



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Planning and Development
Department No.: 053
Agenda Date: October 21, 2025
Placement: Administrative Agenda
Estimated Time: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: <Insert Date>
Vote Required: 4/5

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director: Lisa Plowman, Planning and Development Department
Contact: Alex Tuttle, Deputy Director, Long Range Planning
SUBJECT: First Amendment to the Agreement for Services with Environmental Science Associates (ESA) for Utility Scale Solar Amendments Project

DocuSigned by:

Lisa Plowman

DocuSign Envelope ID: 6A1F59C8-4072-48C...

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve and authorize the Chair to execute Contract Amendment No. 1 to Contract No. BC24216 with Environmental Science Associates (ESA) to provide professional services in the preparation of Utility-Scale Solar Amendments, including CEQA compliance, to modify the scope of work to include two additional sections to the Draft Program EIR, adjusting the total contract amount by \$49,151, for a total amount not to exceed \$552,136.
- b) Determine that the Amendment No. 1 to the Agreement for Services of Independent Contractor and the Board of Supervisors' actions are not a project and, therefore, are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5).

Summary Text:

The Utility-Scale Solar Comprehensive Plan and Ordinance Amendments Project will amend the County's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinances to facilitate utility-scale solar development throughout the unincorporated county.

On October 1, 2024, the Board approved Board Contract No. BC24216 for a total of \$502,985 for a professional services contract with ESA for the preparation of the Utility-Scale Solar Amendments,

including CEQA compliance. This Board Contract amendment increases funding by \$49,151, for a revised total contract amount not to exceed \$552,136. Staff recommends the Board of Supervisors approve Amendment No. 1 to Agreement for Services of Independent Contractor.

Discussion:

On November 7, 2024 the County released the Notice of Preparation and Scope of a Program Environmental Impact Report for the Utility Scale Solar Amendments Project. The proposed scope of environmental review included the following environmental topics to be analyzed in the PEIR:

1. Aesthetics and Visual Resources,
2. Agricultural Resources,
3. Air Quality,
4. Biological Resources,
5. Cultural Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources,
6. Energy,
7. Greenhouse Gas Emissions,
8. Land Use and Planning,
9. Noise,
10. Transportation, and
11. Utilities and Service Systems.

Based on comments received during the scoping process, and a determination to include battery energy storage systems (BESS) into the PEIR project description and impact analyses to facilitate their potential use as part of future solar energy systems and facilities, the County determined that Hazards and Wildfires should also be evaluated in the Program EIR. The estimated cost for the completion of these additional sections and associated additional work to complete the Proof Check Draft PEIR and Public Review Draft PEIR is \$44,683. Attachment B includes an estimate from Environmental Science Associates (ESA) requests a budget amendment to cover the cost of the preparation of these sections.

A standard 10% contingency of 4,468 will be applied to this contract amendment for a total contract increase of \$49,151.

Background:

On October 7, 2014, the Board adopted Land Use and Development Code Chapter 35-59 (Utility-Scale Photovoltaic Facilities) and related amendments to the Land Use Element of the County Comprehensive Plan. These provisions only allow utility-scale solar facilities in the 600-acre Utility-Scale Solar Photovoltaic Overlay in the Cuyama Valley. It also describes smaller solar photovoltaic systems that the County zoning ordinances allow in the Inland Areas and Coastal Zone.

On September 10, 2019, the Board adopted the Strategic Energy Plan to stimulate local renewable energy development. The Strategic Energy Plan recommended amending the County zoning ordinances to increase solar development throughout the county.

On July 13, 2021, the Board provided direction to staff regarding the Utility-Scale Solar Comprehensive Plan and Ordinance Amendments.

On March 15, 2023, P&D initiated a second competitive bid process, issuing a second request for proposals (RFP) after the first RFP in 2022 received no response. P&D then evaluated the proposals

to prepare Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments to allow utility-scale solar development, and selected ESA as the project consultant.

On October 1, 2024, the Board approved Board Contract No. BC24216 for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$502,985 and authorized the Director of Planning and Development to accept grant funds from the California Clean Energy Planning Program (CCEPP) totaling \$100,000 that P&D was successful in obtaining in July 2024.

On August 19, 2025, the Draft Program EIR was released to the public for a forty-five-day public review window. Staff anticipates bringing the project to decision-maker hearings in Winter 2025-26.

Contract Renewals:

This is a contract amendment for an existing contract. Interim performance measures within the existing contract have been achieved. These additional funds are required to complete two additional out-of-scope sections of the Program Environmental Impact Report.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

Funding for this project is budgeted in the Planning and Development Permitting Budget Program on Page 307 of the County of Santa Barbara Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 Adopted Budget. While this is a contract amendment, the department anticipated the need for additional funding and built it into their budget for this fiscal year.

There is no fiscal impact to the department or the County.

Special Instructions:

Please forward one original executed Agreement and a copy of the hearing Action Summary to P&D, Hearing Support, Attention: David Villalobos.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Contract Amendment

Attachment B – BC24216 - Budget Amendment Request

Attachment C – Executed Agreement BC24216

Contact Information:

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