

IRWINDALE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
5050 N. IRWINDALE AVENUE
IRWINDALE, CALIFORNIA 91706

DECEMBER 11, 2024
WEDNESDAY
4:30 P.M.

The Irwindale **CITY COUNCIL** met in a special meeting at the above time and place.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Councilmembers Mark A. Breceda, Manuel R. Garcia,
H. Manuel Ortiz; Mayor Pro Tem Larry G. Burrola;
Mayor Albert F. Ambriz

Also Present: Julian A. Miranda, City Manager; Adrian Guerra, City
Attorney; Theresa Olivares, Assistant City Manager; and Laura Nieto,
Chief Deputy City Clerk

AB 2449 DISCLOSURES None.

**SPONTANEOUS
COMMUNICATIONS**

DOLORAS AMADOR Doloras Amador stated that she ceded her speaking time to Dena Zepeda or Carmen Roman.

FRED BARBOSA Fred Barbosa asked if members of the public would be allowed to speak after the workshop, to which Mayor Ambriz stated that comments from the public would be heard after the presentation.

**WORKSHOP ON
BATTERY ENERGY
STORAGE SYSTEMS**

DIRECTOR SIMPSON Director Simpson introduced Craig Lewis, Executive Director of Clean Coalition, and Joshua Costello, Firefighter Specialist from LA County Fire, and Fire Prevention Division, Central Region Battalion Chief Frank Garrido.

CRAIG LEWIS Craig Lewis presented a recap of the information that was presented at the first workshop held November 13, 2024.

JOSHUA COSTELLO Joshua Costello provided an overview on how LA County Fire handles Battery Energy Storage Systems ("BESS") projects. Specifically, he touched on how each BESS project undergoes extensive review, including a hazard mitigation analysis that would identify potential hazards and scenarios that could arise with the project, to ensure the intended level of safety and performance per the Fire Code. He added that most systems perform as designed with only minor incidents.

**MAYOR PRO TEM
BURROLA** Mayor Pro Tem Burrola requested that Mr. Costello elaborate on "runaway events", to which Mr. Costello advised that such incidents would depend on the make and model of the battery cell, modules, and racks, and how they play into the specific site being considered. He noted that thermal runaway events can begin within an individual

cell or a group of cells when two chemicals that are supposed to remain separated come into contact with one another due to a deterioration of the separator, resulting in a chemical reaction that grows and consumes chemicals within that cell, creating a great deal of heat and potential gasses. He further advised, however, that a standard for testing the level of toxicity of such events does not exist..

Responding to a follow up question from Mayor Pro Tem Burrola, Mr. Garrido advised that that BESS project could pose extreme fire potential, which would be difficult to put out. He advised that exposure sprays are set up to cover the container, allowing it to go through a process of thermal runaway and burn itself out. Hazardous gasses would be considered poisonous in large quantities, which is why many of these types of projects are unmanned. He further advised that response times to these types of fires are generally three to five minutes from the closes fire station, similar to the response time for EMS.

COUNCILMEMBER
ORTIZ

Councilmember Ortiz asked about the resulting effects on air quality, to which Mr. Garrido advised that the containers are designed to explode to relieve pressure, requiring the same type of Fire Dept. response as a commercial building fire, prompting evacuation of residents.

CRAIG LEWIS

Craig Lewis stated that he has participated in a meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors along with Los Angeles County Fire Chief Marrone, where the Chief spoke about battery safety. He noted that multiple projects have already been deployed in the County with zero issues and noted that the Chief is very comfortable with the prepared emergency plans. He acknowledged an explosion at Otay but noted that the Otay project was made using a very old design, which caused gasses to accumulate, resulting in an explosion. Modern systems, however, are built differently whereby they vent directly to the air. He added that such sites would not typically explode; rather, they would vent and melt down in place.

CHIEF GARRIDO

Chief Garrido noted that he is in support of such a project and noted the Fire Department's goal to maximize safety.

MAYOR PRO TEM
BURROLA

Mayor Pro Tem Burrola asked about the size of containers and batteries, to which Mr. Lewis advised that battery containers could be as large as cargo containers or as small as 1.5 inches in diameter. A BESS such as the one being spoken about would contain tens of containers lined up with 8-foot spacing; the spacing of which is set to minimize any meltdown from one container jumping to another.

Mayor Pro Tem Burrola also asked about the number of BESS facilities in California, to which Mr. Lewis advised that dozens have already been deployed, with many dozens in the process of being deployed. Multiple BESS projects have been created in Los Angeles County, some of which have operated for years. Another is coming to Acton, CA.

CHIEF GARRIDO

Chief Garrido added that there is another one in unincorporated Los Angeles above Monterey Park and another in Santa Clarita. He added that one rack could contain up to a thousand batteries, and there could be 16 racks in one container.

DENA ZEPEDA

Dena Zepeda spoke against this type of project, citing environmental contamination concerns and the potential need to evacuate residents, to which Chief Garrido concurred that evacuations would sometimes require moving individuals to a shelter. He noted, however, that cities typically have facilities that could be turned into temporary shelters. He advised that the Fire Department does all it could to pass precautionary measures for the safety of all those concerned and added that the Fire Department is ready to handle these types of incidents.

Dena Zepeda stated that she has an article about an incident that occurred five years ago in Los Angeles where the site is still contaminating water. She requested that the Council consider that no residents have spoken in support of such a project.

CARMEN ROMAN

Responding to a question by Carmen Roman, Chief Garrido advised that BESS fires would be categorized the same as house fires. He noted that the containers are designed to vent product outside and, since it is lighter than air, it will rise and evaporate, diluting itself and creating a less-dangerous situation. He further advised that fire crews learned from the situation at Otay and has determined new tactics to combat fire through the experience.

Carmen Roman voiced concern over the potential hazards for such a project, to which Chief Garrido acknowledged that the technology is new for the CA area, though it has been used elsewhere, such as for residential solar battery storage systems. Mrs. Roman also asked where residents would be evacuated to, should it be necessary, to which Chief Garrido advised that part of evacuation procedures may include sheltering in place. Mrs. Roman also asked whether a fund would be set up in case the project causes any harm or injury.

MAYOR AMBRIZ

Mayor Ambriz stated at this point that the workshop would be continued to a future date since the Council must move on to its regular meeting.

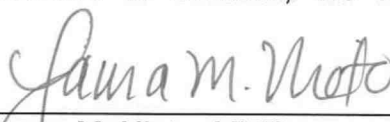
COUNCILMEMBER
ORTIZ Responding to a question by Councilmember Ortiz, Director Simpson advised that staff could gather information from other cities that already have this type of project completed for presentation to the Council.

CRAIG LEWIS Craig Lewis stated that Clean Coalition has been involved in a couple of battery projects in Santa Barbara County and would provide information to staff.

MARGUERITE LOPEZ Responding to a question by Marguerite Lopez, City Attorney Guerra encouraged her to speak to Director Simpson. He also advised that this meeting was merely a workshop and did not apply to any specific project.

JAMES HUNLEY James Hunley stated that he objected.

ADJOURNMENT There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 5:29 p.m.



Laura M. Nieto, MMC
Chief Deputy City Clerk

Approved as submitted at the meeting held January 8, 2025.