



Solano County
Airport Land Use Commission
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Ray Schoch
Chairman

SOLANO COUNTY AIRPORT LAND USE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF January 20, 2010

The special meeting of the Solano County Airport Land Use Commission was held Thursday, January 20, 2010 in the Solano County Administration Center, Conference Room 5015 (Fifth Floor), 675 Texas St., Fairfield, CA 94533.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Schoch, Commissioners Potter, Baldwin, Baumler, and Seiden

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioners Stockard, Cavanagh and Vancil

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Leland, Resource Management, Lee Axelrad, County Council, Diane Buschman, Resource Management

Items 1, 2 & 3: Chairman Schoch called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

Item 4. Public Comment
There were no public comments.

Item 5. Approval of the Minutes of November 12, 2009
The minutes of November 12, 2009 were approved.

Item 6 ALUC-09-04: Public Hearing on a Request for a Land Use Compatibility Determination for a 75 Turbine Commercial Wind Farm

Chairman Schoch asked if there were any public comments on this item. Scott Flake, Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), thanked the ALUC and County staff for all their efforts during the review process of their project. He stated that SMUD agrees with the recommendation presented in the staff report and would have no problem complying with the conditions outlined in the report.

Commissioner Baldwin asked Mr. Flake what the distance was from the projects closest tower to the Rio Vista Airport. The answer was that it was more than 5 miles away.

Jim Leland, briefly reviewed the staff report for the proposed Solano Wind Project Phase III Wind Plant (ALUC-09-04). He stated that the SMUD project initially proposed the construction and operation of up to 75 wind turbines in the third phase of their Solano Wind Project. They have recently proposed the construction of 50 larger size turbines. The project has been submitted to the ALUC for a determination because the wind turbine towers are above 200' in height. The proposal was approved with a determination of no hazard by the FAA. The project is located in an area of moderately high terrain. It has been reviewed by Travis Air Force Base and the Air Force Air Mobility Command. The Air Force issued a letter stating that it has withdrawn its earlier comments objecting to the project. Because the Air Force has withdrawn its objections the project does not require further height restrictions. The project EIR did not identify any noise impacts associated with the project. With respect to safety of persons on the ground the project did not entail land uses with a significant number of people who might be gathered in the project area. In regards to noise and safety of persons on the ground the review indicated that the project does not conflict with the Travis AFB Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Mr. Leland added that one of the main issues that had held up some of the projects from coming to the Commission was radar degradation generated by interference from the wind turbines. As a result of a series of workshops with Air Force and the wind energy representatives the radar issue has been resolved with Travis AFB and the Air Force in general. On September 30, 2009 the first workshop was held with Air Force and the wind energy representatives. From that process they entered into an agreement called a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA). At the January 19, 2010 workshop the results of their efforts were revealed. The Air Force withdrew its objections to the proposed SMUD Solano Wind Project Phase III Wind Plant, the NextEra Montezuma wind project and the Enxco Shiloh III wind project. Mr. Leland noted that chiefly on the basis of the work of the Air Force and the wind energy representatives to create a CRADA the issues had been resolved for the SMUD project.

Mr. Leland concluded by stating that staff recommended that the Commission find the SMUD Solano Wind Project Phase 3 consistent with the provisions of the Compatibility Plans, subject to the following conditions:

1. The Project shall comply with all conditions of the FAA Determinations of No Hazard issued in connection with the Project. The FAA conditions include the requirement that the structures be marked and/or lighted in accordance with the applicable FAA Circulars; and

2. Prior to commencement of construction of the Project structures, SMUD shall file with the ALUC a document describing the final latitudes, longitudes, and heights of the structures to be constructed.

Chairman Schoch asked if there were any Commissioner comments. Commissioner Potter commented that the staff report indicates that the location of the project was southeasterly of Rio Vista. He stated that the location was actually south by southwest or south. Regarding Condition 2 (page 7) of the staff report he questioned the intent of having such detail by referencing the latitude, longitude and heights of structures. Mr. Leland replied that the FAA's Determination of No Hazard was predicated on a description provided by SMUD. Staff was asking that any deviation from what was contained in the FAA approval be provided to the ALUC so a judgment could be made on whether or not the change was material and needed to come back before the Airport Land Use Commission.

Commissioner Potter referred to a letter from the Air Force in November 2009 that stated that the Air Force had issues with the radar interference from wind turbines and that it had not been rescinded by the Air Force. The Commissioner noted that the recent January 19, 2010 letter where the Air Force withdrew its objections referred exclusively to the SMUD project. Mr. Leland answered that the Air Force decided on the basis of the findings of detailed studies of the impacts of the three projects on Travis AFB radar to adopt a standard for radar detection. The Air Force concluded that on the basis of all the detailed studies they would rescind their objections to the three wind projects mentioned above. They did not issue a blanket letter rescinding their objections because they are asking for further study to calibrate whether or not the work so far is accurate and to collect additional data in order to make a judgment about the cumulative effect of development in the entire wind resource area (WRA). Travis AFB is reserving the right to look at future projects.

Commissioner Baumler stated that this was the first step and that there would be more studies to come as conditions change such as the number of flights over the WRA.

Commissioner Potter stated that the November 2009 Air Force letter addressed phantom targets and dropped targets and that the January 19th letter does not and only refers to "certainty of detection". He also stated the January 19th referred to "using tracking and projection of the track of targets that the radar picks up and uses that as the argument to predict the location of the target on the other side". He questioned the accuracy of that process. He asked if that issue was addressed in the studies. Commissioner Baumler stated that it was discussed from the standpoint that the shadow could be remedied by virtue of tweaking the radars.

Commissioner Seiden believed that there was still concern over the knowledge that there is a detriment to the radar's capability. He said that the question that remains is has the working group sufficiently resolved that margin of error to the satisfaction of the Air Force. Mr. Leland stated he did not want to characterize the position of the Air Force. His take on what happened was that the working group spent some time first agreeing on the level of service that Travis AFB owes the flying public. From there the Air Force and the wind resource developers worked together to decide what was acceptable in terms of a standard of detection at different altitudes. They then took the current level and determined the level of detection to be used as the projects are built and determined a sufficient safety margin that would allow them to proceed. The conclusion was made that the standard being set was high compared to radar in other areas of the nation. Although there is additional work the Air Force wants to do there were no reservations expressed by the Air Force regarding the impacts of the three pending wind projects on Travis AFB.

Commissioner Seiden asked if the three new wind development projects would affect instrument approaches at Rio Vista Airport. Mr. Leland answered that the wind towers were given a No Hazard Determination by the FAA.

Commissioner Potter asked if there was discussion at the January 19th workshop concerning phantom targets and dropped targets. Major John Flynn, Travis AFB, answered that with regards to false targets some radar experts have been able to re-optimize the DASR-11 which has created a dramatic decrease in the number of false targets to an acceptable level. They feel they will be able to get the "probability of detect" up to an 80 % or 85% range within the next 6 to 12 months. The Major also indicated that the Air Force and the wind developers would continue to work together to resolve remaining or new issues.

Commissioner Baldwin asked if the IFR approaches and departures for the Rio Vista Airport were considered during the study process. Major Flynn answered that they were. The study area comprised the whole WRA which included the Rio Vista Airport.

Commissioner Potter asked if there were any changes in the design of the wind turbine blades that could minimize interference such as stealth, paint or something else that would diminish the effect of the blades on reflection. Mr. Flake, SMUD, answered that there was nothing currently commercially available. Chairman Schoch stated that the issue was discussed at the workshops and the Air Force contended that thru tweaking the radar they could reduce interference to acceptable levels.

Jim Field, SMUD, responded to Commissioner Baldwin's question regarding IFR approaches into Rio Vista Airport saying that the radar at Travis AFB

consists of a primary and secondary radar. One of the radars utilizes transponder information so anyone that is flying IFR is guaranteed to be seen by the radar system. The issue is strictly limited to VFR flights that are not operating their transponder. There being no further comments Chairman Schoch asked if there was a motion.

Commissioner Seiden made a motion that the Commission find the Solano Wind Project Phase III consistent with the Travis AFB LUCP and the Rio Vista LUCP subject to the conditions shown in ALUC Resolution No. 10-01 prepared by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Baumler. There being no further discussion, a roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

There being no further comments or questions the Airport Land Use Commission entered into a closed session.

Item 7. Closed Session

Item 8. Adjournment

The next regular meeting of the Solano County Airport Land Use Commission will be held on **Thursday, February 11, 2010** in the Solano County Administration Center, Multi-Purpose Room, 675 Texas St., Fairfield, CA 94533