

**DOCKETED**

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## SUMMARY OF MEETING BETWEEN CEC AND INTERSECT POWER

On December 6, 2023, an in-person meeting took place at the California Energy Commission office from 10:00 to 10:50 a.m. Remote attendance was also available via Microsoft Teams. The following representatives of the CEC participated: Commissioner Noemí Gallardo, Erik Stokes, Chief of Staff to Commr. Gallardo; James Qaqundah, Special Advisor to Commr. Gallardo; Elizabeth Huber, Director of Siting, Transmission and Environmental Protection (STEP) Division; Dian Vorters, Deputy Director of STEP Division; Eric Knight, Branch Manager of Siting and Environmental Branch; Ann Crisp, Project Manager, Siting and Environmental Branch; and Lisa Worrall, Project Manager, Siting and Environmental Branch.

The communication was with the following representatives from Intersect Power: Luke Dunnington, President, Co-Founder; Marisa Mitchell, Head of Environmental and Permitting; Becky Moores, Director, Environmental and Permitting. The following persons participated on behalf of Cox, Castle & Nicholson LLP, Intersect Power's legal team: Annie Mudge, Partner; Peter Weiner, Partner.

Intersect Power provided a high-level presentation of their company's priorities for renewable energy development in California. They explained their company's strategic and tactical approach to efficiency, scale, and innovation in developing renewable energy facilities and summarized the objectives and components for the Darden Clean Energy Project (23-OPT-02). If built to plan, the proposed project would be California's largest solar generator and largest green hydrogen producer. In addition, Intersect Power discussed their interconnection strategy and how the proposed 500-kilovolt substation could unlock up to 100,000 acres of land owned by Westlands Water District to energy development. This includes lands that have been retired from agriculture due to impacts from selenium and salt contamination from past irrigation practices. The proposed 15-mile gen-tie and high voltage substation would create a new point of interconnection for other generators, which Intersect Power stated are not yet developed due to lack of interconnection. They are now seeing others filing in California Independent System Operator's generator interconnect request cluster 15.

Intersect Power discussed the benefits of the proposed Darden Clean Energy project to the local community by creating construction and long-term job opportunities and for a serial construction workforce. In addition, they discussed the site-specific conditions of the proposed project and how they approached site selection. The project's site selection strategy included siting the project on retired, highly disturbed agricultural land which has covenants on the title prohibiting commercial farming; on a site identified as Priority Least Conflict Land for solar energy development in the San Joaquin Valley; on a flat site with high solar insolation, and as stated by the applicant, it

has the lowest biological resource value of any other area in the state; in an area with very few nearby residents; and on a site that cultural resources pedestrian surveys indicate exceedingly low potential for impacts. They said the site was identified as "Smart from the Start" from numerous conservation organizations and state agencies. They discussed their early coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding biological resources, such as the Swainson's hawk. They relayed that Intersect Power is part of a consortium that is looking for off-takers for green hydrogen and there is uncertainty. Intersect Power stated they look forward to working with the CEC on the opt-in application. They believe this project to be a good fit with Opt-in and the associated expedited judicial review process due to it being big critical infrastructure.

Commr. Gallardo had several questions regarding the presentation including whether there were residents nearby. According to Intersect Power, there are very few rural residents and they have started to reach out to residents and tenants. Commr. Gallardo inquired about the level of engagement Intersect Power has conducted with local community colleges. Intersect Power stated they are working with various community colleges with whom they have established relationships and with trades and non-profit organizations. They stated they will have a project labor agreement and are meeting with trades later this month to discuss work needs of the project. Intersect Power inquired if the CEC had guidance in terms of who to contact for community benefits. Commr. Gallardo stated she would check with CEC's legal team and staff on community benefits and what information can be shared. Commr. Gallardo inquired if they were connecting with any environmental justice groups. Intersect Power stated they have a contractor/firm with the pulse on the environmental justice community. Commr. Gallardo stated that reaching out to the environmental justice community is helpful and a CEC best practice.