



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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Receive recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee concerning the Moss Landing battery fire of January 16, 2025, and provide direction as needed.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee concerning the Moss Landing battery fire of January 16, 2025, and provide direction as needed.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

On January 16, 2025, a fire broke out at Vistra's Moss Landing battery storage facility. As a result, the County of Monterey Board of Supervisors created an Ad Hoc Committee to make safety recommendations concerning the battery storage facility.

After meeting with staff several times, the Ad Hoc Committee makes the following recommendations:

- 1) the County oppose any future indoor battery storage facilities;
- 2) existing battery storage facilities within the County be brought up to the highest industry standards for battery storage facilities, including the use of newer and safer battery technology that may include non-lithium batteries, the possible use of alternative green energy storage, the use of the best fire suppression technology, and the use of the best fire prevention and containment technology;
- 3) Vistra work with County officials on remediation and recovery of damaged facilities to ensure safety for the public and the surrounding ecosystem;
- 4) the County urges the Vistra and PG&E battery storage operations to not resume until the cause of the January 16, 2025 fire has been determined and appropriate safety remediation measures have occurred; and
- 5) the County urges Vistra and PG&E to halt any expansion of existing battery storage facilities within the County of Monterey until current State legislation is passed ensuring better technology and safety measures at battery storage facilities are in place.

As this Board is aware, there are several legislative bills pending which address the need for better regulation of battery storage facilities. Importantly, under current law (AB 205, 2022), applicants seeking to construct battery storage facilities are allowed to by-pass local permitting processes and regulations, and may instead seek approvals directly from the California Energy Commission (CEC) under a shortened timeframe. This alternative permitting route can undercut any effect of locally-developed rules and procedures, including those for safety and environmental protection.

The Ad Hoc Committee is split on whether to dissolve the current Ad Hoc Committee and direct staff to report back to the full Board in 90 days on the status of legislation or to continue the Ad Hoc Committee and have the Committee report back to the full Board in 90 days.

FINANCING:

There is no fiscal impact except the expenditure of staff time to work on recommended actions.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

This action provides for more efficient processing of safety measures at battery storage facilities.

- Economic Development
- Administration
- Health & Human Services
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety

Prepared and Approved by: Susan K. Blich, County Counsel x5045