



City Council Meeting
Public Comments
October 1, 2025

Agenda Item #11, Oct. 1. 2025 meeting- Environmental Justice Element Adoption

Dear Mayor and City Councilmembers,

I am sorry I cannot attend the meeting on October 1 as I am out of town. However, the Environmental Justice element is something that I have engaged in and commented on continuously since 2021 and as early as 2018 as part of the Climate Action Plan. It is tremendously important for our city that it be meaningful, effective, and implemented.

In spite of the significant amount of public input for the environmental justice element (detailed in your report), the Planning Commission decided to change language at the last minute to render many important policies meaningless. I am requesting that you reverse a large majority of the Planning Commission changes. These are detailed below.

Policy 1.1.12- Protection of sensitive people from industrial pollution rendered meaningless by Planning Commission changes.

The Planning Commission (PC) rendered this tremendously critical policy meaningless with their change of "Require" to 'Consider". This should be changed back to the original "Require". Original language in **bold**.

*1.2.12 Continue to ensure compatibility of industrial uses in proximity to sensitive land uses, **Require** (PC changed to 'consider) zoning regulations provide adequate distance separation and buffering for sensitive uses from industrial zones. The finding for such uses shall include specific references to proximity to or environmental impacts to EICs and IPNS and specific means of mitigation said impacts.*

The separation of housing and polluting industrial activities is a key health issue and has been repeatedly requested from individuals and organizations.

It is hard to understand why the Council would not commit to reasonable and scientifically justified policies that would protect sensitive and vulnerable people in Escondido. Please restore this policy to meaning.

1.3.3 Needed commitment to staff training rendered meaningless by Planning Commission changes.

The addition of "when funding available" completely undermines the commitment to this important aspect of implementing the environmental justice policies. Either the city is committed to these actions and training (like in other actions included in the regular course of business) or you are not. To accept the language of the Planning Commission is to demonstrate a lack of commitment to environmental justice.

1.3.3 *Develop and implement training for City staff on how to integrate equity into decision-making when evaluation and planning City programming and projects. (PC added "when funding available. This qualifier should be deleted by City Council.)*

1.5.6 Restrictions to reduce public health concerns rendered meaningless by Planning Commission changes.

1.5.6 **Establish** *(PC changed to "consider establishing) restrictions for land uses that lead to public health concerns in high concentrations, such as fast-food establishments, and liquor stores.*

Again, the change of language by the Planning Commission renders this meaningless. Why would the Council not want to establish restrictions so that public health is improved?

2.1.13 and 1.3.9 Affirmatively Create a community advisory body to address community concerns and a Park overlay zone.

2.1.13 *Support creation of an EJA/PIN advisory group consistent of residents and members who live, work, and/or play within these City areas...*

I request that "Support creation" be changed to "Create" in both policies.

First, Escondido needs a Community Advisory Board, a stable and organized public place that addresses health, climate action, and environmental justice. Such a board can be a place where residents learn about issues and share their feedback and ideas. It would improve community connection to the city. This is another action we have been requesting for many years and was, in fact, required in the Climate Action Plan with which the City still remains out of compliance. We have offered many ideas on how an advisory group could be structured for maximum benefit. I again repeat the request that you commit to creating it.

It is also in the interest of the community for the Council make the same changes on policy 1.3.9 to "Create" a Park overlay zone for EJA and PIN communities.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please make the Environmental Justice policies meaningful to protection of community health and safety in Escondido.

Laura Hunter

Board or Commission for Public Comment City Council

Email pjladerman@cox.net

Council Meeting Date 10/01/2025

Item # 12

Subject Battery energy storage facilities

Position In Favor

First and Last Name Phyllis Laderman

Are you an Escondido Resident? No

Comments

I live in Eden Valley, in the sphere of influence of the City of Escondido. I urge the City Council to continue its ordinance to prohibit new BESS facilities in the City, and I would actually like to have the City discourage new BESS in the City's sphere of influence. BESS facilities put all those who live and work nearby to a facility at major risk of fires containing contaminants. They do not belong near residences or sensitive receptors.

Thank you for support.



Brittany Applestein Syz
Vice President
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10/1/2025

Honorable Mayor Dane White
City of Escondido
201 North Broadway
Escondido, CA 92025

Dear Honorable Mayor White:

Energy storage projects play a vital role in advancing California's renewable energy goals by enhancing grid reliability and enabling greater integration of clean energy. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are critical in allowing the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) to dispatch stored energy as needed to balance supply and demand, especially during peak hours.

On behalf of the 4,700 SDG&E employees who are committed to delivering safe and reliable energy to the residents of the City of Escondido, we encourage the City Council to forgo extending the moratorium on BESS projects. A further moratorium on BESS projects will delay the transition to cleaner energy sources, reduce grid reliability, and could leave communities more vulnerable to outages.

As energy storage technology advances, safety remains a top priority in the development of BESS projects. SDG&E is committed to ensuring safe and reliable operations through comprehensive site and technology evaluations that follow industry standards. Ongoing innovation, rigorous testing, and close collaboration with public safety agencies help maintain the safety and performance of these systems.

SDG&E is concerned that any moratorium on BESS facilities will have a chilling effect on the industry. We encourage the City Council to instead work with SDG&E and San Diego County to ensure consistent fire safety standards, which will allow for the continued safe development of BESS projects in the region.

In conclusion, SDG&E urges the City Council to consider the broader impacts of a continued moratorium on BESS projects. These systems are essential to achieving California's clean energy goals, strengthening grid reliability, and protecting communities from power disruptions. By working collaboratively to establish consistent safety standards, we can ensure the responsible development of energy storage while safeguarding public safety and supporting a more resilient energy future for Escondido and the region.

Sincerely,



Brittany Applestein Syz
Vice President, External Affairs & Communications

CC:

Honorable Deputy Mayor Consuelo Martinez
Honorable Councilmember Christian Garcia
Honorable Councilmember Joe Garcia
Honorable Councilmember Judy Fitzgerald
Economic Development Director Jennifer Schoeneck
City Manager Sean McGlynn
City Attorney Michael R. McGuinness
Veronica Morones, City Planner



September 29, 2025

The Honorable Dane White
Mayor, City of Escondido
201 North Broadway
Escondido, CA 92025

RE: Request to End the Moratorium on Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

On behalf of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and the undersigned clean energy partners, we respectfully urge the City Council to not extend the current moratorium on commercial Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) projects, enacted under Urgency Ordinance No. 2024-12R and extended by Interim Ordinance No. 2024-14. Rather, we urge the Council to let the moratorium sunset on October 5th, ending the City's current ban on BESS projects in Escondido. A continuation of a moratorium on BESS in Escondido is potentially harmful to both the City's clean energy future and its economy.

When the moratorium was originally adopted, it was presented as a pause to explore reasonable safety standards, not as an indefinite freeze on a critical sector of the clean energy economy. Yet, City staff have since indicated that any future regulations could take one to two years or more to develop. This timeline far exceeds the original intent of a temporary pause and places Escondido at risk of falling behind in meeting its own clean energy goals. We applaud City staff's diligent work to address Council's direction from the meeting on May 7th of this year, yet as the staff report indicates all four of these items are still ongoing for the immediate future.

We also recognize and appreciate the thoughtful actions Council took at its May 7th meeting. At that time, Council acknowledged community concerns about safety while charting a clear path forward. Some urged Council to rescind the moratorium immediately. Instead, Council directed staff to enhance safety through the Fire Code by evaluating workforce qualifications, incorporating the County's guidance, considering size thresholds and developing emergency response planning, with the understanding that the moratorium would sunset on October 5th. This compromise addressed safety concerns without closing the door to clean energy investment or progress.

Escondido's Climate Action Plan clearly calls for a transition toward clean, resilient energy infrastructure. BESS is a cornerstone of that transition, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, supporting renewable energy deployment and providing reliable power during periods of peak demand. Prolonging the moratorium undermines that progress and signals that Escondido is closed to investment in sustainable technologies.

We recognize the importance of public safety and believe Escondido can adopt modern, balanced policies that reflect both community needs and existing, nationally recognized standards. Today, battery energy storage systems are governed by a robust regulatory framework, including National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 855, NFPA 68/69, UL 9540 and the California Fire Code. These standards already require rigorous safety measures such as fire suppression systems, gas detection, automatic shutdown protocols and routine inspections by fire professionals.

Moreover, updates to the California Fire Code made in 2025 strengthen public safety for BESS, and jurisdictions across the state are already preparing to integrate, or have integrated those changes. In fact, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors declined to impose interim safety rules on BESS later last year, noting that existing state and local codes already provide strong protections and that additional guidance is forthcoming.

Additionally, modern BESS projects support local priorities:

- They generate property tax revenue and well-paying construction jobs
- They attract investment into renewable energy infrastructure
- They help Escondido and the region meet their climate and energy targets

A prolonged moratorium sends the wrong message to the clean energy community and jeopardizes projects that are already in the pipeline. We strongly encourage the Council to end the moratorium now, allowing development to proceed under existing codes while staff continue working on a long-term regulatory framework.

We stand ready to collaborate with City staff on best practices from other jurisdictions and offer our support in crafting thoughtful policies that ensure both safety and sustainability. Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing commitment to Escondido's clean energy future.

Sincerely,



Justine Murray
Executive Director of Public Affairs
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce



Jeremy Abrams
Business Manager
IBEW 569



Jason Anderson
President & CEO
Cleantech San Diego



Daniel Harmon
Vice President of Development
Middle River Power

CC:

Honorable Deputy Mayor Consuelo Martinez

Honorable Councilmember Christian Garcia

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