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Homestead Valley Community Council Position Statement Regarding Large-Scale Solar And Wind Energy Facilities On Public And Private Lands

The Homestead Valley Community Council (HVCC) formed in 1996 to address all matters affecting the Morongo Basin unincorporated communities of Yucca Mesa, Flamingo Heights, Landers, and Johnson Valley. Delegates appointed through the community associations represent each of these member communities. Homestead Valley is the designated location name for these communities in the San Bernardino County General Plan, which includes the Homestead Valley Community Plan.

HVCC has opposed all industrial-scale solar and wind project applications in and around Homestead Valley. In 2009, we opposed LADWP Green Path North transmission lines. In 2013, we opposed a wind energy project slated for the Black Lava Butte area of Pipes Canyon. In 2015, we expressed opposition to the Bowman Solar Project proposed in Landers. Each of the project applicants eventually withdrew their plans.

As the lead organization promoting state scenic designation for Highway 247, earlier this year we submitted scoping comments to the draft initial study for the Calcite solar project expressing concerns over the scenic intrusion it would impose along the route (this project was subsequently placed on hold).

HVCC opposes industrial-scale solar and wind projects because these projects provide NO benefit to any community imposed upon to host them. All project benefits are internalized for developers and investors, while ramifications and negative consequences are externalized for residents, ratepayers, and taxpayers to endure.

A common tactic that project applicants employ to try to pre-empt community

opposition is to offer perks to influential entities in target communities. (We saw this during the Bowman Solar debate; the applicant suggested providing funds for Landers Community Center infrastructure improvements.) We find this “pre-compensation” concept to be very unethical and indicative of just how deleterious these projects are to communities.

Consequences

The externalized consequences of industrial-scale solar and wind projects include, but are not limited to the following:

Impact On Property Values: Any real-estate agent will tell you – few people want to live near a solar field or wind turbines. Unfortunately, many of these projects target private lands in residential living zones, requiring zoning variances to get them approved. It is extremely unfair for a property holder who purchased a residential property surrounded by other residential properties to find out they essentially live now in an industrial zone.

Properties in proximity to solar and wind farms are harder to sell. We have heard of strategies by some applicants to build projects in phases, thereby de-valuing property near the initial phase for later purchase at reduced rates.

These projects adversely impact surrounding property values and can impact property values of entire communities. Just the opposite is true when the same solar panels are installed in the already built environment, like home rooftops. Homes with rooftop solar have higher values than similar homes without it.

Electricity Rates: Californians pay some of the highest electricity rates in the country. Between 2011 and 2017, California’s electricity prices rose **five times** faster than the rest of the nation. This is primarily due to the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) that mandates more and more of the electricity supply in CA come from alternative sources like solar and wind farms. The state requires utilities to purchase these types of power, even though they cannot be relied upon to consistently power the grid. The intermittency of these supplies makes it difficult to match supply to demand. To make matters worse, solar and wind farms almost always require significant transmission upgrades and, in many cases, completely

new lines. These costs are passed on to us the rate payers by the utility supplier. The project owners reap all the financial benefits while we watch our electricity bills go higher and higher every year.

Subsidies and Tax Breaks: Solar and Wind project applicants enjoy massive incentives in the form of subsidies and tax breaks, all of which we provide through our taxes. Only these incentives make the projects financially viable. When studies that claim solar and wind energy now compare in cost to traditional energy sources, they never factor in the cost of the huge incentives paid for by the taxpayers. They also never account for the increased cost in infrastructure upgrades necessitated by the integration of solar and wind energy supplies.

In the end, we bear the tax burden that funds the incentives to make industrial solar and wind energy projects viable, and then we get higher utility rates in return. Imagine if we could instead invest our dollars into point-of-use energy generation like solar on our own roofs.

HVCC opposes the RPS mandate, and the massive subsidies solar and wind project developers receive. We support allowing market forces to determine the most reliable and least expensive energy sourcing.

Please note that HVCC does not oppose all solar energy generation. We are fully supportive of solar energy generation that is “point-of-use” – consumed at the location where it is being generated, especially if installed in an already-developed environment. Solar energy installations at Lucerne Valley Market, Lucerne Valley Unified School District, the Johnson Valley Community Center, and Morongo Unified School District are just a few examples of solar energy generation HVCC supports.

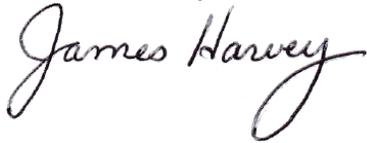
Unlike industrial solar and wind energy sources that require transmission and add to transmission line intermittency and congestion, point-of-use generation reduces transmission line load requirements.

Worse: industrial solar and wind projects require enormous amounts of land, most of which they permanently destroy, while point-of-use energy generation in the already-built environment requires no additional land use or destruction of any

precious open spaces. The materials and energy used in manufacturing, transporting, implementing and deactivating these projects in no way can be considered “green.”

Therefore, Homestead Valley Community Council opposes all industrial-scale solar and wind proposals on public or private lands.

James Harvey

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Harvey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

President, Homestead Valley Community Council
(On behalf of HVCC)