Stakeholder Name: Chuck Bell, Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association

Interviewer: Jill Dominguez, Essergy (Aspen Team) Interview Date/Time: 1/5/16 10:00 AM

Stakeholders will have an opportunity to review the summary of this interview before it is shared with the County to confirm the accuracy of its content. Please provide an email address that can be used for communication:

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Does the Stakeholder give permission to have the results of this interview posted on the County's project website (SPARCForum.org)? **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

Stakeholder Interview Questions Related to Costs and Benefits of Renewable Energy Development

1. How do you define community-based and small-scale renewable energy generation? What do you believe would be the advantages and/or disadvantages to this scale of renewable energy development?

Our concept of Community based RE is that procured within and distributed to and for the community. It could be large scale projects in areas accepted by the community – or a serious of small scale PVs (ie: 2-5 megawatt or larger) only in locations the community deems acceptable. For example the project must comply with community expectations and locations that do not negatively impact undisturbed land, property values or quality of life. Examples of (our preference) smaller scale RE would be point of use rooftop, backyard, government/community/commercial parking lot PV solar that has proven to be cost effective for end users.

Self-sufficient off-grid home solar requires battery storage for off peak periods. Most would likely prefer to stay connected to the grid and use the credit/debit system with Southern California Edison (SCE) to avoid having to utilize batteries.

We prefer local firms be hired to build and maintain. We have an excellent group in Apple Valley that is a good example of hiring locally. They have done several projects with good outcomes.

We are one of the few desert communities that could accommodate some industrial scale PV projects but not solar thermal. Lucerne Valley has old agricultural land that is not suitable for other uses due to groundwater problems and soil limitations. It is ideally suited since it is hidden from view by current shrubs and trees and it is previously disturbed land so no environmentally sensitive areas need to be used. It would not interfere with property values since hidden from site. It is adjacent to a major SCE transmission line and would eliminate or reduce the need for new transmission lines. Of course it would require power/purchase agreements with SCE. There are very few (ideal) areas that can be used for this purpose in the County. The project should be used to supply local energy needs, not outside areas and could possibly benefit from a Community Choice Aggregate (CCA) program. This is an example of advantages of a large scale renewable energy project that we might be able to provide – which other communities don't have w/o causing significant disturbance, opposition, environmental impacts, etc.

2. How can the County encourage local renewable energy production to meet local energy demand?

We feel we should have a partnership with County to choose best locations. As an example, create zones specifically for renewable energy within the County. The County should work with SCE on our behalf on obtaining Power Purchase Agreements (PPA). The current SPARC Framework indicates a good start toward the County's acknowledgement of our community limitations and issues.

The County needs to implement AB 811.

3. What tools should the County consider to encourage renewable energy in a manner that reflects community values?

Incorporate in each community a plan with criteria, stipulations in the plan and codes that are developed with input from each community. This has not been done in the past. There is an example in Lucerne Valley of a 250 acre industrial-scale 20 MW project that was not given ample community input under the old system and the outcomes were highly undesirable and problematic. The County needs a set of clear criteria and definitions that are not left wide open to staff interpretation or misinterpretation. But even with the current County solar ordinance in place – with its criteria - we can't understand how the County could have accepted the application for another 20 MW industrial plant in the same area with similar impacts as the one already here. Actual zoning laws or ordinances for identified parcels should be used for renewable energy projects.

4. The County wants new renewable energy systems to be more affordable, reliable, diverse, and safe for community residents. What types of renewable energy systems would you recommend?

P.V. is our choice with local onsite distribution of power. Solar is better than wind. Solar is advancing in technology at a quick pace and we believe will create better outcomes than wind. Examples of wind power projects on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands were the Granite Mountain Wind and North Peak Wind. We had coordinated community opposition and prevailed in killing those projects (at least for now). We are 100% opposed to large scale wind projects. Small scale backyard wind is OK. The area does not produce sufficient wind during peak need times of the year when demand is high.

5. What types of renewable energy systems would best allow for the hiring of local residents for construction and operation? What are the short-term and long-term employment advantages of this system(s)? What are potential disadvantages of this system(s)? What other factors affect local hiring practices for a construction and operational workforce, and how can the County facilitate the use of a local workforce for renewable energy development?

The best options are rooftop, backyard, and parking lot solar – locally built and maintained. The worst are non-local, large scale commercial projects with out of area union workers. The County should have a local hiring policy and point scale advantage on bids for unions using local workers. Although, I am not sure if that is permissible.

We do not think the County has large parcels of land available or environmentally suitable for industrial-scale projects on private land. Our community has a 4-6 square mile area that might work - but on the whole we see no need for large scale projects.

The County needs an assessment of all parking lot space in both cities and unincorporated areas and what mega-wattage can be generated for local use – as an alternative to large-scale projects.

The County needs to work with (lobby) PUC and SCE to change the policies to in effect 'charge' solar energy users for their 'non-use' of the transmission grid – yet we need to keep the grid functioning. This could become a disincentive to 'go solar'.

The County has an opportunity for ample rooftop, backyard and parking lot solar and we should be taking advantage of this. It should be done by local firms using local residents. The County needs to focus on working with existing training programs at community colleges to hire locally.

We should not be using any undisturbed land.

The County should be willing to consider large area north of Lucerne Valley for larger scale project – especially as an alternative to the pending Solar One project in s. Lucerne Valley. It is the only space available in this region truly suitable for a large scale development.

Some small scale projects, 1-2 mega-watts, on and or for farms might be acceptable. A PPA may work in these instances. Many farms need to replace loss of agriculture due to on-going drought and groundwater adjudication. The County would need policies for these types of projects to offer property owners alternatives to agriculture and not allow the land sit idle and not create jobs and income. We have to respect property rights. These small parcels might not have to be 'zoned' specifically for solar.

6. What factors should be considered when determining the costs and benefits (i.e., social, environmental, and/or financial) from future renewable energy development to the following:

    a. County residents*: No locations considered for renewable energy use should adversely affect current or future land uses. Property values MUST be considered in immediate area. Some property owners land and their values have been adversely affected by solar projects next door. This information has been substantiated by the "Miller Report" which was submitted to the County. We have heard that the property has not even been marketable since the*

solar projects were built. The county must take this into consideration and quantify the impacts to land values.

b. County natural resources: *Disturbing previously undisturbed land with new construction has been problematic with water usage. For example a project that originally called for 50 acre feet of water for dust control actually required 70-80 acre feet of water (the developer was fined – or at least issued notices of violation by County Code Enforcement and the Mojave Desert Air Quality Mgt. District after complaints and action by local residents). This is not a good use of scarce water resources. This same project resulted in the loss of hundreds of Joshua trees and yuccas – along with many other desert plant species. The displaced rodents infested nearby homes and barns due to loss of habitat.*

c. County economy: The *Industrial scale projects did not use local workers. They were imported from all across the country. The only benefit was probably a motel bed tax but that went to cities – probably not the County and certainly not Lucerne Valley that has no motels.*

There is no property tax increase for these large scale projects under the current system. The only property improvement that may be assessed for increased property taxes would be for the fencing..

We have a problem when renewable energy projects are tying up land and they are not the best and highest value use of the land and do not bring tax benefits to the County. Many times this land would be better utilized as agricultural, commercial or industrial use - not solar. The County needs to be very careful in designating its renewable energy zones. Solar has no economic value to the County. We must understand and discuss the economic benefits of land use.

Commercial use of land for renewable energy should require developers to purchase materials locally to generate sales tax - this way the Measure I sales tax could be used to repair and maintain roads heavily damaged by large commercial construction trucks. We need to generate some form of sales tax from renewable energy products and materials for projects built in the County.

7. What funding mechanisms would you suggest to minimize the construction and operation costs of implementing renewable energy?

The county needs to implement AB 811. Plus we need access to available grant $.

The County should assist local non-profits with grant writing and share their knowledge and experience to help disadvantaged communities. We're not sure this is currently the case – but in the past the County Economic Development Department only wrote grants for its own use?

The County should work with the CPUC. The rate increases currently being requested by SCE are a disincentive to and conflict with current policy to encourage solar. CCA may or may not fix this problem. We do NOT want to lose incentives to build homebased solar.

8. The County is planning on hosting a workshop and a webinar to inform the public about the potential costs and benefits of the various options and tools available for facilitating community- or small-scale renewable energy facilities, and to obtain input on other costs or benefits that should be included in the analysis, or other tools that should be considered.

   What suggestions can you provide for the format, approach, and content of the County's workshop/webinar in order to ensure a successful information exchange regarding the needs, options, costs, and benefits to local electricity consumers?

Combined answer to 8 & 9.

In the past County staff/contractors/consultants put on dog and pony shows that were very adverse to the community view. Some of us literally took over a couple of meetings because consultants were ineffective.

In addition to or in lieu of workshops and webinars the County should provide 2 structured – yet informal discussions encompassing the two major desert regions of the County. The consultants and County should participate in a tour of the area and familiarize themselves with local issues and realities. The consultants need to see the good and bad of both a community and especially the effects of the built-out industrial-scale developments - and recognize the best options for future land use. At least one County official and one consultant staff member should attend a community group meeting. We can combine many community groups to conduct two meetings for consultants. LISTEN at the meeting and then come back with an informed discussion. Do not repeat the disastrous forums. Do not speak AT the community listen to the community.

The County is starting to listen to us and this format of interviewing is a sign of good intentions. We foresee some victory in phase 2 of SPARC through this process – but only if all the good words turn into a good Plan. We are willing to help but allow us to be heard on how we, the community, would like to see it done.

9. The County will also hold two in-person focus groups with stakeholders/decision makers associated with the renewable energy (e.g. conservation groups, community leaders, and renewable energy developers). What suggestions can you provide for the approach and content of these focus group sessions to ensure a successful information exchange regarding the role and potential opportunities for community- or small-scale renewable energy facilities in the County?

10. We have ___ minutes left: What haven't we asked you today about the costs and benefits of renewable energy development that you think would be valuable for the County to consider?

The County should consider doing the following:

- *Factor in future energy benefit of pending State building codes - requiring residential development to be energy 'self-sustaining'. This will lead to less need for large-scale renewable energy generation projects.*
- *Complete a Google Earth survey determine the amount of power that can be generated by parking lot generation projects in the County.*
- *Determine how much renewable energy (and energy in general) the County needs for its populations and land-uses only and not what can be built to subsidize other areas and communities in s. Calif. that should produce their own RE. That would decrease the need for more transmission lines.*
- *The County needs to work with BLM to resolve the conflicts with County/community objectives and plans – ie: the final DRECP – which Lucerne Valley protested.*
- *The County should work on a land exchange with BLM to privatize land and allow BLM to get parcels more suitable for its mission. For example the current BLM land along the North Slope in Lucerne Valley could be a job generator. It already has a rail spur and is ideal for industrial uses making products utilizing cement and limestone from nearby plants. The DRECP's designation of these BLM parcels as DFA's for renewable energy projects is not conducive to the community needs and wants and would be disastrous for the future economics of Lucerne Valley. Plus – these north slope oriented parcels don't have optimum solar insolation due to the adjacent peaks.*