

COLAB

San Luis Obispo County



The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

WEEKLY UPDATE
NOVEMBER 12 - 18, 2023

COLAB
San Luis Obispo County



**15TH ANNUAL
DINNER &
FUNDRAISER**

What's in store for 2024?

Save the Date

THURSDAY MARCH 21ST
5:30 PM

MADONNA INN EXPO CENTER

**THIS WEEK
SEE PAGE 4**

**NO BOS MEETING
CALIFORNIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
MEETING IN OAKLAND THIS WEEK
GIBSON TO ASSUME PRESIDENCY**

**LAFCO CANCELLED
NOT ENOUGH BUSINESS**

**LAST WEEK
SEE PAGE 5**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

**FEE INCREASES SET FOR NOVEMBER 28 HEARING
TOO MANY – DOES ANYONE CARE?**

PLAN YOUR 2024 TUESDAYS - BOS MEETING SCHEDULE

**FY 2024-25 PROJECTED \$20 MILLION BUDGET GAP
FUTURE YEARS ALSO PROBLEMATIC**

**FY 2024 BUDGET PRIORITIES & BALANCING
STRATEGIES + BETTER BUDGET ANALYTICS**

**NEW BOARD RULES OF PROCEDURE, PUBLIC COMMENT
MORE CONSTRAINED, FAKE CONFLICT OF INTEREST CODE,
AND GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES ITEM WITHDRAWN
BUT CHECK IT OUT - MORE RESTRICTIVE AND MORE POWER TO THE CHAIR**

**BOB JONES BIKE PATH BETWEEN ROCK AND A
HARD PLACE - CONDEMN PRIVATE PROPERTY FOR
A LINEAR HOMELESS CAMP?**

**SUPERVISOR ACTION REQUESTS
NONE THIS WEEK**

COMMUNITY CHOICE ENERGY OPERATIONS BOARD

**\$715 MILLION POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT
WITH NEW MEXICO WINDFARMS APPROVED
SHIPPING OUR MONEY AND JOBS OUT OF STATE**

SLO COUNTY WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

**WASTE BOARD CONSIDERS READMISSION OF THE
COUNTY
COUNTY WILL HAVE ONLY ONE REP FOR ENTIRE
UNINCORPORATED AREA**

**EMERGENT ISSUES
SEE PAGE 32**

**DISPUTES OVER SAFETY, COST SWIRL A YEAR
AFTER CALIFORNIA OK'D PLAN TO KEEP LAST
NUKE PLANT RUNNING**

**THE DAILY CHART: THE DEBT BOMB
STARTING TO GO OFF?**

**COLAB IN DEPTH
SEE PAGE 37**

THE FRAGILITY OF CIVILIZATION
Strategies for surviving the eruption
BY MIKE WATSON

FROM THE BAY TO THE SEA

BY KATYA SEDGWICK

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 (Not Scheduled)

November 13-16, 2023 is the annual California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Meeting in Oakland. It is expected that Bruce Gibson will be sworn in as the Association's next President.



ANNUAL BANQUET/INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

Join us as we celebrate the installation of our 2024 CSAC Officers and enjoy dinner and networking.

The meeting will be held at the Oakland Marriott City Center. Don't venture out after dark.

At least the keynote speaker will be great:

Opening Session



Keynote Speaker: The Honourable Willie Brown, Former Mayor & Retired Speaker

Willie Brown is one of the most recognizable and respected figures in California politics. Brown was elected to the California State Assembly in 1964, and he would remain there to represent San Francisco until 1995. He was the first African American to serve as Speaker of the California State Assembly and longest-serving Speaker in California history.

Brown spent the last eight years of his political career as San Francisco Mayor from 1996 until 2004, overseeing the city's rapid expansion in the "dot-com" era.

Today he leads The Willie L. Brown, Jr. Institute on Politics and Public Service, an independent, non-profit organization providing a forum for non-partisan education, debate and discussion of public policy issues to expand the expertise available to stakeholders from the political, academic, business and scientific communities.

If they do venture out after dark, they can hit Eli's Mile High Club after the sessions.



Oakland Debutantes frequent Eli's.



Local Agency Formation Commission of Thursday, November 16, 2023 (Cancelled)

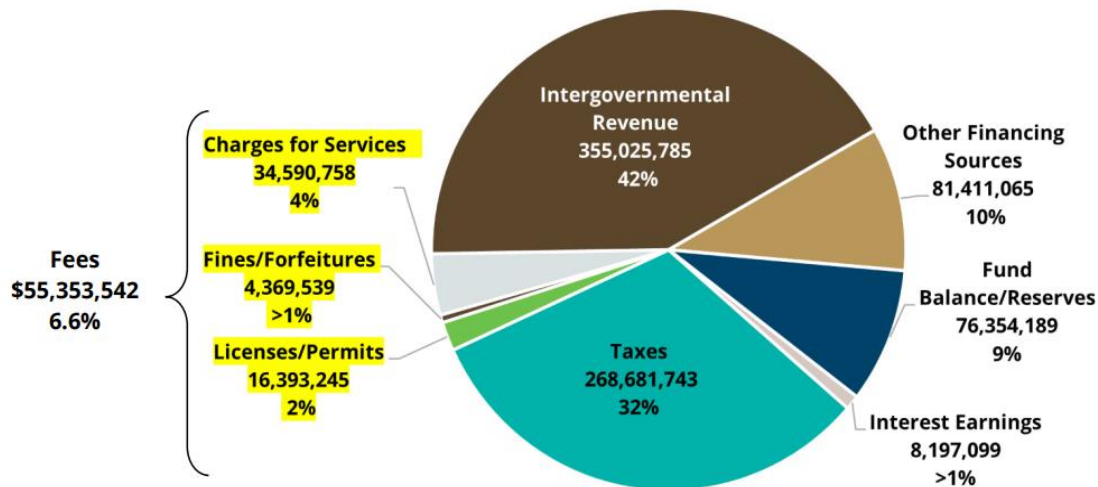
LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, November 7, 2023 (Completed)

Item 1 - Introduction of an ordinance implementing the County Fee Schedule "A" for Calendar Year 2024 and Fee Schedule "B" for Fiscal Year 2024-25. The hearing was set without comment or complaint except by COLAB. If no one shows up on November 28, 2023 for the hearing, Supervisor Gibson will say, "See, no one is bothered by the fees. They are fine with them."

Note that last week, we presented table displaying details of the fee increases. To save space these are omitted here but will be brought back for the November 28, 2023 hearing.

Background: This is early warning for the final hearing, which is set for Tuesday, November 28, 2023. Comments may be received now and at the hearing. Various fees constitute 6.6% of the overall government funds Budget.



Many fees are rising, and there are a number of new fees. The accession of the leftist Board majority last January gives the staff confidence that fees can be raised without any trouble. For example, no one is going to tie pay raises to results such as doing things at less cost, working faster, or shortening permit review times.

The doctrine of cheaper, faster, better doesn't get a lot of support in government.

Listed below are the Department fees, which primarily impact business, land development, agriculture, construction, and related matters.

Item 2 - Request to approve the Board of Supervisors Meeting Calendar for 2024. Please retain and mark your calendars accordingly. The Board loves participation.

Save the calendar on the next page:

2024 Board of Supervisors Meeting Calendar

January							February							March							April						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3						1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30				
														31													

May							June							July							August						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4						1		1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	31
							30																				

September							October							November							December						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5						1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30						27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31	1	2	3	4
																					5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Board Meetings	Swearing in Meeting	Board Break	CSAC Annual Conference
Special Redistricting Eve Mtg	Budget Hearings	Holidays	BOS Chambers AV Work
Study session		Board Break/AV Chamber work	

It appears that there will be major work on the Board’s chambers in the summer of 2024 (the purple dates).

Added Item 23 - Consideration of a report regarding the County’s Fiscal Year 2024-25 and Multi-Year financial forecast. The Board heard the presentation and then thanked the staff for their hard work. The Board also backed the “hiring chill” (a deliberate slowdown in recruitment filling of vacancies). It is not known how this will impact service levels or how in it interfaces with the already existing high vacancy rate of around 9%.

The item was taken out of order because the information impacted **Item 17** below. **Item 23** was carried over from last week when the Board ran out of time.

The item presented a detailed and well documented comprehensive Budget forecast for FY 2024-25 and a projection for the two subsequent fiscal years, FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27. Also presented was a general strategy for closing the impending gaps. The strategy prioritizes public safety. The summary states in part:

Overall, the County’s budget continues to be in an increasingly precarious position, due to its projected rate of spending outpacing its revenues. Given this, continued compliance with the Board-adopted Budget Goals and Policies and Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches will be important to addressing expected budget gaps to meet our legal requirements to adopt balanced budget each year and assuring the ongoing fiscal health of the County. Fortunately, the County has historically taken a conservative approach to budgeting, routinely budgeting a contingency, and maintaining adequate reserve levels. These practices will serve the County well in the coming years.

The future year projections are carefully constructed and present alternative scenarios about deficits that could occur based on salary increases, national and state economic impacts (recession), and adding more staff.

One Year Projection:

All Government Funds - excludes the various utilities and dependent special districts that are theoretically self-supporting

Revenues:

Financing Source Category	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Forecast	\$ Diff	% Diff
Fund Balance Available (FBA)	\$50,786,248	\$42,508,752	-\$8,277,497	-16.30%
Non-Departmental Revenue	\$274,603,870	\$287,383,801	\$12,779,931	4.65%
Departmental Revenue	\$374,526,742	\$379,796,860	\$5,270,118	1.41%
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$699,916,860	\$709,689,413	\$9,772,553	1.40%
Cancelled Reserves	\$13,801,521	\$1,059,126	-\$12,742,395	-92.33%
Total Financing Sources	\$713,718,381	\$710,748,539	-\$2,969,843	-0.42%

Expenditures:

Expenditure Category	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Forecast	\$ Diff	% Diff
Salaries and Benefits	\$386,506,118	\$396,289,499	\$9,783,381	2.53%
Non-Salaries	\$283,095,438	\$294,828,317	\$11,732,879	4.14%
Contingencies	\$33,499,242	\$34,555,891	\$1,056,649	3.15%
<i>Subtotal</i>	\$703,100,798	\$725,673,707	\$22,572,909	3.21%
New Reserves	\$10,617,583	\$5,212,398	-\$5,405,185	-50.91%
Total Expenditures	\$713,718,381	\$730,886,105	\$17,167,724	2.41%

Gap:

Per the assumptions noted above, the forecasted budget for the General Fund for FY 2024-25 is:

\$710,748,539	Total financing sources (revenues)
\$730,886,105	Total financing uses (expenditures)
(\$20,137,566)	Total forecast surplus/(gap)

Non-Departmental Revenues: These revenues are not restricted to specific purposes. The Board has the most discretion over their use. Accordingly, they largely support public safety; support-departments such as County Council, CAO, Human Resources, Auditor Controller, etc.; and local matches on State and Federal programs.

The table below outlines the assumptions for the FY 2024-25 forecast for non-departmental revenue:

Revenue	2021-22 Actual	2022-223 Actual	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Forecast	\$ Diff: 23-24 Bud & 24-25 Forecast	% Diff: 23-24 Bud & 24-25 Forecast
Secured Prop Tax	\$137,463,005	\$147,139,887	\$153,906,156	\$161,663,741	\$7,757,585	5.0%
Unitary Tax	\$4,920,304	\$4,523,249	\$4,425,948	\$4,023,479	-\$402,469	-9.1%
Supplemental Prop Tax	\$3,298,724	\$4,809,193	\$2,345,990	\$4,001,248	\$1,655,258	70.6%
Prop Tax in lieu of VLF	\$42,715,055	\$45,635,993	\$47,461,433	\$50,420,090	\$2,958,657	6.2%
Prop Transfer Tax	\$4,456,223	\$3,165,487	\$4,080,000	\$3,544,500	-\$535,500	-13.1%
Sales Tax	\$16,148,516	\$15,408,856	\$16,500,000	\$16,500,000	\$0	0.0%
TOT	\$17,151,646	\$16,547,954	\$18,375,000	\$17,416,211	-\$958,789	-5.2%
All Other	\$25,267,209	\$43,774,131	\$27,509,343	\$29,814,532	\$2,305,189	8.4%
Total (Non-Dept. Rev.)	\$251,420,682	\$281,004,749	\$274,603,870	\$287,383,801	\$12,779,931	4.7%

The 3-Year Projection: As noted at the beginning of this section, the gap amounts depend on the assumptions about staffing levels, raises, and the economy.

Baseline

As noted, as a baseline for this multi-year forecast, revenues and expenses from the detailed financial forecast already presented to your Board were projected into two additional years using the assumptions already described. Next year's detailed forecast suggests a deficit of approximately \$20.1 million, with a range that reflects existing uncertainties. Assuming a Status Quo General Fund (GF) budget in subsequent years, the GF will continue a deficit that will continue throughout FY 2026-27 without reducing expenditures.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$730,886,105	\$748,367,648	\$766,426,860
Surplus/Deficit	-\$20,137,566	-\$15,274,402	-\$10,218,587

Annual Salary Increases of 1%

Annual salary increases of 1% result in a GF budget that is more negative (deficit) than the baseline beginning in FY 2025-26, continuing to be negative (deficit) in FY 2026-27. It is worth noting that because of the manner in which salary increases currently being negotiated were handled in the Baseline forecast, no additional increases were included for FY 2024-25. Instead, the 1% increase was assumed to be added starting in FY 2025-26.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$730,886,105	\$752,372,946	\$769,351,253
Surplus/Deficit	-\$20,137,566	-\$19,279,700	-\$13,142,980

Annual CPI (4.0%) Salary Increases

Increasing salaries on an annual basis at a rate equivalent to the calculated CPI (4.0%) results in a negative budget (budget gap) throughout the multi-year forecast horizon. Assuming the FY 2024-25 deficit (budget gap) is closed, FY 2025-26 would continue a significant deficit of approximately \$31.3 million and \$43.3 million in FY 2026-27. The same assumptions applied in the 1% Annual Salary increase scenario regarding timing of increases was applied to this scenario as well. Increasing salaries without reducing expenses will not be feasible.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$730,886,105	\$764,388,840	\$799,459,802
Surplus/Deficit	-\$20,137,566	-\$31,295,594	-\$43,251,529

Adding Positions

As noted in the Assumptions section, the County has added an average of 22 GF positions over the past 5 years. As shown below, the GF budget remains in negative territory throughout FY 2026-27 should positions be added at this rate per year beginning in FY 2024-25.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$734,177,598	\$751,659,140	\$791,593,625
Surplus/Deficit	-\$23,429,059	-\$18,565,895	-\$13,510,080

Adding Positions

As noted in the Assumptions section, the County has added an average of 22 GF positions over the past 5 years. As shown below, the GF budget remains in negative territory throughout FY 2026-27 should positions be added at this rate per year beginning in FY 2024-25.

	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27
Revenues	\$710,748,539	\$733,093,246	\$756,208,273
Expense	\$734,177,598	\$751,659,140	\$791,593,625
Surplus/Deficit	-\$23,429,059	-\$18,565,895	-\$13,510,080

Since these factors do not occur in isolation, various combinations could result in a more severe gap. Other than the retention of Diablo, the report does not speculate on the potential of generating additional revenue though major economic development, such as:

- **Adding units to Diablo and replacing the existing units.**
- **Offshore wind**
- **Development of 5 Star destination resorts - Including, God forbid, the Lone Madrone Ritz Carlton tucked in the valley up behind the traffic circle.**
- **Oil development**
- **Para mutual horse racing - Like Keeneland in Kentucky**
- **Major Google site - they are looking to site a new 1.5 million sq. ft. facility in Ca.**

Item 17 - Review of the FY 2024-25 Budget Goals and Policies, Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches, and Board Priorities, and provide direction to staff as necessary, including authorizing the County Administrative Officer to implement any mid-year budget balancing strategies, including but not limited to a ‘hiring chill.’ The Board paid attention and conducted a lively discussion. The priorities were slightly tweaked to give economic development and housing a little more pre-eminence.

Background: Each year the Board reviews its overall Budget policies and priorities in November. This allows the CAO to issue budget directions for the preparation of the subsequent year Budget (in this case FY 2024-25) and for the Departments to prepare their requests. The CAO then reviews the requests and submits recommendations in May for June adoption.

These current adopted priorities are depicted in the graphic below:



Long term budget balancing strategies:

1. Priority Driven- One of the starting points of the budget process is to identify Board priorities so staff can craft budget proposals that align with these priorities. The Board's current priorities are as follows (in order):
 - a. Ongoing Priorities: Meet legal mandates and debt service requirements, and Public Safety, defined as:
 1. Sheriff-Coroner (Fund Center 136)
 2. District Attorney (Fund Center 13201)
 3. Probation (Fund Center 139)
 4. County Fire (Fund Center 140)
 - b. First Tier Priorities specific to FY 2024-25:
 - i. Homelessness
FY 2024-25 Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches
 - ii. Behavioral Health
 - iii. Housing
 - c. Second Tier Priorities specific to FY 2024-25:
 - i. Storm Recovery
 - ii. Economic Development
 - iii. Water Resiliency
 - iv. Organizational Effectiveness

We expect these to remain unchanged.

Significantly, the new CAO is recommending some welcome upgrades to the process and document.

Building a Better Budget	
Line of Effort	Description
Phase 1	
Budget savings incentive	Initiate a budget savings incentive program for departmental savings
Build in "known" labor costs in budget	Build in known or estimated labor increases for the year
Build in vacancy rate	Build in a historical average of vacancy rate savings
Status Quo definition	Better define "status quo" budgeting
Overhead/Cost plan review	Full review impact of how the County budgets for overhead costs, including the 10-year rolling average
Phase 2	
Budget enhancements with SAP Replacement	Continue to work with the project team for the replacement of the County's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Financial Management System (SAP), to enhance the County's budget and forecasting capabilities.
Implement real program-based budgeting /performance-based budgeting	Improve ability to budget at program level, including revenue sources for positions

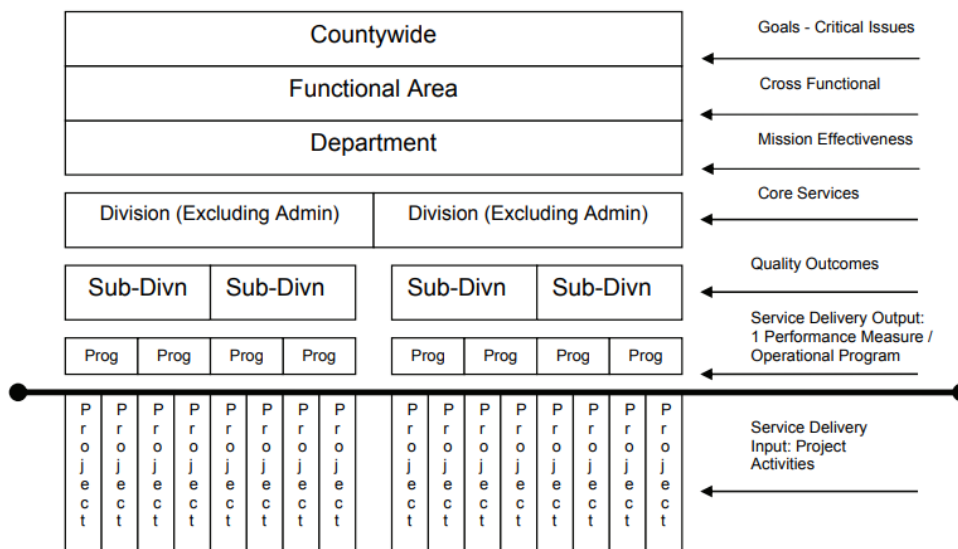
These are very positive and should be backed strongly by the Board of Supervisors.

They will, when fully implemented, provide management and the Board with a much stronger ability to control and implement policy. They will facilitate much more refined and sharp financial control and will enable the County to increase productivity.

Given the initiatives listed above, the County could adopt a true performance-based budgeting system, such as is conceptually displayed below.

Levels of Performance Reporting

The cascading levels of performance measures in County departments include: Countywide, Functional Area, Program Cost Center, and Individual Measures. These are illustrated in the following chart and each are then explained, in turn.



Item 20 Withdrawn - Request to adopt amendments to the Board of Supervisors Rules of Procedures and consider the Election of Officers selection outlined in the Rules of Procedure and provide direction as deemed necessary. For whatever reason, the item was withdrawn. The notice stated:

Item #20 - Request to adopt amendments to the Board of Supervisors Rules of Procedures and consider the Election of Officers selection outlined in the Rules of Procedure and provide direction as deemed necessary. This item is being withdrawn and moved to a later date.

The Board was silent on the cause for the withdrawal.

Notwithstanding the withdrawal of the item from the agenda, outlined below are some of the significant amended and new features. These are extensive and bear close examination by the public. It is not certain when these provisions will reappear on the agenda.

The write-up stated in part:

The item promulgated a new set Board Rules of Procedures which include:

The notable changes to existing Rules of Procedures for your consideration, include:

- *Section III - Public Comment was expanded to add and clarify language related to specifying public behavior that is prohibited. The Board's previously adopted Code of Civility is referenced and included as an appendix.*
- *Section IV - Procedure was expanded to include information regarding officers (Section B(1-3)), clarification of the parliamentary authority (Section C(1-9)), addition of specific language related to reconsideration actions, and reference to conflict of interest language which is included in an appendix. Additionally, governance principles are referenced and also included in an appendix.*
- *Section V - Committee is amended to include language which recommends, when feasible, that Board members serving on commissions and boards, bring items being considered by those bodies to the Board of Supervisors when those items impact the County of San Luis Obispo and are within the authority of the Board of Supervisors.*
- *Appendix A, Code of Civility has been added to the Rules of Procedures. This previously adopted code is intended to emphasize order in the Board's discourse with the public, staff, and each other.*
- *Appendix B, Conflict of Interest has been added to the Rules of Procedures. The section has been clarified and amended by County Counsel.*
- *Appendix C, Governance Principles has been added to the Rules of Procedures. This is a new section to the Rules of the Procedures and includes:*

o Norms for Positive Governance Culture

o Roles and Responsibilities, including language stating that Board members represent the Board of Supervisors' official positions in all public meetings, unless expressing personal views requiring the public to be so advised.

The intent of these governance principles is to provide to the Board examples of best practices throughout the state and when followed by the Board can directly lead to high levels of sustainable organizational performance.

Election of Officers

The staff that prepared the item left the current district rotation system intact; however, they pointed out that the Board has discretion to do otherwise.

Election of Officers of the Board

The current Rules of Procedures has not been amended (Section IV(B)(4)), -. However, it may be amended based upon the following discussion and the Board action that may result.

And

Throughout the state and even in San Luis Obispo County, it is not unheard of to break the numerical rotation when selecting the chair. Statewide, this has been done for a variety of reasons such as the newness of a board member, the death of a board member, and an ongoing crisis to name a few examples.

Supervisor Arnold is next up in the normal rotation. There has been some speculation that Supervisor Gibson might prefer someone else.

Some key changes:

Note that ~~deletions~~ have a line through them and red is new text.

PUBLIC COMMENT

This section contains new restrictions on the form and content of public comment. These include provisions for the Board to examine the public, limitations on public demonstrations, prohibition on use of "electronic devices," whatever that means. Does this prohibit cell phones, cameras, video recording, etc.? Hand held signs are prohibited.

~~D.E.~~ **Comments should be clear and brief and maintain a courteous and polite demeanor. Personal attacks, abusive language and other disruptive behavior must be avoided.** No person will be permitted to make slanderous or profane remarks against any individual. **The Board as a whole is committed to the respectful exchange of ideas. (Please see appendix A. Code of Civility)**

F. Board members may respond briefly to statements made or questions posed. They may ask questions for clarification, make a referral to staff for factual information or request staff to report back to the Board at a later meeting. The Board may take action to direct staff to place a matter of business on a future agenda.

G. Additional comments and questions from those unable to attend may be submitted in writing, ideally prior to the Board meeting, by emailing Boardofsups@co.slo.ca.us

H. Actions Prohibited during Board of Supervisors' Meetings:

1. Applause or vocal expression of support or opposition. All demonstrations, including cheering, yelling, whistling, hand clapping, and foot stamping are prohibited.
2. Use of electronic devices, unless they are in silent mode are prohibited.
3. Handheld signs in the Legislative Chambers are prohibited.
4. Possession of weapons, illegal substances, or dangerous materials are prohibited.
5. The Chairperson will cause to be removed any person who disrupts, disturbs, impedes, or renders infeasible the orderly conduct of a meeting of the Board of Supervisors. The Chairperson may recess the meeting to allow the group or groups of persons willfully interrupting the meeting to leave the meeting or be removed from the meeting.

VOTING PROCEDURES

6. Any Board member who votes in the majority on a question, as well as any Board member who was absent, is eligible to make a motion to reconsider. A motion to reconsider shall be in order during the meeting at which the action to be reconsidered took place. In all other cases, motions for reconsideration must be placed on a future agenda for action. A motion to reconsider shall require a majority vote. A motion to reconsider, if lost, shall not be renewed nor shall any subject be reconsidered a second time within twelve (12) months except by a four-fifths (4/5) vote of the Board. A motion to reconsider is not in order if action has been taken which cannot be changed.

If the old Board majority regains the Board at some point, this one could lock out policy changes for a year.

NEW CODE OF CIVILITY:

This one seeks to paper over real disagreements with and challenges to the government. It also assumes that the government is acting in the peoples' best interests. It is not legal to ban anger, disappointment, and disgust. The Board of Supervisors should not emulate the Imperial Byzantine Court of the Emperor Justinian, where the Emperor and court sat behind a veil. Nor should it be Presidium of the Chinese Communist Party, immune from hard criticism. It is not even a State Senate Committee. It is a local body subject to public interaction, including criticism of individual members.

Appendix A Code of Civility

CODE OF CIVILITY

A healthy democracy respects the people's right to debate issues with passion. A healthy democracy not only tolerates disagreement but welcomes it in order to refine ideas and create policies that benefit the greater good.

The deterioration of civility across the country and within our community poses a threat to our democracy and our civic well-being. This deterioration:

- Compromises the integrity of a healthy, representative democracy.
- Closes the door on depth of thought, reducing complex problems to harmful oversimplification.
- Deters potential leaders from running for office or serving in government.
- Poisons the civic well and discourages citizens from engaging on pressing community issues.
- Casts the spotlight on poor behavior rather than shining a light on possible solutions.
- Sets a poor example for our children.

We have crafted this Code of Civility as a promise to each other, and to the people and institutions we serve, that we will always strive to conduct our debates - whether in person, online, or in written communication - in ways that allow for the widest range of opinions on ideas and policies, yet also respect the dignity, integrity, and rights of those with whom we might disagree. With our individual and collective commitment to this code, we welcome our elected colleagues, the press, and the public to hold us accountable.

In our deliberations we pledge to:

- Listen First: We will make an honest effort to understand views and reasoning of others by listening to understand, not listening to find fault, allowing thoughtful discussion to lead to the best possible outcomes.
- Respect Different Opinions: We will invite and consider different perspectives, allowing space for ideas to be expressed, opposed, and clarified in a constructive manner.
- Be Courteous: We will treat all colleagues, staff, and members of the public in a professional and courteous manner whether in person, online, or in written communication, especially when we disagree.
- Disagree Constructively: We strive to advance solutions to community issues; when faced with disagreement, we do more than simply share our concerns with differing positions, we work to propose a course of action of mutual benefit.
- Debate the Policy Not the Person: We will focus on the issues, and not personalize debate or use other tactics that divert attention from the issue.

NEW CONFLICT OF INTEREST CODE (Please see the next page)

Appendix B – Conflict of Interest

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

To assure their independence and impartiality on behalf of the common good and compliance with conflict of interest laws, all County officials shall use their best efforts to refrain from creating an appearance of impropriety in their actions and decisions. No County official shall engage in any business, transaction or activity, or have a financial interest, which is in conflict with the proper discharge of official duties, which would tend to impair independence of judgment or action in the performance of official duties, which creates the appearance of such conflict, or which otherwise violates applicable County policies or state or federal law.

Disclosure of Campaign Contributions. Pursuant to Government Code section 84308, members of the Board of Supervisors are disqualified and not able to participate in any agenda item involving contracts (other than competitively bid, labor, or personal employment contracts), franchises, discretionary land use permits and other entitlements if the Board member received more than \$250 in campaign contributions from the applicant or contractor, an agent of the applicant or contractor, or any financially interested participant who actively supports or opposes the County's decision on the agenda item since January 1, 2023.

Members of the Board of Supervisors who have received, and applicants, contractors or their agents who have made, campaign contributions totaling more than \$250 to a Board member since January 1, 2023, are required to disclose that fact for the official record of the subject proceeding.

Disclosures must include the amount of the campaign contribution and identify the recipient Board member and may be made either in writing to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors prior to the subject hearing or by verbal disclosure at the time of the hearing.

Of course contributions of tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars by government employee labor unions are exempted by state law. This places business, agricultural, and fiscal restraint advocates at a huge disadvantage. Will the Supervisors, if they really support prohibition of conflict of interest, ban receding such contributions? After all, they vote on raises and benefits of those very employees who, in turn, materially support them. Gibson received all his big corporate water money before the December 31, 2022 deadline.

NEW GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

This one appears to have been copied from some government professionals' advocacy organization text on how city managers and county administrators can maintain good relations with their employers. It misses the point entirely. First of all, the Supervisors represent the people, who are sovereign. They temporarily preside over specific functions which are delegated to them by law. The Appendix C below is a huge slap in the face to the people. In America the traditional primary job of government is to protect the people from the government.

From the standpoint of policy and the proposed Governance Principles, the County is frozen in the obsolete (though trendy) policy paradigms of "sustainability" and "consumption." It is unlikely that the staff and Board (given the text of the proposed "Governance Appendix") have any idea about this. They are like fish [in] out of water. They do not know that there are other realms without water. ←

First and foremost, the County officially conceives of itself as a provider of consumptive societal goods, which it characterizes as "needs and desires of the community." A problem is that as utilitarian goals, they focus the organization on expanding the services and products as its highest value and reason for existence. This misses the ultimate and most important guiding

purpose. As we have pointed out repeatedly, the unique and animating historic genius of the American Constitutional system was and is that its key purpose is to protect people from their government. The Constitution and its derivative state and local laws recognize that on a practical level, government exists to insure freedom, safety of persons and property, legal stability, public order, and the general welfare in society. Its very distinctive character is that it recognizes that governments themselves have always been and always will be the greatest threat to those very principles.

Accordingly, the County would do well to adopt the statement below as its overarching purpose and organizational value, against which substantive policy and organizational values are measured:

PROTECT LIBERTY, PERSONAL SECURITY, PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND FREEDOM WHILE PROMOTING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY, STRONG FAMILIES, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

The SLO County proposal ignores this entirely.

Appendix C Governance:

Governance Principles

Definition:

The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors (Board) is the governing body for the County of San Luis Obispo. Governance is the act of transforming the needs and desires of the community into policies that direct the organization. At its core, the Board sets direction related to policy, budget and finance, human resources, collective bargaining, facilities, and advocacy.

Whether in Board Chambers or out in the community, Board members serve as the stewards of the County, a regional government that provides countywide services to all residents; municipal services to residents in the unincorporated areas; and State and Federal services as a political subdivision of the State.

Utilizing effective governance practices, private citizens, once elected to the Board of Supervisors, work to keep the organization's efforts focused on its mission, values and strategic goals. The community elects Board members to set and monitor the direction of the County with the County Administrator, who translates this direction into action. The Board does not administer the County, but rather governs it.

Governance Principles:

The Board employs various principles in order to govern as a team, strategically focused and mission driven. They are as follows:

- Strategic Approach: The Board establishes and follows a long-term view on strategy and performance, focusing on sustainable success.
- Align Goals with Resources: As a fundamental principle, the Board allocates adequate resources when establishing new goals and activities. The Board does not ask staff to deliver goals without the necessary resources unless there is an acknowledgement and acceptance that additional priorities often require a delay or deletion of current priorities. The Board recognizes that the desire to create or adapt to new demands requires reprioritization of existing strategies, goals, and objectives.
- Hold the organization accountable through mutually agreed upon standards: With roles and relationships defined, the Board governs in a transparent, open, and collaborative environment.
- Commit to continuous learning and improvement: encourage and support staff efforts to improve process, streamline service delivery, and enhance customer quality. Support the Board and staff to seek leadership positions at regional, state, and national levels.

- Communicate information about County policies, priorities, fiscal condition and progress on goals. Because the Board functions as a body, i.e., acting on a majority vote, it is important that members represent the Board of Supervisors' official position, or if expressing personal views, the public is so advised.
- Represent the needs of individual districts as well as the needs of the county as a whole.
- Support, honor, affirm and celebrate the value of those who work for San Luis Obispo County.
- The Board models the civic behavior that the Board expects the employees of the County to exhibit.

The Primary role of the Board Chairperson is to:

- The Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors directs the efficient and transparent operation of the Board.
- In consultation with the County Administrator, the Board Chairperson develops and approves Board meeting agendas and serves as a sounding board for the County Administrator on matters of significant concern.
- With agreed upon procedures, the Board Chairperson conducts Board meetings consistent with the law and the principle of transparency, ensuring the Board, staff and public understand the process and actions to be taken, and that adequate and equitable public input is received prior to Board discussion and deliberation.
- With the ability to communicate the position of the Board, the Board Chairperson generally serves as spokesperson for the County in:
 - Press releases and media events
 - Public events
 - Correspondence
 - Exceptions: District-specific events or areas of expertise
 - Able to articulate Board actions and policies, and when discussing Board actions in public, clarifies when speaking on behalf of the Board vs. own opinion.

The primary role of the Board members is to:

- Generally, keeps colleagues informed of activities, especially related to Board assignments, constituent issues and concerns of which they are involved that have a countywide impact via the Board Member Comments and Reports section of the Board meeting.
- While addressing issues the Board, considers the concerns of all, especially on countywide policy issues.
- Informs appropriate Supervisor when assisting constituents outside their district.

- Initiatives brought forward by individual Board members for Board consideration should first be heard under the Board Member Comments and Reports on Meetings section of the Board meeting, and then as necessary, the item will be scheduled for a subsequent agenda. Additionally, during this portion of the agenda, any Board member may raise for consideration legislative, ballot measure, judicial system (including amicus participation) or other proposals of statewide, national, and international interest that are beyond the scope of the County's legislative platform.
- Individual Board members are encouraged to ask questions concerning items on the agenda prior to the meeting with the County Administrator and/or by contacting the department head in advance.

The primary role of the County Administrator is to:

- Support and implement the direction, policy and strategic goals adopted by the Board.
- Hire and manage the department heads (with the exception of elected officials, the County Counsel, and the Director of Human Resources).
- Promote collaboration across the organization and administer the county in an effective and equitable way.
- Establish and maintain a positive organizational culture.

Desired End State:

Effective governance requires a broad, systemic view of the County, and an approach to all Board responsibilities with a focus on achieving the strategic outcomes the Board has set and how to effect policy change as a team rather than an individual. Working toward a common goal as independently elected individuals requires patience, understanding, respect and most importantly, common courtesy. While not an exhaustive list of all elements of governance, the items listed within represent the best practices throughout the state and when followed can directly lead to high levels of sustainable organizational performance.

Item 21 - Request to receive direction from the Board on options to amend the scope or phasing of the Bob Jones Pathway Gap Closure Project to continue progress in order to meet the grant funding timeline for the Bob Jones Pathway from the Octagon Barn to Ontario Road Project, Avila. The project and County are stuck between a rock and a hard place. The Board received the presentations on several workarounds that would avoid the Bunnell property condemnation. A problem is that the State will have to agree to these.

Supervisor Arnold presented her case against condemnation for recreation projects, noting that the prior Board had agreed to no condemnations for recreation projects.

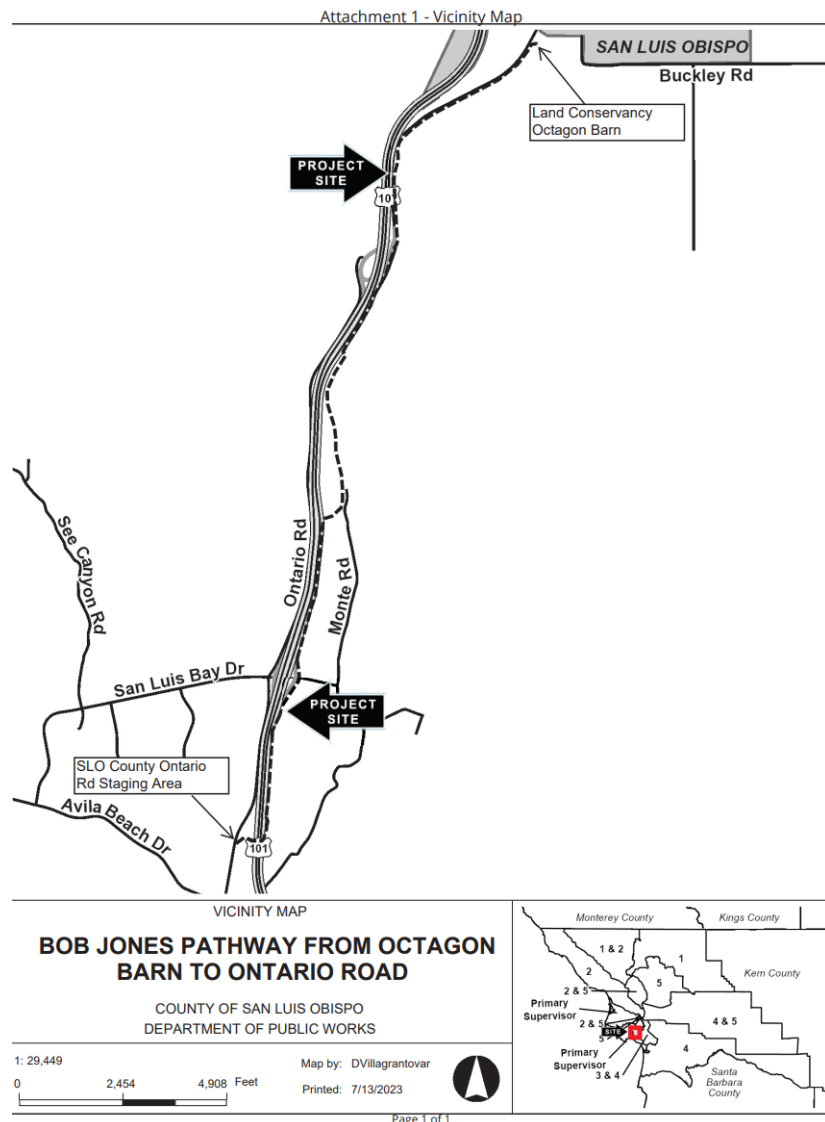
Ultimately the Board voted 4/0 to authorized staff to attempt to work with State and report back. Supervisor Peschong recused himself, as he has received a campaign contribution from Bunnell.

Background: *To date, Project development has been delayed due to right of way issues, specifically at the Bunnell property. An easement through the Bunnell property is necessary to complete the Project, and the Project team has continued to work with the property owner in the hope of reaching an agreement. However, the property owner has indicated that they will not grant an easement for the Project. In addition, permission for access needed to complete design*

work on this segment of the pathway has not been granted. Without an easement agreement with this property owner, the Project, as currently planned, will not be able to meet the ATP grant funding timelines to be ready for construction by February 2025 and is at risk of losing the \$18.25 million in grant funds.

There is one property owner who will not sell the needed right of way for one segment. Supervisor Arnold is opposed to government condemnation of private property for recreation purposes. A unanimous vote is required to condemn.

This item discusses several alternatives, including rescoping the project (which increases the costs) and would require approval of the State. The alternative is messy and complicated. The project has wide support as a tourist generating facility and by local bike advocates.



The bike advocates have a disproportionate impact on County policy, as Gibson is apparently somewhat of a bike enthusiast. Most people think they are a pain in the ass. Just look at the new concrete traffic lane dividers and green painted lanes all over the City of SLO. Try Vineyard Drive out in Adelaide some Saturday morning when they are out in packs hogging the blind curves.



Item 22 - Any Supervisor may ask a question for clarification, make an announcement, or report briefly on his or her activities. In addition, Supervisors may request staff to report back to the Board at a subsequent meeting concerning any matter or may request that staff place a matter of business on a future agenda. Any request to place a matter of business for consideration on a future agenda requires the majority vote of the Board. This is now a standing item at the end of each Board Meeting. There were no new requests this week.

Central Coast Community Energy Authority (3CE) Operations Board Meeting of Wednesday, November 8, 2023 (Completed)

Item 8 - Approve and authorize the CEO to execute a Power Purchase Agreement (“PPA”) with SunZia Wind Power Co, LLC, in a form substantially similar to the attached, as well as any necessary ancillary documents, including potential replacement PPA(s) with the same terms and conditions as the attached except for any necessary administrative changes, with a power delivery term of 15 years starting with an expected Commercial Operation Date of September 30, 2026, in an amount not to exceed \$715,000,000. For the first time ever some of the Operations Board members had some hard questions.

1. Rebecca Campbell, San Luis Obispo County Deputy CEO - SLO County: Reported COLABS’ question to the SLO Board of Supervisors last week. *Aren’t we importing from out of state with this project and thereby exporting our money and jobs?*

The 3CE staff responded with an incomprehensible non- answer. *We need more wind in our portfolio and the Board has authorized us to procure outside energy. We also get energy form within the state.*

Relatedly: A Citizen from Santa Cruz, a Mrs. Deshero, noted that 3CE has promised millions of dollars in community economic benefit. How does this contract comport with that promise?

Again the 3CE staff responded with mumbo jumbo about Board policy and wind energy.

This did not answer the question.

Deshero also said, “I notice you mentioned RECs (renewable energy credits) from this project? Is it real energy or RECs.”

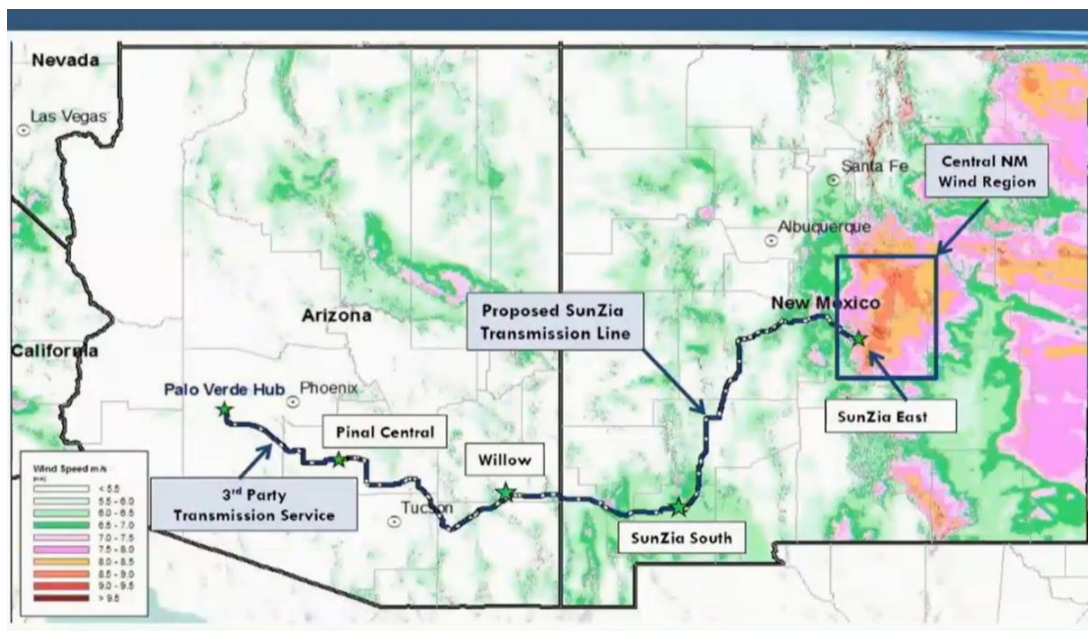
The Executive Director answered: *These are Class I RECS, which are accepted by all California regulators as valid.*

The was no answer to the question whatsoever.

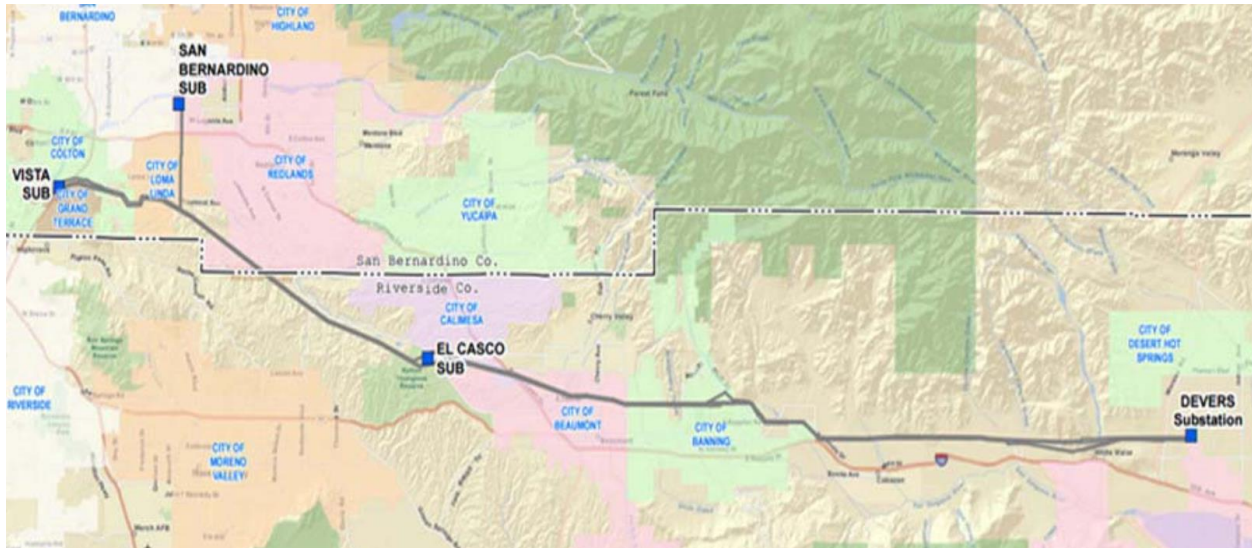
2. Mona Miyasato, Santa Barbara County CEO: Asked a number of questions about the power line connection to Arizona, which is a component of the project, versus how the energy gets from Arizona to California. In other words, 3CE shows how the energy gets from New Mexico to central Arizona but not how it gets from central Arizona to California.

The 3CE staff stated that the line terminated at “the Palo Verde Hub in Arizona where there is a “pseudo connection” to a “third party transmission line to California that enters the state at the “Devers transmission station.”

The problem is SCE’s map shows that the Devers transmission project is well west of the Arizona Boarder, next to the City of Desert Hot Springs. 3CE never explained how the power would get from central Arizona to Devers.



SunZia right of way preparation in New Mexico – 3CE didn’t tell the Operations Board about the Tribal opposition.



In California

Miyasato also had questions about “what happens if the transmission line in Arizona, which is not yet fully built, is not completed on time? Several others also chimed in on this issue, citing the recent circumstances where the 3CE had to renegotiate revised delayed contracts that were more costly contracts with companies which had in effect defaulted.

The 3CE CEO’s answer was the most bizarre of all. He stated that “this could not happen now because the industry is more mature.”

The 3CE staff did not disclose to the Board that a coalition of Indian Tribes led by the Zuni in New Mexico have a pending lawsuit to overturn the New Mexico Public Services Commission’s approval of the transmission line through highly sensitive and “sacred ground.”

Even after the non-answers, the Operations Board voted unanimously to approve the 15-year \$715 million contract.

Background: The contract is yet another step by 3CE to acquire actual green energy as opposed to relying on renewable energy certificates. This one authorizes importing energy from a large solar generator in central New Mexico, SunZia. SunZia is a subsidiary of Pattern Energy, which is one of the largest solar farm operators in the world.

SunZia is building a transmission line from its New Mexico sites to Pinal County Arizona, about 40 miles south of Phoenix. It is not so clear how the energy gets to 3CE in Central California. Presumably, it gets dumped into the western grid, and the portion purchased by 3CE is somehow counted as a source. Currently and State wide, California purchases considerable energy from Arizona, especially at night. It is largely composed of nuclear and coal fired sources.

Even though construction of the transmission line was approved by the State of Arizona, a legal suit against the approval is still pending before the Arizona Superior Court.



Will SLO County, which is gung ho for the Chumash Marine Reserve as a sacred Native American preserve, endorse energy from suppliers that are putting huge power towers across southwestern Native American Sacred lands?



SunZia Power Line

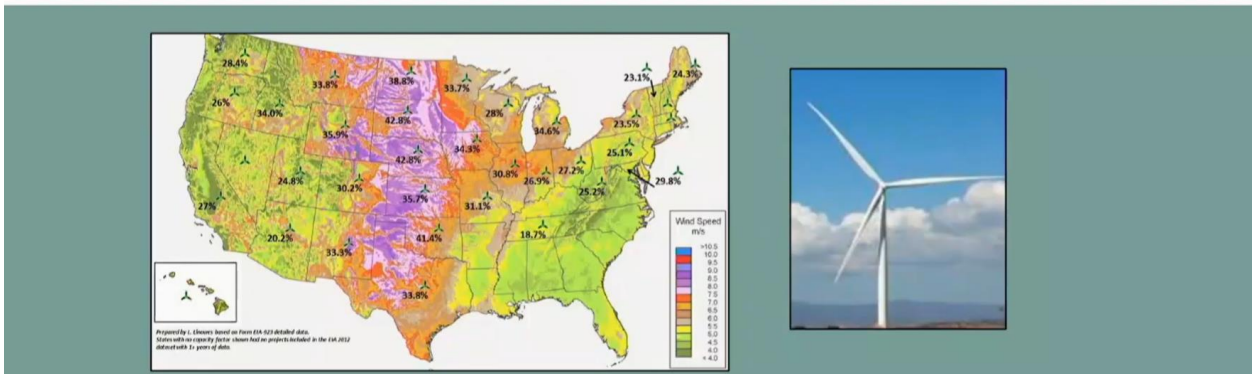
Displayed below are several recent articles covering various aspects of the project that the 3CE report and staff failed to disclose.

It's Windier in New Mexico

SunZia Wind will produce significantly more energy than what a California-sited wind farm can produce, given the difference in wind patterns.

This measure is called a Capacity Factor, and the capacity factors in New Mexico are higher than in California.

This specific location in Lincoln, Torrance, and San Miguel Counties has a 36% Capacity Factor.



The *SunZia Wind* is a 3.5-gigawatt [wind farm](#) being developed by [Pattern Energy](#) in [New Mexico](#), United States, near [Corona](#) in [Lincoln County](#), [San Miguel County](#) and [Torrance County](#), [New Mexico](#). The wind project is paired with *SunZia Transmission* to carry the power

to Arizona and California. Originally developed as the **Corona Wind Projects** along with the Western Spirit Wind Farm, it received unanimous approval October 5, 2018 by the [New Mexico Public Regulation Commission](#) (PRC). The PRC rejected and requested that SunZia resubmit a more detailed application to build a 500-mile long transmission line (800 km) to carry the power from central New Mexico to Coolidge, AZ.^{[1][2][3][4]}

The project includes at least 900 [wind turbines](#).^{[5][6]}

[Pattern Energy](#) previously purchased the rights to the Mesa Canyons Wind Farm from Clean Line Energy Partners in May 2018. The Mesa Canyons Wind Farm is a 1 GW wind farm just north of [Corona](#). This combined with the Corona Wind Project gives the 3 GW of energy that is projected to be exported to the west via the SunZia power line.^{[3][7][8]}

Pattern Energy bought the 3 GW SunZia 525 kV [direct current](#) transmission project in July 2022,^[9] and signed a [power purchase agreement](#) with Shell and [University of California](#) in 2023.^[10]

An ongoing case in Arizona Superior Court asks that SunZia's amended Certificate of Environmental Compatibility (CEC) for Arizona be voided.^[11] The plaintiff's final brief, filed June 22, 2023, states that the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) failed to adequately consider dramatic changes in the SunZia project. The plaintiff contends that the project's original CEC, granted in 2015, was based on the benefits of an AC line. The amended CEC is for a DC line, which would not provide similar benefits to Arizona. The brief asks that SunZia's amended CEC be voided and the decision be remanded to the ACC.^{[12][13]}

Groundbreaking for the transmission line was held in September 2023.^[14]

The Biden Administration has been pushing the project:

Biden-Harris Administration Advances SunZia Southwest Transmission Project - Once completed, project will carry up to 4500MW of clean energy throughout Southwest

Date: Thursday, May 18, 2023
Contact: Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov

WASHINGTON – The Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced a [Record of Decision](#) for the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project, which, when completed, will transport up to 4,500 megawatts of primarily renewable energy from New Mexico to markets in Arizona and California.

This project represents another milestone in the Biden-Harris administration’s [efforts](#) to accelerate transmission buildout to lower consumers’ energy costs, prevent power outages in the face of extreme weather, create good-paying union jobs, and make progress towards achieving President Biden’s goal of a 100% clean electricity grid by 2035.

“The Department of the Interior is committed to expanding clean energy development to address climate change, enhance America’s energy security and provide for good-paying union jobs,” said **Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Laura Daniel-Davis**. “Through robust engagement with states, cities and Tribes, we are proud of the

part we play in the all-of-government efforts to diversify the nation’s renewable energy portfolio while at the same time combatting climate change and investing in communities.”

President Biden’s Investing in America agenda is growing the American economy from the bottom up and middle out – from rebuilding our nation’s infrastructure, to driving over \$470 billion in private sector manufacturing and clean energy investments in the United States, to creating good paying jobs and building a clean energy economy that will combat climate change and make our communities more resilient.

“We are pleased to announce this exciting milestone for the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project,” said **BLM New Mexico State Director Melanie Barnes**. “This effort represents an important step in the development of our country’s renewable energy and transmission infrastructure.”

The SunZia Southwest Transmission Project is composed of two planned 500-kilovolt transmission lines located across approximately 520 miles of federal, state and private lands between central New Mexico and central Arizona. The permitted route originates at a planned substation in Torrance County, New Mexico, and terminates at the existing Pinal Central Substation in Pinal County, Arizona. The project traverses Lincoln, Socorro, Sierra, Luna, Grant, Hidalgo, Valencia, and Torrance counties in New Mexico and Graham, Greenlee, Cochise, Pinal, and Pima counties in Arizona.

The BLM completed the review period for this project – from the Notice of Intent to Record of Decision – in less than two years. This is one of the final steps the BLM needs to take before the project proponent can formally break ground.

Since 2021, the BLM has approved 35 projects (10 solar, 8 geothermal, and 17 gen-ties) on approximately 23,396 acres of BLM-managed lands. These projects are expected to produce 8,160 megawatts of electricity — enough to power more than 2.6 million homes.

The BLM is currently processing 74 utility-scale onshore clean energy projects proposed on public lands in the western United States. This includes solar, wind and geothermal projects, as well as interconnected gen-tie lines that are vital to clean energy projects proposed on non-federal land. These projects have the combined potential to add over 37,000 megawatts of renewable energy to the western electric grid. The BLM is also undertaking the preliminary review of over 150 applications for solar and wind development, as well as 51 applications for wind and solar energy testing.

The BLM manages vast stretches of public lands that are making significant contributions to the nation’s renewable energy portfolio. To promote the development of these energy sources, the BLM provides sites for environmentally sound development of renewable energy on public lands. The efficient permitting of renewable energy and transmission from our nation’s public lands is crucial in achieving the Biden-Harris administration’s goal of a carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035, as well as Congress’ direction in the Energy Act of 2020 to permit 25 gigawatts of solar, wind, and geothermal production on public lands no later than 2025.

New Mexico expects a 20 Billion economic benefit. Meanwhile, the Diablo Power Plant may close here. 3CE is exporting our economy to New Mexico.

New Mexico Is Riding A Breeze -

The stage is set for the nation's biggest wind energy investment.

BY GARY DAUGHTERS



Pattern Energy Group's Western Spirit Wind farm in New Mexico generates 1.05 GW of electricity.

Courtesy of Pattern Energy Group

Having only recently christened its biggest wind power project to date, New Mexico is poised for new investments that are primed to vault the state into a leadership position in wind energy generation. Regulatory approvals issued in October and November helped clear the way for two massive, related wind projects that will serve to more than double the large bet already placed on New Mexico by San Francisco-based Pattern Energy Group.

Officials from Pattern and the state say the planned SunZia Wind facility near the federal government's White Sands Missile Range in central New Mexico will constitute part of the largest wind project in the Western Hemisphere. The 3.5 GW wind farm, to span some 600,000 acres across Lincoln, Torrance and San Miguel counties, has spent 14 years in the planning and approvals processes, with construction — now pending only final federal approvals — set to begin mid-year.

Pattern also received right-of-way permits from the Arizona Corporation Commission related to its plans for the 550-mile, 525-kV SunZia Transmission project, which will connect the scattered SunZia wind farms to south-central Arizona, from which the electricity also can be sent farther on to California.

“SunZia Transmission,” said Pattern CEO Mike Garland in a statement, “will create a clean power superhighway for millions of Americans by opening access to huge, largely-untapped wind energy resources in New Mexico.”

SunZia Wind and SunZia Transmission, Pattern says, together will comprise the largest renewable energy infrastructure project in U.S. history, representing a combined investment of more than \$8 billion and eventually producing enough power to meet the needs of some 3 million people. The projects, the company says, will create more than 2,000 construction jobs at peak and 150 permanent operations and maintenance jobs. Both undertakings, according to

Pattern statements, are privately funded and will deliver more than \$1 billion in tax and other economic benefits across both New Mexico and Arizona.

“SunZia,” said U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, “will ignite rural economic development across the Southwest.”

It was only last February that Pattern took the wraps off of its Western Spirit Wind project in the same region of central New Mexico as the planned SunZia farm. At 1.05 GW, the Western Spirit facility now accounts for a full 25% of the state’s installed wind capacity. As with SunZia, the Western Spirit project includes a transmission component: A 55-mile power line carries electricity to a substation near Albuquerque, from which it is delivered to renewables-hungry markets in California, including Los Angeles and San Jose.

As with the SunZia projects, Western Spirit endured more than a decade of regulatory hurdles, a fact bemoaned by New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham at a February 2022 dedication ceremony. Similar obstacles have served to bottleneck wind and solar projects in other states.

“Developers like Pattern know how to site, develop and finance projects, but building them boils down to permission to move forward,” Fernando Martinez, director of New Mexico’s Renewable Energy Transmission Authority (RETA) told the Albuquerque Journal. “We don’t want to cut corners,” Martinez said, “but streamlining the process is the only way to allow the massive development of renewable energy needed to meet climate goals.”

RETA in 2021 entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Invenergy Wind Development North America, which hopes to build a 400-mile high voltage transmission line with the capacity to support some 4 GW of wind energy development across northern New Mexico. In a report issued in May, state officials valued New Mexico’s untapped renewable energy resources at \$11 billion.

Universities Get on Board

On a smaller scale than such massive utility projects, but with impacts that touch virtually every corner of the country, colleges and universities of all sizes are leading by example on renewables. Last March, Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, began receiving power from its second solar generating plant, an 88-MW installation south of Fresno, thus completing the institution’s transition to 100% renewable electricity. Recurrent Energy, a subsidiary of Canadian Solar, developed and operates the facility. Stanford has a 2050 goal of reaching net zero carbon emissions on campus and, beginning in 2009, has overhauled its entire energy system to meet it.

In November, construction commenced on a 20-MW solar farm near Pittsburgh International Airport that will be a key component of the University of Pittsburgh’s goals of meeting 50% of its electrical needs through renewables by 2030 and 100% by 2037. The project is being constructed on 68 acres in Allegheny and Beaver Counties by Texas-based Vesper Energy, with the university having secured 100% of its output for the next 20 years.

“Directly purchasing clean electricity will generate long-term cost and environmental savings, require no upfront capital or maintenance costs for the university and give Pitt price certainty throughout the contract,” the school said in a statement.

More than 40 colleges and universities have gone 100% renewable, according to the Environmental Protection Agency’s Green Power Partnership. Top users of green energy,

according to the Partnership, include the Universities of California and Iowa, Arizona State, the University at Buffalo, Boston University and Stanford. As of October 24, 2022, the combined annual green power use of the EPA’s Top 30 College & University Partners amounts to more than 3.8 billion kilowatt-hours of green power.

Manufacturing Poised to Soar

Buoyed by last summer’s passage of the historic Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which directs nearly \$400 billion in federal funding to clean energy, the nation’s top solar trade association released an ambitious roadmap to boost America’s solar manufacturing sector. The congressional Joint Committee of Taxation estimates that the Solar Energy Manufacturing for America Act, contained within IRA, will pour \$30 billion into solar manufacturing over the coming decade through a series of tax credits.

“For the first time, the United States has an industrial policy in place that will usher in a new era of clean energy manufacturing,” said Abigail Ross Hopper, president and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA).

SEIA’s roadmap, released in August, charts a path toward achieving a target of 50 GW of annual solar manufacturing capacity by 2030. As of mid-year, the U.S. was on target for about 10 GW for 2022. The paper emphasizes that domestic manufacturing can grow in the near term as the IRA “dramatically scales up demand for solar and storage products.”

Arizona-based First Solar plans to scale its American manufacturing footprint to more than 10 GW by 2025. In November, the company announced plans to invest \$1.1 billion in a solar module manufacturing facility in northern Alabama’s Lawrence County. Expected to be commissioned in 2025, the project is to create more than 700 jobs. It will join three First Solar facilities in Ohio, including a new one coming online in 2023.

Prior to the IRA’s passage, Hanwha Q Cells announced a major expansion of its facility in Dalton, Georgia, already the nation’s most prolific producer of solar panels. The \$171 million expansion is to create more than 500 jobs and to boost production at the facility to 3.1 GW.

First Solar plans a \$1.1 billion investment in Alabama manufacturing.

Courtesy of First Solar

Gary Daughters is a Peabody Award winning journalist who began with Site Selection in 2016. Gary has worked as a writer and producer for CNN covering US politics and international affairs. His work has included lengthy stints in Washington, DC and western Europe. Gary is a 1981 graduate of the University of Georgia, where he majored in Journalism and Mass Communications. He lives in Atlanta with his teenage daughter, and in his spare time plays guitar, teaches golf and mentors young people.

SLO County Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA) Meeting of Wednesday, November 8, 2023 - 1:30 PM (Completed)

Item 13 - Discussion of the Status of the County of San Luis Obispo’s Consideration of Rejoining the IWMA. The Board letter states in part:

On October 31, 2023, the County of San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors voted 3-1-1 approving a Resolution adopting the Second Amended and Restated Joint Powers Agreement of the IWMA, as amended by the 2023 Joinder Agreement. Additionally, the Board of Supervisors held a public hearing to consider a resolution to approve the IWMA.

RECOMMENDATION: That your Board discuss the request from the County to return to the IWMA, per the terms 2023 County Joinder Agreement to the Second Amended and Restated Joint Powers Agreement.

Is there any chance that they will reject the County's rejoining since the vote was not unanimous? Will they seek to extract concessions? The proposed revised joint powers agreement gives the Board of Supervisors only 1 representative. The unincorporated County will be under represented.

EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - Disputes over safety, cost swirl a year after California OK'd plan to keep last nuke plant running

[U.S. NEWS](#)

Disputes over safety, cost swirl a year after California OK'd plan to keep last nuke plant running



1 of 2 |

FILE - The Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant Thursday, June 1, 2023, in Avila Beach, Calif. The power plant was scheduled to close by 2025. But the Legislature changed course in September 2022 and opened a path for the reactors to keep running. On Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023, operator Pacific Gas & Electric asked federal regulators to

extend the plant's operation while, supporters and critics clashed at a state hearing on Diablo Canyon's future. (Laura Dickinson/The Tribune via AP, File)

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FILE - The Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant is seen June 1, 2023, in Avila Beach, Calif. The power plant was scheduled to close by 2025. But the Legislature changed course in September 2022 and opened a path for the reactors to keep running. On Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023, operator Pacific Gas & Electric asked federal regulators to extend the plant's operation while, supporters and critics clashed at a state hearing on Diablo Canyon's future. (Laura Dickinson/The Tribune via AP, File)

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BY MICHAEL R. BLOOD

Updated 9:30 PM PST, November 9, 2023

LOS ANGELES (AP) — More than a year after California endorsed a proposal to extend the lifespan of its last nuclear power plant, disputes continue to swirl about the safety of its decades-old reactors, whether more than [\\$1 billion in public financing](#) for the extension could be in jeopardy and even if the electricity is needed in the dawning age of renewables.

Late last month, a state judge tentatively approved the blueprint to keep the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant operating for an additional five years, until 2030. The proposal, which could get finalized later this month, imposed several conditions, including that federal nuclear safety regulators greenlight the longer run and that a state loan supporting the extension is not canceled.

The twin reactors, located midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, began operating in the mid-1980s. They supply up to 9% of the state's electricity on any given day.

Environmentalists argue California has adequate power without the reactors and that their continued operation could hinder development of new sources of clean energy. They also warn

that long-delayed testing on one of the reactors poses a safety risk that could result in an accident, a claim disputed by operator Pacific Gas & Electric.

Public Utilities Commission Administrative Law Judge Ehren D. Seybert's proposed ruling did not directly address yet another question: Whether [a past felony conviction](#) against PG&E might pose an obstacle to the government financing for the extension.

California is the birthplace of the modern environmental movement and for decades has had a fraught relationship with nuclear power. In 2016, PG&E, environmental groups and plant worker unions reached an agreement to close Diablo Canyon by 2025. But the Legislature voided the deal last year at the urging of Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, who said the power is needed to [ward off blackouts](#) as climate change stresses the energy system.

PG&E says it wants to keep the plant open to “ensure statewide electrical reliability and combat climate change” at the direction of the state. But the plant has to clear a series of state and federal regulatory hurdles, and it remains in dispute how much ratepayers will ultimately have to pay to keep it open.

On Tuesday, the same day that PG&E submitted its application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to keep the reactors running, supporters and critics clashed in a state utilities commission hearing over whether the plan is a sound investment or a financially reckless gamble. The utility is seeking a 20-year extension, typical in the industry, but emphasized the state would control how long the plant runs.

Matthew Freedman, an attorney with the advocacy group The Utility Reform Network, told regulators that PG&E was looking for a “blank check” from ratepayers.

The fight is playing out as the long-struggling nuclear industry [sees a potential rebirth](#) in the era of global warming. Nuclear power doesn't produce carbon pollution like fossil fuels, but it leaves behind waste that can remain [dangerously radioactive](#) for centuries.

In September, environmental and anti-nuclear groups called on federal regulators [to shut down](#) one of Diablo Canyon's reactors. Friends of the Earth and Mothers for Peace said in a petition filed with the NRC that tests and inspections have been delayed for nearly 20 years on a pressure vessel in the Unit 1 reactor. They also argued that the steel wall in Unit 1 might be deteriorating from sustained exposure to radiation and is becoming susceptible to cracking, a condition technically known as [embrittlement](#).

The pressure vessels [are thick steel containers](#) that hold nuclear fuel and cooling water in the reactors. The NRC [took no action](#) on the request and instead asked agency staff to review it.

PG&E has maintained the plant is safe, an assessment endorsed by the NRC.

PG&E was expected to begin embrittlement testing on the vessel last month, with the plant shut down for refueling. But it told legislators that workers couldn't remove samples inside the vessel because they did not have the correct equipment to access them.

PG&E has said workers would try again during the next refueling period, which could be as much as two years away. Once removed, evaluating the material can take another year. Under

that scenario, it's possible that information might not be available until after state reviews are completed and the NRC has considered the utility's request for extended licenses.

State Sen. John Laird and Assembly member Dawn Addis, both Democrats, urged PG&E to determine if alternative testing can be used. In a letter to the utility, they lamented the lost opportunity to answer, "allegations that the vessel is dangerously embrittled."

Financing questions also have emerged.

In 2016, a federal jury found PG&E guilty of multiple felonies for failing to properly inspect gas pipelines before a [2010 blast](#) that incinerated a neighborhood in San Bruno, south of San Francisco, killing eight people. Federal rules generally prohibit the government from entering into a contract with any corporation with a federal felony conviction, though exceptions can be made.

The Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility, an anti-nuclear group, has alleged that PG&E failed to disclose its conviction before it received conditional approval from the U.S. Department of Energy last year for \$1.1 billion in funding for the extension.

Both the Energy Department and PG&E declined to answer directly when asked by The Associated Press if the conviction was disclosed to the department. DOE spokesman Chad Smith said in an email that "DOE is in active discussions" with the utility, without providing further specifics. PG&E said it is eligible for the money because it already received conditional approval last year.

The Biden administration gave preliminary approval for the Energy Department funding in November. The financing came through the administration's [civil nuclear credit program](#), which is intended to bail out financially distressed owners or operators of nuclear power reactors as part of the administration's effort to [cut planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030](#), compared with 2005 levels.

The alliance said that if a failure to disclose the conviction is confirmed, PG&E could see its hopes for a longer run at Diablo Canyon extinguished — and possibly expose the company to penalties. Also at risk could be a \$1.4 billion, forgivable state loan authorized by the Legislature, the alliance said, which is expected to be paid back with the federal funds. ____ This story has been corrected to show the state senator's name is John Laird, not Robert Laird

Item 2 - POSTED ON NOVEMBER 10, 2023 BY STEVEN HAYWARD IN THE DAILY CHART

THE DAILY CHART: THE DEBT BOMB STARTING TO GO OFF?

Last week the stock market enjoyed a strong rally, and one part of the good news was the Treasury's announcement that they didn't have to borrow as much money as they had expected, which, given our \$1.7 trillion budget deficit this year (up \$300 billion over last year), is hardly great news. But the markets bought it anyway.

Then yesterday the results of the latest Treasury bond auction came in, and the stock market tanked in the afternoon. Here's how [Barron's described it](#):

30-Year Treasury Auction Breaks Bad, Sinks Stock Market

The [Treasury's auction of 30-year bonds](#) on Thursday went about as badly as it could, indicating investors are reluctant to own long-dated government securities.

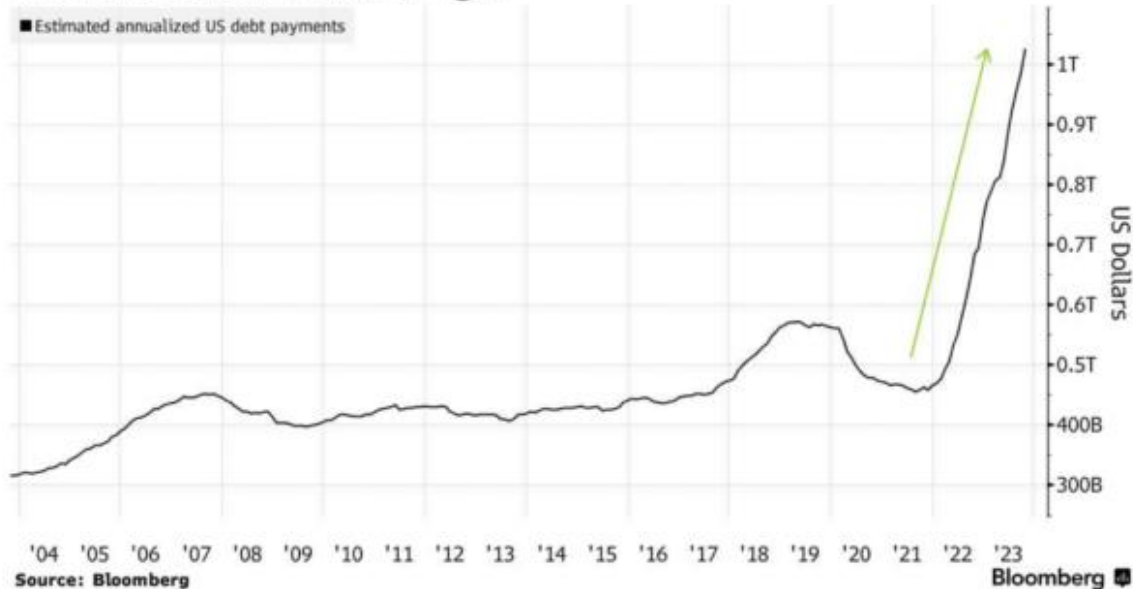
At the auction of government debt that matures in 30 years, investors were awarded 4.769% in yield, 0.051 percentage point higher than the yield in pre-auction trading. The difference between the two yields—called a tail—indicated a weak auction where the U.S. government had to entice investors with a premium over the market to buy their debt.

Primary dealers, who buy up supply not taken by investors, had to accept 24.7% of the debt on offer, more than double the 12% average for the past year.

"Today's 30 yr. auction was outright bad," Peter Boockvar, chief investment officer at Bleakley Financial Group, said in a research note.

Maybe this has something to do with the hesitations of the bond market:

Cost of US Debt Pile Surges




Steve Hayward is a nationally syndicated columnist who lives in SLO County.

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THE FRAGILITY OF CIVILIZATION
Strategies for surviving the eruption
BY MIKE WATSON



SINCE the end of the Cold War, much of the Western world has built and inhabited an elaborate fantasy. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, according to this story, the big dragon had been slain, the kingdom was at peace, and the only task left was to clean up the last vestiges of the nasty old world of conflict and chaos. Democracy and human rights could advance around the world, Communist China could learn free trade, Russia could come into the fold, Europe could unite and become a great and independent power, and none of it would require much spending on the military, diplomatic, and aid tools of foreign policy. The future would be like the finale of *Independence Day*, with all the peoples of the world united behind American leadership to defeat invading aliens — or, sober-minded fantasists believed, more-realistic threats such as the erosion of the ozone layer.

Not every member of the Western foreign-policy elite shared each aspect of this

dream, but enough of them picked up enough parts of the story to push the United States and its allies into hubris and overreach. Like the Pompeiians in search of fertile soil, they forgot the wisdom of their ancestors, ignored the dangers, and moved steadily closer to the mouth of Vesuvius.

Now, the rumblings from the caldera are shaking t

he foundations of this fantasy world. First, the early stages of the pandemic revealed that the supposedly global system of trade would screech to a juddering halt if disease broke out in a handful of Chinese cities, or if the Chinese Communist Party withheld shipments to disfavored nations. Companies around the world discovered

d that after optimizing for efficiency for decades, they no longer had the resiliency needed to deal with sudden shocks. Next, Vladimir Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine reminded them that hostile dictators cannot be put off forever by threats of sanctions and diplomatic isolation, that steel cuts through paper. And the catastrophe that Hamas unleashed on Israel shows that another part of the

fairy tale — that the bad guys will always lose the fight and the good guys can relax — is also made of pixie dust.

As the lava burbles up from below, the storytellers have choices to make: They can flee down the mountainside, they can sacrifice some of their homes and try to save others, or they can dig ditches and build walls to stop the onrushing magma short of destruction. But first, they must accept that they do not live in a castle in the sky.

The Israelis, who confronted the viciousness of Islamist terror more directly than many of their allies, did not succumb to the same delusions as their Western friends did. But a great deal of magical thinking nonetheless took place in the Holy Land. The second intifada convinced most Israelis that the Palestinian leaders were untrustworthy and unwilling to make peace. But after a period of taking the terror threat seriously, Israelis let themselves be lulled into their own false sense of security. As they saw it, after taking control of Gaza, Hamas would realize that it had

more to lose from war than it could possibly gain and that the sporadic threats emanating from the West Bank would be manageable.

As the threat seemed to recede and domestic politics became more important, the Israeli government allowed Jews to permeate the West Bank with small, isolated settlements, many of which were militarily indefensible. But many Israelis convinced themselves that the Palestinians could not organize a mass attack without being detected and that Israel's high-tech border security would give the military adequate time to respond to any attacks on the homeland. When I visited the Israel–Gaza border this summer, the Israeli briefers emphasized the

threat from rockets and artillery. They felt confident in their ability to detect tunnel-diggers and knew that if a group of Gazans approached the security fence, the Israel Defense Forces would send a detachment to drive them away. But they expected no more than a few Gazans at a time.

The IDF was ready to fight when Hamas attacked. But it was ready to fight in the wrong place: the West Bank, where the IDF had apparently concentrated its forces. As thousands of terrorists surged across the Gazan border, IDF units there were cut off and overrun. Many gave their lives to slow down the assault. Reportedly, the bulk of the IDF had to race from their West Bank positions while Hamas worked its devilry in the south.

Neither the Israeli government nor the West Bank settlers bear guilt for these deaths: That burden falls solely on the shoulders of the people who planned, supported, and carried out the barbaric attacks in southern Israel. Many of those killers hope to receive their just reward from God for their actions, and all civilized people should do what they can to grant them their wish. Nonetheless, if the worst happens and Iran's other proxies attack from all sides, Israel will need to make hard choices about how many resources the IDF can spare to defend these lonely West Bank outposts.

The unfolding series of wars and crises around the world has shown that the international order is profoundly unstable. Some may object that Russia's attack on Ukraine and Iran's proxy attack on Israel are unconnected. That is true — the new Axis partners do not trust one another much more than the old Axis powers did, and they do not appear to fully share their strategic planning with one another. But a complacent person in 1936 would have been equally correct to point out that Japan's invasion of Manchuria, Italy's gas attacks in Ethiopia, and Germany's proxy war in Spain were not products of a single grand design. The three powers still combined to conquer most of Europe and much of Asia shortly thereafter.

Many of the most critical and dynamic parts of the global economy are just as vulnerable as Israel is. Iran demonstrated when it hit the Abqaiq oil refinery in Saudi Arabia in 2019 that it is able to devastate the world's energy markets with only a few missiles and drones, and it's willing to do it. If the Gaza crisis breaks out into a major regional war, the consequences could be immense: Iran has more than 3,000 ballistic missiles and has armed Hezbollah with more than 100,000 rockets. Stray rockets and artillery could close the Suez Canal, and one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas could be blocked from leaving the Persian Gulf and flowing to homes and factories across Europe and Asia. Israeli innovation, which has improved the lives of untold millions around the world, would be diverted to an all-out struggle for survival. The human cost would extend far beyond the Middle East.

MEANWHILE, China's belligerence is raising the stakes on the other end of Asia. The Chinese military's increasingly aggressive actions against Americans, their partners, and their allies show

that Xi Jinping is giving it a long leash, and it is snapping at the heels of peace-loving nations around the region. Last month, the Chinese coast guard collided with a supply boat and a coast guard vessel from the Philippines — an American ally — in the Philippine exclusive economic zone. Last year, China used the Winter Olympics to honor an officer whose unit killed more than 20 Indian troops along the disputed China–India border. And over the past two years, the Chinese military has buzzed and harassed American ships and planes more than 180 times.

Even neophytes such as Vivek Ramaswamy are aware of the importance of Taiwan’s semiconductor industry, which makes more than 90 percent of the chips that power the global tech ecosystem. But chips will not be the only worry if a conflict breaks out in the Taiwan Strait. The island democracy would certainly have trouble exporting its best products, but it would not be alone. Taiwan sits astride the sea lanes that connect China, Japan, and South Korea to the rest of the world: Each of them depends on food and fuel imports for survival, so they would struggle to feed their people and keep the lights on in a war. Moreover, half of the world’s trade would be in the line of fire. Japan, which hosts American bases and whose leadership increasingly realizes that Taiwan’s survival is vital for Japanese independence, would probably be scarred by Chinese missiles.

A conflict with China could unleash chaos throughout the region. North Korea has steadily made progress on its own missiles and nuclear arsenal, but it does not need them to do serious damage. Over half of South Korea’s population lives in and around Seoul, many of them within range of North Korean artillery. The South Korean military has found four tunnels for infiltrating North Korean forces, and defectors say there are plans for more than a dozen more. If American forces have their hands full against China, North Korea could blackmail South Korea or rain down shells while its shock troops burst out of the ground.

The heat rising out of the caldera has alerted some of the Western elite that all is not well in their fairy-tale world. But they have not yet made their move. For years, America has been a dangerous friend and a feckless enemy: We overturned a friend in Egypt while letting a butcher in Syria run amok, we encouraged Ukraine’s democratic aspirations only to shrink back when it was attacked in 2014, and we have done next to nothing as Iran has steadily overtaken much of the Middle East and China has built up its military might.

The sallies out from the sky castle have been embarrassing failures. The fall of Afghanistan was a humiliation. Appeasing Iran has made the Middle East more violent. China’s military budget has rocketed up to \$700 billion a year, while American defense spending as a share of our economy drops ever lower. Many of the Eastern Europeans are arming themselves as fast as they can, but the Germans are dragging their feet. And now that Russia has attacked Ukraine a second time, seven of the ten largest economies in the world are losing a war of attrition to the eighth-largest. In international forums, Western diplomats tie themselves in knots to lay out the challenges without offending their adversaries. They are hashing out the distinctions between magma and lava while their shoes catch fire.

The incompetence is staggering. Something must change.

ONE option, for the Americans at least, is to flee down the mountain slope and hope that other houses slow the lava flow enough that it cools before it engulfs their own home. This is a long-standing tradition in American foreign policy. Some of the Founders hoped that national independence would free Americans of concern about foreign affairs, although wiser ones such as George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and John Quincy Adams counseled their

countrymen instead to build up their strength and then decide what role the United States should play in the world. Many members of the founding generation lived long enough to learn during the Napoleonic Wars that a country that engages in trade as heavily as the United States does cannot emerge unscathed from major wars in other parts of the world.

The last time the world was filled with this much turmoil, Americans had to learn this lesson again. As the Axis powers rose, a group of well-meaning American patriots partnered with a disreputable group of antisemites and lowlifes to argue that the United States should stay out of the war. As they saw it, Europe's and Asia's problems were for Europeans and Asians to solve and, in any case little harm could come to the United States. They were mistaken, and their bad ideas contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Another choice is to try to save some parts of the mountainside but not others. As the advocates of this position point out, strategy is about setting priorities, and even the United States has limited resources. For the many Americans who are not impressed by recent forays in the Middle East, and who are exasperated by the Europeans' being quicker to wag their fingers than to shoulder the load, this strategy has a strong intellectual and emotional appeal. If the Europeans are so smart, let them manage their own affairs; the Arabs have all this money, let them figure out their neighborhood. China is the main threat, and we can focus there.

Upon closer inspection, this strategy is far riskier than its advocates admit. Take Europe. Some blithely assume that the European democracies are unwilling to pay their fair share on defense because the United States does too much; they will cough up more as American forces withdraw, the thinking goes. It is possible that all the European democracies will pull together as the relatively small American contingent pulls out. But people who know European history understand that Christendom's past was bloody and fratricidal and that only the arrival of entrenched American power broke the cycle of violence. We are defending Europe at relatively little cost, and because a pullout would risk destabilizing America's top trading partner, the stakes are very high.

Paradoxically, too intense a focus on Asia could make Americans lose there. At the onset of the Cold War, American strategists realized that the industrial heartlands of Europe and Japan were the most important prizes in play. But for Western Europe to rebuild its economy and fend off the Communists, it needed cheap energy. The American government, which did not have much faith in Britain's imperial acumen and dreaded Soviet domination of the global energy market, began elbowing both of its major wartime allies out of the Middle East. To win the Cold War, America needed the Middle East on its side.

Today, Japan, India, and other major allies and partners depend utterly on Middle East oil and natural gas: Withdrawing from the region would put Israel in mortal peril and would hand control of global energy markets to China, Iran, and Russia. They might squabble among themselves and even fall out about how to best divide up the enormous spoils, but our Asian allies and partners are not likely to be impressed by that level of American strategic incompetence. Moreover, because their security depends on American assurances, they study all of American behavior closely: If Obama's failure to enforce the red line in Syria undermined Japan's confidence in the United States, imagine what a precipitous withdrawal would do.

The last option is to descend from the sky castle and build real defenses. This will require hard work. Joe Biden needs to come up with a plan for victory in Ukraine and bring it to Congress, he needs to stop appeasing and start confronting Iran, and he needs to get our commanders in the

Indo-Pacific the resources and authorities they need to defend American interests and allies. This will be expensive, but deterrence is much cheaper than war.

And we will not be alone: Japan and South Korea are doing their part to build up their defenses, and we have seen before that our Middle East partners pitch in when they know the United States is behind them. The Western Europeans are slow, but Britain and Eastern Europe are clear-eyed about the threat from Russia, and Europe as a whole has given Ukraine about twice as much aid as the United States has.

The Jewish state points the way out of this mess. The entire aim of Zionism is to make the Jewish people the subject of history, not its object. Theodor Herzl warned his kinsmen that the fond wishes of the international community would not save them when the crisis came, nor would their devotion to human rights and democracy, but a state with an army could. Since then, Israelis have shown that vision and purpose can make a people flourish, but only steel can make them secure.

Peace will come when our enemies know that the cost of aggression is too high, defeat is assured, and struggle is futile. Israel is ready to crush its enemies. We should help.

This article first appeared in the National Review of November 9 2023 MIKE WATSON is the associate director of the Hudson Institute's Center for the Future of Liberal Society.

FROM THE BAY TO THE SEA

BY KATYA SEDGWICK



Will San Franciscans ever protest the disaster that is its civic life?

San Francisco recently outdid itself. Ten thousand people marched down Market Street, the once busy commercial artery, carrying Palestinian flags, chanting “Free Palestine, stop the genocide.” Their banners read “When people are colonized resistance is justified,” and “Zionism is fascism.” Activists spray-painted “death 2 Israel” on the side of a building.

These 10,000 souls gathered in San Francisco after the Palestinian terror organization Hamas raided the Jewish state, slaughtering 1,300 people and taking hundreds of hostages. Thirty of the murdered and 13 of the captives were Americans. The rally was part of the “day of rage” held by Hamas to oppose the ensuing campaign to eradicate the terrorist organization.

The signage carried by the protesters was confusing. “Free Palestine” is a dubious slogan because Gaza has been self-ruled after Israeli disengagement in 2005. As for the “genocide,” Arabs west of River Jordan have been enjoying healthy population growth since the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in 1948. Moreover, Zionism is the age-old yearning of the Jewish homeland in the Holy Land. To call it “fascism” is to use the ugly slur against the very people who suffered most under Nazi rule.

Saying things like “When people are colonized resistance is justified” amounts to approving of any terrorist action, so the event was effectively pro-Hamas. In this case, “resistance” means paragliding into a music party and murdering 250 attending pacifists. And, as a bonus, taking hostage an elderly pro-Palestinian activist. To describe the rally as “pro-Palestine” is to obscure its savage nature.

I make no secret of being a Zionist, so naturally I was unnerved by the pro-terror march. But regardless of where they stand on the conflicts in the Middle East, my Bay Area neighbors should be deeply concerned by what this demonstration revealed about all of us. It’s not that Zionism is out of vogue here; civilization itself is considered irrelevant.

San Francisco is deeply dysfunctional. For a decade now, Golden Gate City has been notorious for its open-air opiate markets. Drug users from around the country flock here because the local political establishment made it easy for addicts to maintain their lifestyle. At the same time, the illegal immigrant drug dealers find comfort in the sanctuary state of California. Many users live on the streets, crowding out the “normies.” Bay Area Rapid Transit, the main public transportation company, is now filled with individuals displaying various degrees of intoxication and derangement. Because of lax attitudes toward property crime, criminals “bip” into parked cars and casually strip stores clean of merchandise.

Who protests the ills of San Francisco? A group called Mothers Against Drug Addiction and Deaths, led by women whose kids fell prey to the local fentanyl culture, holds yearly rallies on Fentanyl Awareness Day. Those are typically attended by tens—nay, dozens—of activists.

It’s not merely a matter of who turns up for a street protest. There is no silent majority of voters whose primary focus is on the issues of the city and the region. Turnout is sky high during presidential elections—in November 2016, 80.7 percent of registered voters

cast their ballots. In 2020, the number grew to the unbelievable 86.3 percent. Yet Joe Biden won California by a massive margin, as everyone knew he would.

Compare it to the recall election of the former District Attorney Chesa Boudin. Boudin was one of the key figures responsible for the disruption of orderly life in the city. As a DA, he was responsible for decarceration, including the release of repeat offenders, refused to prosecute hate crimes, and spoke of drug dealers as “children.” Only 46.4 percent of registered voters turned out in the recall contest—a high number for a special election, to be sure, but considering the deplorable condition of the once lovely town, it highlights a general lack of interest in what happens in our own backyards.

“Think globally, act locally” is a Boomer cliché by which the Bay Area lives and dies. People around here like to dwell on universal themes—global warming, trans rights, decolonization. If a junkie dies on their doorstep, on the other hand, it’s a bummer.

To be fair, they have plans for the junkies, too. The war on drugs is evil and racist, just like the fictive genocide Israel is perpetrating against Palestinians, so under the social justice regime fantasy, all drugs would be obtainable on demand. The drugs would be lab-manufactured and of consistent quality, so no one would accidentally take too much and die. Overdose prevention experts could be on hand in the well-maintained social housing buildings that all residents would be entitled to by right. All of this will be easy to achieve, if only the rich are made to “pay their fair share.”

It’s not that we shouldn’t think about global problems, but a better universalist approach begins at the front door, with things that we can observe and understand. Think not of utopian outcomes framed in clichés, but tangible issues here and now and how to fix them. If the homeless are dying of drug addiction, perhaps the right solution to the problem does not lie in some drug legalization framework that, we are being promised, worked in Portugal or some other exotic location, but in cutting off the supply of drugs. Similarly, if a baby and a Holocaust survivor are abducted and held hostage by a terrorist group, common sense dictates that the root cause of the crime is not “occupation,” but barbarism.

In both cases, our duty is to defend civilization from savagery and fanaticism. To ensure a normal flow of life and flourishing of culture. It’s a shame that far more people turn up in San Francisco in defense of Hamas than to demand a just life for their own families.

Katya Sedgwick is a writer in the San Francisco Bay area.

This article appeared on November 3, 2023 in [The American Mind](#), which is a publication of the Claremont Institute, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated to restoring the principles of the American Founding to their rightful, preeminent authority in our national life. Interested in supporting our work? [Gifts to the Claremont Institute](#) are tax-deductible.



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