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*Comment Received From: Scott Swendiman
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Approve Fountain Wind

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

February 28, 2024
Scott Swendiman
scottswendiman@gmail.com

California Energy Commission
715 P Street, MS 40
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Fountain Wind Project (23-OPT-01) Support Letter

Good Morning, Energy Commission Members,

As a long-time resident and now a “young” retired small business owner, I am writing you to express my continued support for the Fountain Wind Project and respectfully request that you approve the project, which provides significant socio-economic benefits to Shasta County. You have been inundated with opposition statements from people who do not represent many of the residents and businesses who have taken the time to understand and become knowledgeable regarding the project. Quite frankly, many Shasta County residents do not care about the project. They are concerned about jobs, the economy, crime, education for their children, PG&E utility, and health costs. There is a relatively small group of core, mainly “not in my backyard” persons, who have resorted to intimidation and scare tactics. These people tell others that the project will cause tremendous irrevocable harm to not only the environment but also to themselves. I know of several residents who live in the project area who privately support the project but will not openly do so. Opponents spread gloom and doom that the project will cause wildfires, resulting in property values spiraling downward. Interestingly, many of these same opponents fail to recognize that the Hatchet Ridge Wind Project, which is very visible along the highest area ridgetop, has not resulted in lower prices and homes not being sold in the area, or in wildland fires which opponents claim Fountain Wind will create, or be unable to contain.

My parents moved to Shasta County in 1953, just around the time I was born. I was raised here and have been and continue to be extremely active in our community. I served on the Enterprise Elementary School Board for about 24 years and currently serve on the Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint Community College District Board of Trustees. I have been a real estate broker for the past 50 years, a 40-year active member of the Shasta Association of Realtors, having served and continuing to serve on the Board of Directors, and a 25-year California Association of Realtors Director.

I am especially familiar with the area where the Fountain Wind project is proposed, having provided real estate services since the late 1970s and continuing through this day. I am probably the primary realtor for this area, representing sellers and buyers of residential properties, ranches, recreation properties, and timberlands. Over all these years, I have had many friends and business associates with whom I regularly meet.

You may not be aware, but at one time, Shasta County thrived economically due to the timber industry. In the early 1980s, the Shasta Trinity National Forest authorized the sale of 50 million board feet to be harvested yearly, which would have maintained a healthy timber-related economy, combined with tourism, emerging provision of health services, and retail sales, all of which contributed to a relatively stable and robust economy benefitting all socioeconomic segments in our community. However, in and around the early 1980s, the emergence of the spotted owl brought timber sales to an abrupt halt and essentially shut down our timber industry. Furthermore, during this period, the early 1980s recession, whose effect began around 1975, and the energy crisis, coupled with the demise of the timber industry, severely adversely impacted our community. Mortgage interest rates reached 19 percent, and unemployment, which was about 10% in California in 1982, was higher in Shasta County due to timber industry layoffs. The effects led to small business shutdowns, the dismantling of families, and an increase in drug and alcohol abuse. It took about 35 years, or until about 2010, for our economy to stabilize, but it did not bounce back as well in other areas of the state that benefitted from the technological boom. Why did we begin to rebound?

The timber industry, while not the economic driver as it was in the past, benefitted from increased housing construction. Other segments, such as medical services and retail sales, provided a needed economic impetus, but it was the construction of large projects that hired local workers and purchased local materials that provided the much-needed boost. Industrial-type projects such as the Wheelabrator Shasta in 1987 and Knauf Insulation in about 2000 have provided stable economic benefits to the community for decades. It is worth noting that both of these projects experienced significant public opposition. The opposition claimed environmental impacts that would cause major health problems and a drop in property values. After all these years, there have been no environmental impacts like the ones the opponents claimed. These two projects have proven to be good neighbors and community contributors. Sound familiar? The type of naysayers that opposed these projects are also opposing Fountain Wind.

As a County, we need to welcome projects like Fountain Wind to our community. The socio-economic short-term and long-term benefits can be realized without compromising our environment. Just like mitigation measures implemented for projects like Knauf, Wheelabrator, and Hatchet Ridge reduced potential impacts, so can Fountain Wind.

I do not know if you and your staff have visited the project site and are familiar with the area. I have been over much of the site and, as previously stated, am knowledgeable of the area. I have formulated what I consider an objective opinion regarding the project after research, site visits, and direct 'down to business' discussions with the developer, ConnectGen. I have spoken with many of the opponents, including Supervisors who are in opposition, and I heard their concerns; however I truly believe them to be unfounded.

This project not only represents a once-in-a-generation boost to the economic strength of Shasta County, but it will safeguard us from whatever shocks to our economy that the future holds, all while providing our county a much-needed clean, renewable resource that benefits Shasta County and all of the State of California. For these reasons and many more, I urge you to please approve Fountain Wind.

I would be more than pleased to discuss further why I support the project, and I would be willing to come to Sacramento and meet with any and all of you and members of your Staff.

Thank you for considering this letter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Swendiman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail.

Scott Swendiman