is being placed on us here. And I'm sure going along with the best practices and items that you have and your regulations and everything, those are the things you weigh.

I think it's probably been said here more than

once, but the battery energy storage systems contain flammable cells, hazardous materials, lithium, salt, nickel, cobalt, manganese, electrolyte solvents. And we all know that when they fail through thermal runaway, a self-sustaining chemical reaction that can burn for days can occur and is extremely difficult to extinguish. We've already seen what it looks like at a utility-scale, including the incident at Moss Landing. These events release toxic gases, hydrogen fluoride, generate contaminated fire suppression runoff containing heavy metals and chemical residues.

In a rural area like ours, this is particularly concerning. Many of us rely on private wells. We've got chickens, other things. We do not have redundant municipal water systems. If contaminated runoff reaches our soil or our aquifer, remediation is not simple. And in many cases, groundwater contamination can persist for decades.

Now add the fact that we are in a high fire zone, as I understand, in trying to get insurance for my home, the highest fire zone in the state of California that you can have. Insurance carriers are already withdrawing from this area. And I know of only one company that writes policies.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comments.

MR. KULLA: Thank you.

MS. LAO: Next up we have Monica Kulla. Please spell your name for the record unless you want comments to be taken in for less.

MS. KULLA: Good evening. My name is Monica Kulla, that's M-O-N-I-C-A K-U-L-L-A, and I'm here to formally oppose the proposed battery energy storage system in our rural community. This proposal introduces industrial-scale lithium-ion infrastructure into an area defined by private wells, agricultural land, limited road access, and high wildfire risk. That combination demands a fire far higher standard of scrutiny than we have seen.

First, the groundwater and soil risk. As my husband stated, there's a lot of toxic elements to these batteries. He also referenced Moss Landing, which illustrates the duration and complexity of these events. In a community dependent on groundwater well, even a low probability failure carries high consequence impacts.

Second, the fire zone amplification. We're already in a high fire zone. Insurance carriers are withdrawing and increasing premiums due to wildfire exposure.

Third, operational impacts. Continuous cooling systems are needed in order to keep this running. Inverters and transformers generate persistent low frequency noise. Have they had an independent acoustical

analysis assess nighttime and tonal impacts relative to rural ambient baselines?

Fourth, decommissioning. These batteries have finite lifespans. Where will the thousands of aging modules go at the end of their life? Recycling capacity for utility-scale batteries remains limited and costly. Without binding financial assurances, this community risks inheriting the waste liability decades from now.

Finally, evacuation logistics. Our road infrastructure is limited. In the event of a battery fire requiring an exclusion zone, what is the evacuation plan? How quickly can residents be notified and safely moved? Has plume modeling been conducted for worst-case wind conditions? It's very windy here.

This is not an opposition to renewable energy. It is an opposition to placing a high-risk industrial infrastructure in a rural residential setting.

MS. LAO: Next, we have Joan Millar. Please spell your name for the record. Okay. It's for our court reporter.

MS. MILLAR: Sure. My name is Joan Miller, J-O-A-N- M-I-L-L-A-R. I'm a 33-year Acton resident. I have numerous concerns about the Prairie Song Dust Project being proposed to my community, but I'm limited to two minutes.

We're located in a known high fire zone. If this BESS facility is built in our community, it's highly probable homeowner policies will be canceled, which they already are for other reasons, or the rates will skyrocket exponentially. In addition, our property values will plummet if we can sell our home at all. As a retiree, this would be financially catastrophic.

Your BESS 100-acre facility, the largest in North America, will forever change our beloved community. It will become an eyesore, a blight.

The health and safety standards are numerous. Sadly, many other communities have suffered the consequences of lithium-ion batteries catching fire, spewing toxic chemicals into the air that require evacuations and extensive response. The Moss Landing facility is just one example, yet you have selected a community of 7,500 residents with a major corridor, the 14 Freeway, and train tracks that carry cargo and people on Metrolink running through it. Evacuation would be monumental.

In addition, Acton is located seven miles from the San Andreas Fault. Earthquake-induced BESS fires are possible. Battery fires are notoriously difficult to extinguish and can experience thermal runaway events. How does any of this make sense?

I understand the large open space and the close proximity to the transition powers that send power to Los Angeles as a cost-saving measure that looks enticing on financial statements. But at what cost?

The health and quality of life of your fellow human beings is at stake. I implore you to do the right thing, put people above profits, and locate the Prairie BESS facility in the middle of the desert as far away from human beings as possible.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

And next we have Tammie Necessary. Please spell your name for the record. I think the mic should be on still.

MS. NECESSARY: Hi, my name is Tammie Necessary, T-A-M-M-I-E N-E-C-E-S-S-A-R-Y.

I've had the privilege of calling Acton my home for the past 48 years. I've raised my family here, and I cannot imagine living anywhere else. Acton is a small, tight-knit community nestled in the beautiful mountain hills and valleys of the Antelope Valley. Our town is peaceful, and our natural surroundings, like the poppies that blanket our hills, are part of what makes this place special. It's quiet, scenic, and a safe place to live.

But now we're being asked to accept a proposal that doesn't belong here, a battery energy storage

facility. I'm here to tell you that this facility brings nothing but risks and harm to our community. It would be a massive eyesore, completely out of place in our stunning natural landscape. It is a high-risk project with the potential for toxic exposure and the threat of catastrophic fires. Worse, it wouldn't even benefit us. All the power generated by this facility would be sent over the hill to Pasadena and Los Angeles, not to Acton. So the risk is all ours, but the reward goes elsewhere.

I ask, why here? Why not build this facility in a place where it's less of a danger to other communities like ours? The answer is clear. It's about money. This isn't about doing the right thing or what's best for Acton. It's about making a profit at our expense. And I can't stand by while our town and our homes, our safety, and our peace of mind are sacrificed for someone else's bottom line.

To make matters worse, I am 1.5 miles away from this proposed site, and yet I have received absolutely no formal notice or updates, no letters, no warnings, nothing. If it wasn't for our Town Council and other strong bonds of our community, I wouldn't even know about this. How can it be that someone this close to the site isn't informed? That's not transparency. That's not respect for the people who call this place home.

I urge you, please consider the long-term effects of our town, our environment, and our livelihoods. Don't turn Acton into a place where no one can get fire insurance, no one wants to live because of the dangers and the ugly infrastructure. Find another location, please. Build elsewhere and let our town remain the beautiful, safe, and peaceful community that it is.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: I'm filling in the blue cards at the moment. Would you like me to make a comment?

Does anybody else would like to make a public comment? And if so, you can fill out a blue card on the back table. It's the (indiscernible) if anybody's interested, it's in the back. Hey, guys.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Can someone bring them a card? It's like in the middle. Okay. There he goes. We're going to be here until 8:00, so we will wait for you. There's not a rush.

(Off mic comment.)

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Well, no, we're not going to do a Q&A today because we don't have enough information to be able to provide to you anyway. So we don't want to put anything out there that's a guess and, you know, assumption. And really, today is about you being able to have your time to speak to us and say what you've got to

say. And you can have questions put into the record, but we're not answering.

(Off mic comment.)

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: Understood. But this is the first meeting. We will have others and, you know, we can adjust the time. But we want to make sure everyone had an opportunity to be able to speak. And so we thought the two minutes could, you know, enable us to do that.

All right, so while we're waiting for anyone else who wants to make public comment --

MS. LAO: I see there is a hand in Zoom.

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: In Zoom? Go ahead.

MS. LAO: Yeah. Okay. I see Nancy Crosby. I am going to unmute your line. You're going to have to unmute on your end. And please, for the record, we're asking comments to be two minutes or less.

MS. CROSBY: This is Nancy Crosby, N-A-N-C-Y C-R-O-S-B-Y.

I've been in Acton for almost 30 years. And I can't say very much beyond what has already been stated. But I share the same sentiment, that Acton is a beautiful rural community. And it has schools, small businesses, and it's not far from a larger city. And if you put this endeavor in Acton, it not only endangers all of us, but potentially local residents and nearby cities.

With our high fire danger, I tell you, I live every summer worried about what fire is going to start and what could happen. And if a fire starts with this project, there isn't going to be very much remedy for us. It's going to be very difficult for that fire to ever be put out.

So bottom line is, much like others that have spoken, I really want to emphasize how important it is that this project not happen in Acton. Find a place that is not as likely to endanger people. There have to be other sites. Although I must say that with modern innovations, this type of battery storage shouldn't be happening anymore anyway anywhere. There's too much happening that's increasing the safety level so that this shouldn't be necessary, regardless of whether it's in Acton or in any other location.

Thank you.

MS. LAO: And I'm not seeing any more hands raised on Zoom.

Are there any comments here in the room? Okay, David Devereaux to the podium, please. I think the mic's still on, isn't it?

MR. DEVEREUX: Hello?

MS. LAO: Please spell your name for the record. We're asking for --

MR. DEVEREUX: David Devereaux.

MS. LAO: Spell it out for the record for our reporter.

MR. DEVEREUX: Oh, last name is D-E-V, like Victor, -E-R, like Robert, -E-U-X, like X-ray. I appreciate the opportunity to make my comments here.

I understand the importance of maintaining electrical reliability for California. However, I have serious concerns about the proposed project and its compatibility with our rural environment. Agua Dulce, we all know, is a high-fire area with limited evacuation routes, constrained emergency response access, et cetera. So introducing this large-scale project into a wildland urban area, rural area, it will -- sorry. Introducing a large-scale battery energy storage facility into this area raises safety concerns, particularly given thermal runaway incidents in similar facilities elsewhere in California and across the country.

Battery fires remain uniquely difficult to suppress and can burn for extended periods, as people have already stated. The Commission should fully evaluate worst-case fire scenarios, impacts on surrounding communities and properties, evacuation feasibility, and long-term environmental risks specific to this terrain and wind conditions.

In addition, projects of this scale can fundamentally alter the rural characteristics that many have invested in and relied upon in the area.

So I would hope that you would reconsider this project, due to the risks and also the negative impact on our property values for those of us that have invested in properties in the area.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MR. DEVEREUX: Thank you.

MS. LAO: And we have Nina Chacon. I hope I pronounced that right. I've been having a day. Okay, great. And please spell your name for the record. And we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MS. CHACON: Okay. Thank you. My name for the record is Nina Chacon. The last name is spelled C-H-A-C-O-N. I'm a resident of Acton.

I would like to speak today because I oppose this development for three main reasons. I've been an Acton resident for seven years. I live here with my husband and my six-year-old daughter. I am also a scientist. I have a degree in science. I've been teaching middle school science for 25 years. So I do have a science background and I have quite some understanding about this.

The first reason why I oppose this is the fire risk. As mentioned before, we are already almost

impossible to obtain insurance outside the California FAIR plan. We have unpredictable high winds that cause PSPS several times a year. We have canyons and steep hillsides that make containment challenging. We're not even allowed ADUs on our properties, even if we have acreage.

The second reason is the water contamination risk. Like many properties, my property relies on a well. We're not connected to county water. If our groundwater gets contaminated through an accident, our property will be without any access to clean water, as many others. That makes our property basically unusable.

The third reason is livestock. We do own horses. If you do have livestock, it is impossible to shelter in place. Animals have to be watered and fed. Our barns are not able to be shut off from the outside air. We have to go outside to take care of our livestock. So these properties would lose not only their rural character, but also their value and any usability, unless the county is willing to, I don't even know, connect us all to county water so we have a Plan B, or give us all evacuation accessibilities and places where we can take our livestock to. There's just no way that I see that this is a good idea.

Thank you so much for your time.

MS. LAO: We don't have any more blue cards right

now. We're going to make a call for them.

Does anybody else who hasn't made a public comment would like to do so? Just go and fill up a blue card at the back.

MS. CHANG: All right, while we're waiting for public comment, we'll talk about next steps.

So Hilarie, if we could get the comments due slide, please?

And I want to sincerely thank you all for taking the time today and sharing all your comments. We still have time, like Commissioner Gallardo said, we'll be here until 8:00 p.m., and so happy to hear additional comments. Please submit a blue card if so. As Fabi mentioned, you can submit a comment anytime.

We did file the Notice of Preparation to the docket on February 2nd, 2026. And I wanted to note that the public comments on the scope and content of the environmental document in response to the Notice of Preparation are due by 5:00 p.m. on March 4th, 2026. So comments can be submitted electronically via the e-comment system on the CEC webpage for the proposed Prairie Song Reliability Project or mailed directly to the CEC at the address identified on this slide.

And next slide, please.

As you've seen, CEC welcomes public participation

today and throughout the proceeding. We anticipate the staff assessment will be published and circulated for public review in June 2026. There's a QR code on the slide and also on the materials in the back of the Public Advisor's Office where you can get access to the project webpage.

MS. LAO: Okie-doke, so we have one more public comment by Mark Stocks. Please walk up to the podium and spell your name for the record. We're asking for comments to be two minutes or less. And please speak into the microphone.

MR. STOCKS: Thank you. My name is Mark Stocks. I'm a resident of Acton for about six years now. Prior to that, I was a resident of Agua Dulce for 27 years, so I know the area. It's been my home for a lot of years. I know the rural life. I know what it means to a lot of people here and including my family.

I was a police officer for several years. And during that time, I was also an arson investigator. I went to school, studied arson investigation, fires in general, wildlife [sic] fires. So I gained a lot of knowledge from that. And with that knowledge, I know that, you know, the fires that are being fought nowadays, especially with the lithium-ion fires, are completely different than they were years ago. They're generated differently. They produce

their own heat. They're basically thriving on their own fuel system, so they're hard to put out. It's very hard to put out. It's very hard to put out with just the means of water. You have to use chemicals and other things to try to put these things out.

Well, all that stuff, the water and these chemicals, goes into the ground and goes into the groundwater, which is going to be devastating to people in general, including mainly to a lot of people that have livestock. So it's going to affect the area quite a bit because that's what our rural community is all about.

The toxic pollutants that would be placed in the air during a fire could last for an unknown amount of time. I don't think they really know how long it would last. Obviously, the larger the fire, the bigger it would be as far as the pollutants in the air. We've already consulted with several realtors who believe that our house would decrease in value and also make it difficult to sell the house.

We also believe that the chemicals in the water to fight a fire would contaminate the ground, as I said before, even affecting the Santa Clara River. Should a fire erupt, the location --

MS. LAO: Thank you.

MR. STOCKS: Okay. Thank you.

MS. LAO: And we saw that some folks came in. If you'd like to make a public comment, please fill out a blue card in the back at the table of the Office of the Public Advisor.

(Off mic comment.)

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: So there are some questions happening in the room. I apologize. I didn't state that for the Zoom participants earlier. So we're trying to be responsive here.

(Off mic comment.)

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: So you can submit comments, questions in writing into the docket. When you make a public comment, you could do that as well. But what we say, especially at this first public meeting, is we don't answer. We don't do a Q&A-style type of session.

(Off mic comment.)

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: We tell folks that it's one chance to make your comment, again, to be fair to everybody and also to help ensure everybody gets a chance. So we wouldn't do a second round, but you would have been able to do that when you first spoke. And then we did hear some people ask a question earlier.

MS. LAO: I'm going to make a call for Zoom, just in case. And for those on Zoom that maybe have joined recently, if you would like to make a comment, please press

the open -- I can't even read what I'm talking about. Yeah, please raise your hand, it looks like an open palm, if you would like to make a comment and you're on Zoom.

I see somebody on Zoom. I see it's the phone, Samson SMS 9160. I am going to unmute your line. Open your line, please, and please state your name for the record.

MS. PHILLIPS: Thank you. Vivian Phillips, V-I-V-I-A-N P-H-I-L-L-I-P-S.

I'm listening to what other people are saying, and my sentiments are the same. You are not welcome here. There are so many reasons that it's such a bad place to establish a lithium battery storage plant. We don't want it here. We know the risks. We have no idea what kind of economic impact it's going to have on surrounding communities, as well as our community, when there is a fire. It's going to shut down the 14, the railroad, the Angeles Crest. It's going to shut down everything. It's going to be huge. Who's going to pay for that? And what about the fire department? Are you going to pay for more fire department personnel?

It just is beyond me why you would ever do this, other than the fact that it's so convenient to have that power plant there that you can just hook into. Well, it's very short-sighted, and it ain't happening here. We don't

want it.

MS. LAO: Okay, Dianna Spiegel? Oh, great. (Indiscernible.) You're fast. Please put your name for the record. Use the microphone. And we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MS. SPIEGEL: Hi. I'm Dianna Spiegel. I'm a retired teacher in the school district. My husband is an L.A. City retired firefighter, so he kind of knows about these things, too. But I'll just make it quick. All right.

My main concerns are the danger of chemicals in the air with or without a fire, given the fact of what could happen. There's no way those things do not emit things into the ground and air. Just like having a phone near your body or your ear all day long, they're finding out now that many things can become toxic, too.

Imagine hundreds of those bigger batteries than a phone down the street less than a mile or a little over a mile from our home, and other people's homes are within feet of those batteries, near where we live and we're all active outside on our properties and raising our families, then there's what happens if they catch fire? And we've seen from three other ones that have caught fire, what happens? Nothing can be done. Toxic fumes are in the air for who knows how long. Evacuations have to be made. Our

homes are filled with the toxic gases, even if we are not there, probably permanently in the walls and the furniture and who knows what. Not to mention what it does to us before we are able to evacuate, breathing that stuff in.

Next, we have insurance, which is basically impossible to get now because of the fires, let alone once those batteries come in, what's going to happen to our insurance then?

Then the resale of our house. Who wants to pay what it's worth now at this time period once that largest battery facility is going to go in down from the street where we live?

And lastly, don't take this personally because this is a company I know, I don't trust you. I don't know about anybody else. I think you're not really thinking about the people who live in this area. You have no idea what the repercussions of these things could be down the road, just like nobody knew what cigarettes could do, what the dumping from factories could do, like the Erin Brockovich story, her name.

MS. LAO: Thank you for your comment.

MS. SPIEGEL: I'm done?

MS. LAO: Yes.

MS. SPIEGEL: Oh, okay. Well, there was a little bit. Thank you.

MS. LAO: Steve Kaplan. Is there a Steve Kaplan? Is there a Steve Kaplan? Oh, there you go. Please spell your name for the record, and we're asking for comments to be two minutes or less.

MR. KAPLAN: Steve Kaplan.

MS. LAO: No, into the micro. Oh, sorry.

MR. KAPLAN: Steve Kaplan, K-A-P-L-A-N. First name too?

MS. LAO: No, it's okay.

MR. KAPLAN: Okay, so I'll finish where she left off.

(Indiscernible), to name a few, we're not buying it. The movement is better storage facilities, doesn't even know how safe this is. Why risk it in neighborhoods or near neighborhoods? Sounds like a money -- sounds like money is talking more than citizens. I don't even need that.

I'm just going to tell you guys, I've been living up here for 32 years. I don't feel like having my house go down in value by 50 percent. Sorry. I don't want it going down 50 percent. And I really am sort of ticked right now because my insurance just went up 1,000 percent, okay? Can't get fire insurance. Can't get flood insurance. I got a barn that sits two foot into a supposed flood line. I've lived in my house for 32 years. There was never a

flood line. All of a sudden, it comes up on a new map. Now I'm in a flood zone. That cost me another five grand.

This is getting ridiculous. You guys, do whatever you guys think is best. You guys, on the last or quite a while ago, they asked what we as a community thought. And we all told you we didn't want it. And the guy told me, we're going to do it anyway.

Take that in consideration when you guys do it anyway because it ain't going to work. It doesn't do anything for our city. It doesn't do anything for our town. It's feeding somewhere else. That's not going to do us any good.

We have power outages all the time. The wind blows two miles an hour. They shut the power off. And your little battery thing is going to be coming up and working. It ain't going to help us. So it's just, we don't need it here. We don't want it.

And who's going to maintain it once you guys all are done and the people get their money and they get their incentives and they walk away? I worked for the State of California for 32 years. I know how things work. They get it done, they move on, and the stuff's going to sit there and rot.

MS. LAO: Okay, if anybody else came, if you would like to make a comment, please fill out a blue card

on the table in the back with the Public Advisor's Office. We are here until 8:00, so no rush.

Oh, yeah, and for those who came not too long ago, there's materials in the back table, too, that has more information about the proceeding, and also there's a QR code that will take you to a page where you can submit further comments in writing.

(Off mic comment.)

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: We're getting comments from the audience who is sitting patiently here, thanking the Energy Commission for the work we're doing, for being here, for all the diligence shown through the docket. Much appreciated.

So we are waiting until 8:00 in case there are any other members of the community who decide to show so that they have an opportunity to make a public comment. Anyone on Zoom, also welcome to raise your hand if they haven't already been able to give a comment. I don't have any good jokes, otherwise I would at least do that. But thank you, everyone, for joining us. And again, there's material in the back if you do want to pick it up before you go.

(Pause)

MS. LAO: There's a clickety sound. Okay. We have one more from Kathy MacLaren. And please spell your

name for the record. And we're asking that comments be two minutes or less.

MS. MACLAREN: Yes. My name is Kathy MacLaren, K-A-T-H-Y M-A-C, capital -L-A-R-E-N.

Thank you, first, for being here. I really appreciate that. I don't live in Acton. I live in Palmdale. But I serve on several different capacities that people spoke on today. I'm part of the AV EDGE for the economic development, but I'm also a Palmdale Water District director and sit on the Watermaster for the Aquifer. And so mainly I'm speaking because I'm curious to know and be able to look up all the information, where they're going to get the water from, all the different things like that.

It's a hard thing, because an elected official, I always know, I know that the people are very concerned. But I feel that this Energy Commission and the different fire people and everyone that spoke truly have the community's interests at heart. Nobody wants to do anything bad. And it's hard because a lot of times -- this Vincent Station, I know because I work for the electricians and the subcontractors, as well as everything else, so I know you're getting really safe, good electricians that are being trained on everything and will go out and train the fire personnel and do everything. So I know we have our

heart into bringing the best people that you can have in the community.

And it's very difficult. I mean, you're worried. You know, we're worried. You know, a lot of us up in the Antelope Valley, 100,000 of us drive on the 14. It would be catastrophic.

But I'm glad that this process is happening. It gives everyone a chance to speak. Everyone was respectful and I really appreciate that everyone, you know, the fire --

MS. LAO: And thank you for your comment.

MS. MACLAREN: -- everyone.

MS. LAO: Thank you.

MS. MACLAREN: So thank you.

MS. LAO: Also a reminder that if you would like to receive like notices or emails about anything that gets posted to the docket, you can subscribe to it and you can find that information with the QR code in the handout in the back.

And I'm going to make another call for those who are on Zoom. If you'd like to make a public comment, please use the raise-hand feature, it looks like an open palm at the bottom of your screen, and -- or if you're joining us by phone, please press star nine to raise your hand.

Okay, I don't see anything on Zoom.

(Pause)

COMMISSIONER GALLARDO: All right, everybody, before we adjourn, just want to make a few remarks here. We're getting close to adjourning, so just want to make a couple remarks.

So I want to give a big thanks to all the participants. We had about 70 people, I would guess, in the room, definitely a full room even if we don't have an exact number. We had about 90 people on Zoom. So a very popular event here. We had about 61 comments. So we really appreciate all that participation, whether people commented or just attended and listening.

I want to thank the applicant as well for, again, facilitating the site visit, being here to present, being available, staying through to the end here.

The library staff for enabling the venue, providing us so much support, it's been great to be here. Very nice venue.

Also to CHP providing security and staying with us and sticking it out. Yes, they do deserve a round of applause. Keeping us safe.

To our interpreters for making our meeting more accessible to the Spanish speaking community, appreciate that.

Also to our court reporter, making sure everything's been accurate. It will be in writing and accessible soon on the webpage.

And then to our staff at the Energy Commission, our STEP Division, which is the policy division that leads this effort on Opt-In, our Chief Counsel's Office that provides us legal expertise.

Our IT Office that helps set everything up. Chris over there on his own, doing a lot and running around.

MPCO, who's our media team and making sure that if we have any questions, comments from media, that those are handled.

Our Public Advisor's Office who handled the public comments so nicely and smoothly.

Our Executive Office too for providing support.

And then to my Advisor, Jimmy, in the back there, helping out with all kinds of tasks. So thanks, Jimmy, for doing that.

All right, with that said, I'll do a last call for comments on Zoom or in the room. I'm not seeing any hands in the room. Do we see any hands on Zoom? All right.

Well, with that, we will adjourn. Thank you again, everyone, for enabling us to be here and joining us.

(The meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.)

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I do hereby certify that the testimony in the foregoing hearing was taken at the time and place therein stated; that the testimony of said witnesses were reported by me, a certified electronic court reporter and a disinterested person, and was under my supervision thereafter transcribed into typewriting.

And I further certify that I am not of counsel or attorney for either or any of the parties to said hearing nor in any way interested in the outcome of the cause named in said caption.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 9th day of April, 2026.

ELISE HICKS, IAPRT CERT**2176

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I do hereby certify that the testimony in the foregoing hearing was taken at the time and place therein stated; that the testimony of said witnesses were transcribed by me, a certified transcriber and a disinterested person, and was under my supervision thereafter transcribed into typewriting.

And I further certify that I am not of counsel or attorney for either or any of the parties to said hearing nor in any way interested in the outcome of the cause named in said caption.

I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript, to the best of my ability, from the electronic sound recording of the proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

April 9, 2026

MARTHA L. NELSON, CERT**367