

LWVCNM Observer's Report

Sandoval County Commission special meeting – Diamond Tail Ranch Solar & Storage Project
Appeal of the Planning & Zoning Commission approval recommendation.

February 18, 2025

Mary Templeton, observer (by video recording)

Present: Michael Meek (Chair), Jordan Juarez (Vice Chair), Joshua Jones(video), Katherine Bruch, Jon Herr

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Land Use and Clean Energy

On October 29, 2024, PCR Energy, a developer of wind and energy projects, presented a [plan](#) for a solar facility and battery energy storage system (BESS) east of Placitas and San Felipe Pueblo next to the East Mountains. Implementation would require a Zone Map Amendment from Rural Residential Agricultural to Special Use, which Planning and Zoning has recommended that the County Commission approve. The purpose of this special meeting is to hear the multiple appeals submitted to the Planning and Zoning department prior to a decision by the County Commission. Discussion on permitting would come later, but this meeting is the last step in the public process.

Appeals from the community mainly concerned the location of the facility, public safety, water access and usage, and hazards to wildlife. The facility would be visible from the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway and Sandi Tram. The area draws tourists as a corridor of wildlife preserves and hiking trails. Appellants asserted that the facility, which uses lithium-ion batteries, would be located in an area of high fire risk, no local water supply, and no emergency access roads. Fires at similar facilities have been produced heavy metals. A safety and evacuation plan has not yet been presented to the public. Appellants voiced support for a solar energy facility and proposed relocating it to the West Mesa area.

The proposed operator, PCR Energy, spoke to many of these concerns, including emergency water supply and timing of a safety plan presentation. They noted that it would be unrealistic to relocate the project after three years of planning.

The Sandoval County fire chief mentioned that PCR has complied with all County requests around fire safety to date.

The Commission voted 3-2 to approve the Zone Map Amendment.

As background:

LWVUS promotes policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship. In addition, LWVNM supports the conservation and protection of wildlife and their habitats, as well as our natural, human, and cultural resources. An essential prerequisite for protecting our resources is to require comprehensive analysis of the environmental and fiscal impacts of applications before issuing a development permit. The LWVCNM also supports development that protects natural resources and promotes the equal right of all to an environment beneficial to life.

LWVUS encourages the use of renewable resources. In addition, LWVCNM promotes a clean, low-carbon energy economy that is sustainable, including all forms of renewable energy and transportation infrastructure.

Additional Comments

Sandoval County Commission Website

<https://www.sandovalcountynm.gov/commission/>