

Juliette Rezzato

From: Nina Audino <gregeninahome@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 11:57 AM
To: Juliette Rezzato
Subject: Audino Nina Requesting Assistance with Comments Upload

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I've attempted to upload February 25, 2025 comments during the Board meeting. And I'm confirming that they were received. There were technical glitches occurring at the time, and I was told that the County system was overloaded and slow.

The same issue occurred today, March 11, 2025.

Here is the text of my uploaded comments to Agenda Item #5.

Liz said to email them to her please, so they can be added manually.

Good morning,

My name is Nina Audino. I live 11 miles from the toxic lithium battery fire disaster at Vistra's Moss Landing BESS, which is still unfolding and will continue to unfold for many months to come – while Vistra tries to mitigate its awful environmental disaster. I am understandably concerned by plans to build a grid-scale 200-megawatt battery energy storage facility using what industry proponents misleadingly pitch as a “safer” lithium battery technology on Watsonville's doorstep and 2 miles from our property – less than half a mile away from dense residential neighborhoods, near Watsonville Community Hospital, and amidst schools, churches, parks, riparian zones, a watershed that drains into the Pacific Ocean, and a clean water reclamation project for Pajaro Valley irrigation.

I don't think any of us want to live under the shadow of an industrial-sized lithium BESS that industry experts and their sales reps assure us will never burn as badly as Vistra's toxic disaster. I don't think any of us want to wake up every day thinking, “Geez, I sure hope that clean energy beast down the road is going to behave itself today – otherwise we might have a small toxic lithium battery fire by lunch time.” That's why some of us are listening to the sales pitches coming from the lithium-based battery energy storage sector.

And what are those sales pitches? The fires will be small. The fires will be rare. The fires will be more controllable (except of course during a high wind event, as New Leaf Energy's “Fire Emergency Response Plan” alludes to over and over). The toxic footprint will be negligible (except of course during a high wind event). This is a much “safer” battery technology.

But I think all of us would agree that our community deserves “safe,” not “safer.”

Research states that the 2nd Gen LFP battery is actually prone to much more toxic fires. So, does that mean that the risk of a smaller but substantially more toxic fire is "safer?"

The issue is lithium itself. That’s why it’s missing on New Leaf Energy’s misleading infographic perched on the County website that “explains” how the 2nd Gen lithium battery is supposedly “safer.”

It’s too volatile for grid-scale application. It’s the thing that vents, burns and explodes when aging battery components and housings start to weaken and fracture after repeated charging and discharging cycles.

The lithium battery industry and the energy sector are shaping public policy dialog about renewables and net zero goals into an exclusive choice between lithium battery X and lithium battery Y. This is a public policy dialog that has no future if we are to commit to battery energy storage that is actually clean and green. The real question we need to be asking is how do we partner with battery technologies capable of grid-scale energy storage that are free of lithium fire risk and that will be commercialized as fast as possible.

The devastating toxic battery fire at Vistra’s Moss Landing BESS has brought us to a critical crossroads and given us all an opportunity to re-examine things closely.

I ask you please to slow our BESS developments down. Enact an Urgency Ordinance moratorium. Appoint an impartial, expert Technical Advisory Committee to work with all stakeholders, including the public, on this critical issue. Convene a town hall. Invite the people you represent to a dialog about a Santa Cruz County that will be a true leader in truly safe, clean energy solutions.

Thank you.