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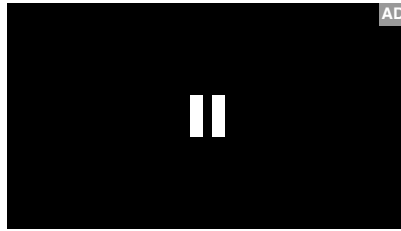
Posted by: Linsey Towles in Community News, Santa Clarita Latest News June 6, 2023 - 1:15 pm 6 Comments 1,035 Views

Residents of Acton gathered to speak out against multiple planned battery energy storage system facilities known as BESS – at the Town Council meeting on Monday night.

The town council room in the Acton library was filled with residents Monday night following a protest over the weekend that garnered the attention of surrounding residents and media.

Both the protest and the crowd at the town council meeting resulted from uncovering plans to build at least seven battery energy storage system (BESS) facilities in the Acton area, which has residents concerned about safety.

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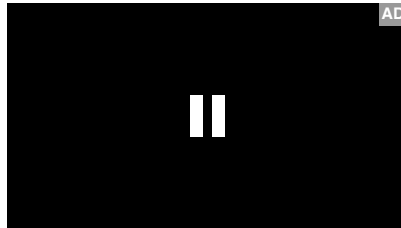
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BESS facilities are storage units for energy, storing thousands of megawatts of energy and providing power to millions of homes, as well as serving as backup energy sources during power outages. While developers claim that the facilities would bring benefits such as jobs, tax revenue and support during outages, Acton residents are unconvinced due to the threat they pose to fire safety and environment.

"Why should the little town of Acton be burning like that?" questioned town council member Jacqueline Ayer. "It's unreasonable in a very high fire hazard area, and out here we've already lost three major fire insurance companies."

Many residents in attendance echoed Ayer's sentiments, expressing their concerns about how the presence of over seven flammable battery storage facilities would impact the cost of their fire insurance and what would happen in the event of a fire.

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"We're being poisoned in the air and in the ground," said one Acton resident who stated that in the event of a lithium-ion battery fire, a special chemical extinguisher would be needed, which can't seep into the ground. "I can't comprehend how they can even propose to do this. It escapes me," she said.

Others are worried about how the influx of these energy facilities would impact their small-town community. "There is an agenda to make rural towns less rural," said resident Jerry Cook.

The discovery of the planned facilities came as a shock to residents, who expressed Monday that they were given no notice of the plans presented by Southern California Edison.

"It is impossible for the public to learn anything about these projects until they have gone through all the acceptability studies," said Ayer. "It should be required of them to devolve information about projects they are considering. We were deliberately kept in the dark."

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The information about these facilities only came to light as a result of research done by the Town Council. By the time information was made public, at least two projects had been confirmed and set off on.

"If we didn't know where to look, we wouldn't know about anything until they started digging," said town council member Jeremiah Owen. "We're thinking we're at the beginning stages and come find out this is much further along."

The exact locations of some of the facilities are not all known as of Monday night, though some are set to be near the Vincent substation. One facility is set to stretch across a mile-wide property adjacent to the 14 Freeway.

When confronted by the town council, the project developers claimed that the facilities were not in Acton and actually resided in Palmdale.

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"Edison insists that these projects are not in Acton, that they're in the city of Palmdale. That is a flat-out lie," said Ayers.

She claimed that the company sent the town council a map, which was actually a "map of influence" for the city of Palmdale. Maps of influence show the areas that a city may impact, and Acton is considered to be within Palmdale's sphere of influence.

The BESS facilities have taken the forefront of the town council's agenda, leading to the L.A. County Board of Supervisors being contacted and notified of the issue. The council approved a motion Monday to comment at the Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday morning, and the issue is under consideration.

"Really, all we care about is where these projects are and where they are at the approval process. None of that should be secret," said Ayers. "We have powerful tools at our disposal and the trick convince the county."

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The council's motion included that the Board of Supervisors needs to look at the Antelope Valley-specific plan and urge them not to rely on SoCal Edison for private party input.

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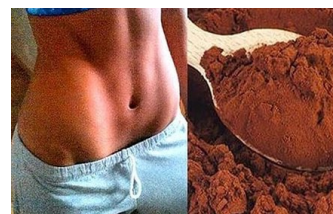
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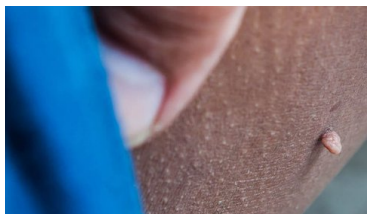
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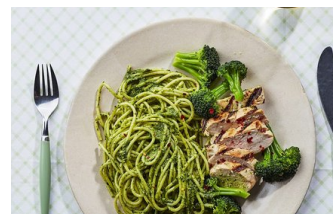
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