

DOCKETED

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CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION “ Santa Paula Informational Meeting #1

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION – Santa Paula Informational Meeting #1

'Greetings and thank you, members of the California Energy Commission, for making this site visit and for allowing us to weigh-in tonight on CalPine's Mission Rock Energy Center proposal, a project that, if it moves forward, would sit at the very western edge of our town.

My name is Charles Spink, and I am speaking on behalf of my wife, Linda Spink and myself. During the past months, we have both submitted comments to the CEC expressing our concerns about the unsuitability of this project as envisioned by CALPINE for a gas-fired power plant just upwind from us in Santa Paula.

My wife's first thoughts regarding the planned location of this gas-fired power plant, were regarding the increased amount of pollutants that would be left hanging over Santa Paula, with little chance of dissipating due to the 'pinched' topography at this point in our Santa Clara River Valley. With relatively low stacks cited for the proposed plant, the likelihood of pollutant dissipation by the prevailing westerly winds would seem minimal before reaching Santa Paula.

This increased health risk to her, suffering as she does from chronic upper respiratory issues, we can only imagine being mirrored, or, more likely *magnified*, across the rest of Santa Paula's population who, as you probably know, are mostly of low socio-economic status and who, as research shows, can be expected to have a much higher degree of health issues across-the-board. Health-wise, this plant spells 'problems' for many of our citizens who can't just 'move away'.

Another grave concern of ours is the siting of this critical energy infrastructure smack dab in the middle of the Santa Clara River floodplain on deep, alluvial soils, adjacent to a *very much* active geologic fault!

Need we ask, 'What could possibly go wrong'?

From Calpine's back property fence, someone with a strong arm could probably throw a rock and land it in the riparian habit of the Santa Clara River...it is that close. Mitigations that can look *reasonable* on paper will, months or years later, often look embarrassingly inadequate on the 'Six-O'clock News'. Further, mitigations that might actually *BE* adequate – levees come to mind - could severely impact natural habitat restoration that has been ongoing and *crucial* for a number of endangered species all along the Santa Clara River, including a Nature Conservancy project immediately adjacent to CALPINE's site!

Given that these serious hydro/geologic issues are well known, why would anyone plan to consciously put critical energy infrastructure on this spot? The convenience of Calpine actually owning this property is not a good enough argument. We think the Commission members need to answer this very basic question, for it precedes most every other concern in importance.

In trying to better understand the bureaucratic landscape within which this project operates – I'm talking about oversight by the CPUC, the CEC, CAL-ISO ... perhaps there are others I've yet to account for out of ignorance - the term "STAKEHOLDERS" keeps rising to the top of my consciousness, for it seems most crucial to understanding present issues and potential outcomes for us here in Santa Paula.

First, had a number of alert, concerned citizens *not* addressed the Santa Paula City Council as to the existence of CALPINE's proposal a few months back, we might not even be here tonight. Indeed, having this audience now with the CEC comes with a lingering taste, one that we have sadly come to know as Santa Paulans: *We were an afterthought*. Hopefully, we won't become road kill again.

Indeed, if you consider the number of instances where we, as a community have had little or no influence avoiding negative impacts on our future— the siting of a County Jail expansion a stones throw from CALPINE's proposed plant, with the cheapest housing available in our town once prisoners are released; the conversion of our local landfill into a *regional* landfill, now a litigated toxic waste issue for us; the inexcusable routing of sand trucks through *OUR* town rather than a much less circuitous route through wealthier towns, ones with more political clout than we have – you have to ask yourself if there isn't an established pattern of disregard visited upon communities such as ours; that communities such as ours, because of mere poverty, are the first and 'best' places 'the deciders' think of when it comes to the siting infrastructure with low desirability.

So, what can we do to avoid being the perpetually 'chosen ones' when it comes to projects like this?

In that regard I think the CEC can play a role. Recognize that we, Santa Paulans, should be considered real 'Stakeholders'; be given a seat at the table, our many concerns listened to; not be relegated to the bleachers, the 'unconsulted' as in the past; not be the perennial 'recipients' of what more affluent communities desire or what more politically powerful players decide. *We have needs in common with these people. We are not separate. We should not be made to perpetually 'carry all the water'!*

Lastly, and most importantly, like many of us here tonight, we would like to see *much* more weight given to renewable, non-polluting energy solutions! Given the pressing needs that the build-up of catastrophic greenhouse gases demands of us, I don't think we can address this issue, short or long term, by deploying yet another gas-fired power plant such as CALPINE's ...here or anywhere. Indeed, the CPUC in their stated goals demands that we address this issue now.

Natural gas as an energy solution is in oversupply in the California market. This is well documented, and as the EDF points out, once the full spectrum of its extraction/use cycle is considered, natural gas is on a par with coal in terms of its impact on greenhouse gas emissions! The mantra we keep repeating that 'natural gas is clean energy' is, I think, a comfortable falsehood. The people in Aliso Canyon would likely bear witness to that assertion.

Fortunately, renewal energy, such as wind and solar, is no longer a 'pie-in-the-sky' alternative, and is often our *CHEAPEST* energy option now...today. Locally, we're seeing businesses and county offices retrofitting parking lots with solar/shade projects...a no-brainer! New storage solutions for this burgeoning cheap energy is driving a whole new direction for energy production as noted in an article in this July's *Scientific American* which states: 'Five years from now, if current plans work out, the "peaker" [plant] will be gone, replaced by the worlds' largest storage battery...'. This is happening just down the road in Los Angeles – 100 MW of flexible power, under the auspices of Southern California Edison! Just five years!

So, my question to this Commission is, 'why authorize CALPINE's project now, if, by the time it goes on-line, it will almost surely be obsolete as our best or even cheapest energy solution? Where is the demonstrated need for its capacity given this new reality, beyond CALPINE's desire to sell it to you? After all, gas-fired power plants are their 'bread-and-butter', and they don't have a contract with SCE to produce energy for them. So how is this moving forward? Whose needs does it really fill, and how does that answer make this location near Santa Paula, in the riverbed, an absolute necessity?

Thank you, Commissioners and staff for your generous time here this evening. We hope these issues can and will be addressed with serious consideration for not moving forward with Calpine's MREC proposal.

-Charles & Linda Spink
7-28-2016