

Katherine Douglas

Public Comment

From: Erik Vasquez <evasquez@venatorresources.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 15, 2025 4:55 PM
To: sbcob
Cc: Jacquelyne Alexander
Subject: Letter to the Board, Oct 21st Meeting; Re: Oil and Gas Agenda Item
Attachments: Asphalta LLC_Letter to BOS_10.21.2025 Hearing.pdf

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Dear Clerk of the Board,

Please see attached letter from Asphalta, LLC related to the proposed Oil and Gas Ordinance changes to be heard at the October 21st BOS meeting as initiated by the Board at the May 13th meeting. The agenda has not yet been released so I do not know the correct agenda number but please attach to the aforementioned item. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me via email or the number below. Please ensure the letter is included in the Board package sent to the Supervisors, and please acknowledge receipt of the letter.

Thank you,

Erik Vasquez
805-275-1711



Asphalta, LLC
4099 Orcutt Garey
Santa Maria Ca, 93454

VIA U.S. MAIL DELIVERY AND EMAIL TO sbcob@countyofsb.org

October 15, 2025

Chair Laura Capps
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E Anapamu St
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Recommendations Concerning Santa Barbara Phase-Out Ordinance

Dear Chair Capps and the Members of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors:

On behalf of Asphalta, LLC (“Asphalta”), a local oil and gas company that has been active in Santa Barbara County since 2008, the purpose of this letter is provide the Board with certain recommendations concerning the proposed “phase-out ordinance” which the Board is considering for a vote at its next public meeting on October 21, 2025. Asphalta employs over twenty local workers and drilled twelve wells in the Eastern Santa Maria Valley in 2024, ensuring well-paying jobs for our employees and for dozens more workers employed through our service providers. The oil we produce is considered “heavy,” and as such it is predominantly used to make an asphalt emulsion, which in turn is mixed with sand and gravel to pave roads, parking lots and similar projects in and around the Central California.

We recognize there has been a push by the State of California over the last decade to reduce the use of fossil fuels in favor of electricity in transportation. However, Governor Newsom recently directed the California Energy Commission (“CEC”) to recommend options to help California formulate a more practical transition plan for moving away from fossil fuels. The Governor’s sensible edict, which came subsequent to the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (“Board”) directive to staff to develop a framework for an oil “phase-out ordinance” acknowledged the recent rapid decline in California based oil production, a domestically secure feedstock for California refineries. The CEC’s study resulted in Senate Bill 237 which unanimously passed the California Senate and was signed into law by the Governor in September. SB 237 acknowledges the practicalities of the continuing need for fossil-based fuels over a longer term than either the Governor or the legislature originally envisioned.¹ In light of the above, please consider deferring your vote on the phase-out ordinance at your next public

¹ Such need for a slower energy transition pace is evidenced by the continuing popularity of internal combustion (“IC”) engine automobiles. Three out four automobiles sold in California in the first six months of 2025 were IC engines.

meeting on October 21, 2025, to allow time for the creation of a local Energy Commission to advise the Board on sound energy policies. By listening to an independent, local Energy Commission instead of special interest groups, the Board can develop a sensible ordinance that will be aligned with the State's recent adoption of SB 237.

Alternatively, if the Board is not inclined to create a local Energy Commission to advise the Board, please consider deferring your vote on the phase-out ordinance until county staff is able to carve out an exemption for local heavy oil production used predominantly for creation of asphalt products in the State. Such an exemption would be both practical and reasonable by acknowledging the public benefit of using local produced heavy oil for making asphalt products as opposed to relying on foreign heavy oil imported from Canada or Venezuela, for example, where most non-US heavy oil is produced. Furthermore, and contrary to information provided to the Board by special interest groups, the carbon intensity of heavy oil used for making asphalt is much lower than its emissions "score" would suggest. For example, asphalt is effectively "sequestered" in the bedding of a road, creating less emissions than oil used for fuel purposes which is combusted. Although concrete can also be used to make roadways, installation of this product is generally twice the expense of asphalt and is considerably more carbon intensive to produce. For these reasons, at a minimum, an exemption to the phase-out ordinance for heavy oil production used predominantly for creation of asphalt products, is warranted.

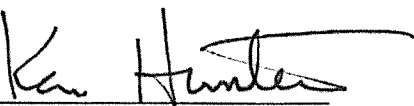
In sum, please consider deferring your vote on the ordinance changes to allow the Board time to listen to an independent voice from a local Energy Commission on a framework for an ordinance that will be aligned with State's enactment of SB 237. In the alternative, please consider deferring your vote to allow County staff sufficient time to draft an exemption to the proposed ordinance change for local companies that produce heavy oil used predominantly for making asphalt.

These recommendations will facilitate enactment of an ordinance aligned with the State's objectives while also preserving the value of local jobs to the Santa Barbara community and ensuring a domestically secure source for asphalt products.

If you have any questions regarding these recommendations or would like to schedule a meeting to further discuss, please contact the undersigned by phone at (805) 275-1711.

Very truly yours,

ASPHALTA, LLC

By: 

Ken Hunter, its President