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Seahawk Battery Energy Storage System facility unacceptable risks

There is a battery energy storage system facility proposed for 90 Minto Road in rural Watsonville. The developer has decided to do an end-run around the County and opted into the State's CEC process and the CEC is trying to speed up the approval process.

Forcing this massive industrial infrastructure into an inappropriate location places our community at unacceptable risk.

The project site sits dangerously close to residential neighborhoods, local schools, and agricultural work areas. A major industrial failure at this location puts children, families, and workers directly in harm's way.

Thermal Runaway and Fire Safety Hazards: Despite advancements in Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) technology, the risk of thermal runaway, toxic off-gassing, and chemical fires remains a serious threat. Our local rural fire protection districts lack the specialized, heavy-duty resources required to suppress a large-scale, multi-day chemical fire without depleting the region's limited water infrastructure.

Environmental and Agricultural Impacts: The Pajaro Valley is a highly productive and economically vital agricultural zone. Placing a massive 200-megawatt battery facility on or adjacent to these lands threatens local soil health and poses a contamination risk to critical local water resources, including the College Lake area.

Subversion of Local Democratic Input: The developer's decision to bypass the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and utilize the state override process directly undermines the zoning laws established to protect local citizens. A community should not be forced to host hazardous industrial infrastructure when its elected leaders and residents have overwhelmingly signaled their opposition.

The state's climate goals should not be achieved by sacrificing the safety, environment, and democratic self-determination of Watsonville and Santa Cruz County residents.