

Via Email

August 26, 2020

President Richard Valle and
Alameda County Board of Supervisors
1221 Oak Street, Room 512
Oakland, CA 94612

**RE: Request for Alameda County to Complete a Comprehensive Solar Policy for
Agricultural Districts and Amend the General Plan**

Dear President Valle and Alameda County Supervisors:

We represent Save North Livermore Valley, a group of approximately 175 residents in North Livermore Valley, the City of Livermore, and the Tri-Valley concerned over the future of North Livermore Valley. Also joining this letter is Friends of Open Space and Vineyards, a nonprofit organization founded in 1981 that supports the permanent protection of the Livermore Valley region's open spaces and agricultural lands.

We request that the Board of Supervisors direct the Alameda County Planning Department to complete expeditiously a comprehensive solar policy for agricultural districts and a General Plan amendment prior to reviewing utility-scale solar projects on agricultural land. The result would be clear rules for the appropriate siting, scale and operations of solar power plants, if any, on agricultural land. It would save the public and the County time, energy and money and create certainty for all parties.

On February 28, 2012, the Board of Supervisors directed the Planning Department to complete a solar policy that it started in late 2011. In addition to clear direction from Supervisors Keith Carson and Nate Miley, Supervisor Wilma Chan and Planning Director Albert Lopez had the following exchange:

Supervisor Chan: "Why is it taking so long to develop the solar policy?"

Planning Director Lopez: "We have been working for several months.... We think we are moving at a fairly rapid clip."

A county solar policy was discussed at the Board again in 2018, but again, never completed.

We are requesting a commonsense step that the County has already committed to. Santa Clara County adopted a countywide solar policy ordinance covering agricultural land in 2010. Earlier this year, Contra Costa County adopted a similar ordinance.

Why can't Alameda County do the same?

Now Alameda County's lack of a solar policy is coming to a head over two proposed solar power plants that would occupy nearly 825 acres in an area the County designated as a scenic rural corridor. Hundreds of nearby residents and other citizens feel that these projects needlessly pit renewable energy against environmental preservation. The absence of promised standards brings into question whether the review process for these projects will be fair, transparent and reasonable.

We support the immediate expansion of renewable energy in appropriate locations. We also know that failing to plan is planning to fail. Today, Alameda County has piecemeal review of solar power plants without reference to policies and standards developed in consultation with experts in the fields of renewable energy, land-use management, environmental science and wildlife biology.

A comprehensive solar policy combined with a General Plan amendment will lead to greater solar power generation and job creation in Alameda County. Solar companies need predictability for investing their capital, and state regulators need certainty about renewable energy supply. Residents, likewise, should have the assurance that any new solar projects comply with a clear set of standards that have taken account of their viewpoints, including whether the County should prioritize expanded distributed solar power generation in urban locations.

Accordingly, we request that the Board of Supervisors direct the Planning Department to complete what it started – a comprehensive study on utility solar in agricultural districts combined with a General Plan amendment.

Very truly yours,

Signatures and Names of North Livermore
Valley Steering Committee and Board Member
of Friends of Open Space and Vineyards [in
original letter]