

COUNTY OF VENTURA
PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING
CASE NO. PL24 - 0019
PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED FOR MARCH 21, 2024,
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

From: [Ping Fang](#)
To: [Nielsen, Donald](#)
Cc: [Engstrom, Aaron](#); [Ping Fang](#)
Subject: Comments on PL24-0019 (March 21 Planning Commission Meeting)
Date: Monday, March 18, 2024 4:20:02 PM

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Hello, Don

Congratulations to a first bow on introducing proactively a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to Ventura County. Great job on the Staff Report!

I do have a few comments/questions for you:

1. On the definition of Renewable Energy Production and Storage, please includes those structure/installation/facility to not only produce and store such energy, but also in support of doing it. Cases in mind would be to have onshore facilities/structures to receive generated electricity from a wind farm, or to generate electricity using hydrogen by processing seawater carried over onshore. I'm sure you know that Port Hueneme is eyeing on an Offshore Wind Energy project
2. Do we have a similar provision in the Coastal Zoning Ordinance to support Offshore Wind Energy and Hydrogen Production systems? Where can I find more info on this category (Don/Aaron ?)
3. Not knowing how much acreage we have near a substation, I like to continue advocating on the ideal side - Give a higher priority to build a long duration battery storage system. DoE [defines](#) it to be a system capable to discharge energy at 90% capacity over 10+ hrs. It is important also considering that the County of Ventura has a long duration energy storage (LDES) manufacturer in our backyard, Energy Vault.

I may not be able to attend the hearing on Thursday. So I would appreciate it very much if you can help pass them along as public comments too.

Thank you,
Ping

From: [Helen Eloyan](#)
To: [Nielsen, Donald](#)
Cc: [Emily McCrorie](#); [John Hecht](#); [Erin Phillips](#)
Subject: Planning Commission Meeting (3/21) Public Comments - Item 6A. CASE NUMBER: PL24-0019
Date: Wednesday, March 20, 2024 12:03:13 PM

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Good afternoon Don,

Hope you are doing well. We received a notification that the Planning Director Use Equivalency Determination for battery energy storage system (BESS) updates would be heard by the Planning Commission (PC) on Thursday (3/21) and wanted to provide written comments on behalf of Longroad Energy. In reviewing the staff report, we realized that the proposed definitions would not accurately represent the nature of energy storage facilities and would not be practical since private developers cannot control the energy sources from the grid. For example, while the intent of the BESS is to store excess renewable energy during the day, there is no way for the BESS operators to differentiate how the energy used to charge the BESS was created. The suggestions below also provide flexibility as the grid changes over time.

As such, we have provided the following comments to clarify the proposed definitions regarding BESS facilities; please note that deletions are shown in ~~red/strike-through text~~, whereas additions are shown in red/underlined text.

Energy Production ~~and Storage~~ from Renewable Sources and Energy Storage - Any facility, structure, or installation as a principal use that produces ~~or stores~~ energy, primarily for off-site use, from naturally replenished sources such as, but not limited to, wind, water, sunlight, geothermal heat, or biomass and facilities that store energy produced either on or off-site for the purpose of providing grid resiliency and integrating renewable energy to the electric grid.

Energy Storage, ~~Renewable~~ – A specific type of land use under the definition “energy production and storage from renewable sources and energy storage” that is limited to the storage of ~~renewable~~ energy produced either on or off site primarily for off-site use. for the purpose of providing grid resiliency and integrating renewable energy to the electric grid.

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Sec. 8107-49.1 – Renewable Energy Storage Acreage Limitation

Energy storage facilities, including accessory equipment and structures, shall not constitute buildings for purposes of lot coverage, provided the total cumulative acreage for ~~renewable~~ energy storage facilities, including accessory equipment and structures but excluding the area for ingress and egress to the facility, shall not exceed 100 acres within the OS (Open Space), AE (Agricultural Exclusive), and RA (Rural

Agriculture) zoning districts.

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As noted, these systems play a vital role in optimizing electricity management and integrating more renewable energy into the grid overall. We plan to submit our written comments to the PC and appear at the hearing, so please reach out to me to discuss them once you have considered them.

Thank you,

Helen Eloyan, MPPA, AICP Candidate
Project Manager – Land Use

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March 20, 2024

Secretary of the Ventura County Planning Commission
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

**RE: Item No. 6: Public Comment -Text Amendments to NCZO Articles 2, 5, 7, and 19
Related to Energy Storage in the AG and OS Zones; and CEQA Exemption
(PL24-0019)**

Honorable Ventura County Planning Commissioners:

Wellhead Electric Company, Inc. (Wellhead) is a privately held 40-year-old California-based developer and operator of innovative power generation and energy storage facilities with over 500 MW of power generation and energy storage locations throughout the State.

As you are fully aware, the State has set ambitious goals of 90% “clean electricity” by 2035 and 100% by 2045. On March 17th as reported on the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) website, solar-generated power accounted for 85% of the renewables that provided 74% of total supply at 11:30 am. Of course, solar generation goes away at sunset and gas-fired power plants are dispatched to meet the evening peak demand. To remove the need for non-renewable energy generation, CAISO and the Public Utility Commission (PUC) energy policies and procurements now focus on quickly developing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) to charge from daytime solar-generated energy and then discharge in the evening. In 2022, AB 205 was passed as an optional Energy Commission permitting process for BESS’s of 200 MW or more.

West Ventura County is more vulnerable than most areas to wildfire and/or wind-driven regional outages because most power is imported over SCE’s transmission lines to Santa Clarita. Local BESS’s serve as local sources of emergency energy. Wellhead has been working for several years to identify a location that is compatible with agriculture and open space without the need for additional high-voltage transmission lines that are susceptible to wind and fire damage and usually not welcome by residents.

Wellhead encourages the Planning Commission to recommend to the Board of Supervisors the approval of the RMA’s proposal to codify the November 29, 2023 Planning Director’s Use Equivalency Determination No. 2023-2 that is now before you as NCZO text amendments. These actions clearly enable the transition to renewable energy.

We do, however, have three comments with suggestions for your consideration:

Comment 1: Corresponding Subdivision Ordinance Exemption Text Amendment

In the same manner that the Planning Director found energy storage as equivalent to “energy production from renewable sources” in the NCZO (Section 8102-0), the County’s Subdivision Ordinance Section 8201-4(k), “Exclusions and Exemptions from this Chapter,” should also be amended as follows (shown with underline):

The leasing of, or the granting of an easement to, a parcel of land, or any portion or portions thereof, in conjunction with the financing, erection, and sale or lease of a solar electrical generation device and/or energy storage on the land, if the project is subject to review under other local agency ordinances regulating design and improvement or, if the project is subject to other discretionary action by the advisory agency or legislative body (See Gov. Code, § 66412(l));

This amendment creates cross-consistency between two County ordinances and becomes consistent with State Subdivision Map Act exemptions GC 66412(n) which include:

(n) The leasing of, or the granting of an easement to, a parcel of land, or any portion or portions thereof, in conjunction with the financing, erection, and sale or lease of an electrical energy storage system on the land, if the project is subject to discretionary action by the advisory agency or legislative body. For the purposes of this subdivision, “energy storage system” has the same meaning as defined in Section 2835 of the Public Utilities Code.

Comment 2: 100 Acre Cap Increased for Long-Duration Mandate

Most all BESS’s are a “4-Hour Duration” design, meaning that the batteries will last four hours at maximum discharge capacity. CAISO and CPUC policies and goals are beginning to look toward a requirement for 8-Hour duration systems (“Long Duration Energy Storage” or “LDES”) that, effectively, about doubles the spatial requirements for BESSs under current available technologies. Should LDES become the standard without an increase in energy density (i.e. installed duration per acre), the proposed Section 8107-49 cumulative 100-Acre Cap amendment might hinder the County’s goal of helping reach renewable energy goals. The cumulative acre limitation cap could be modified to include an option to exceed 100 acres (if agreeable to the Board of Supervisors) such as:

“The Planning Director may increase cumulative acreage to not more than 200 acres by making a finding that CPUC procurement orders are instructing Load Serving Entities (“LSEs”), e.g. Clean Power Authority (“CPA”, SCE, and PG&E to procure] 8-or-more hour duration and that reliable and available energy storage technology requires additional land area compared to 4-hour duration technology on which the 100-acre cumulative metric was based.”

Comment 3: AG Reserve Carve-Out If BESS Is Adjacent to SCE Transmission Line

General Plan Policy COS-O entitled “Assessment of Land Near Electrical Transmission and Distribution Lines” is not addressed in the staff report and proposed amendments as there is no discussion of the benefits of locating a BESS immediately adjacent to an existing SCE high-voltage regional transmission line with existing capacity. In that situation, there is no need for additional towers and high-voltage lines. But, State and County codes may prevent

that very desirable location because all County AG-zoned land is designated as Agricultural Preserve (AGP), and GC 51230.2 would not allow a "lease" subdivision of AGP land for energy storage. To resolve this unintended barrier to energy storage projects, the County could amend the 2019 "Ventura County Land Conservation Act Guidelines", Section IV (page 6) and Appendix A, and add a carve-out for a "BESS lease area or subdivision of an AG-zoned parcel abutting a SCE high-voltage transmission line."

Thank you for considering these three comments and suggestions. Wellhead looks forward to working with County staff, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors to facilitate responsible AG- and OS-compatible BESS projects that enable the transition to truly 24-hour clean electricity, enhance energy reliability and public safety during outages, and contribute significant local property tax revenues.

Sincerely,
Wellhead Electric Company, Inc.

Hal Dittmer

Harold Dittmer
President