



Application # 251463 No Situs, Felton CA 95018 APN: 071-331-06 - public comment

From Chris Berry <cberryh2o@gmail.com>

Date Mon 7/13/2026 7:21 PM

To Rebecca Rockom <Rebecca.Rockom@santacruzcountyca.gov>

Cc Fifth District <Fifth.District@santacruzcountyca.gov>; NBBM <NBBM@cruzio.com>; JM Brown <JM.Brown@santacruzcountyca.gov>; mark_ogonowski@fws.gov <mark_ogonowski@fws.gov>; Stokes, Wesley@Wildlife <Wesley.Stokes@wildlife.ca.gov>

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Hi Ms. Rockom - Please accept the following comments on Application #251463 for consideration at the Zoning Administrator hearing on 7/17/26:

As there are potentially special-status species on this site, a CEQA exemption is not appropriate for this project. I have personally witnessed white-shouldered kites foraging on this property. This species is a CA fully-protected species - which formerly meant "take" cannot be authorized for it. However, while SB147 recently lessened the regulatory obligations for projects like this one when they may impact fully-protected species, there is still a requirement to avoid or minimize impacts to this species as would typically be dictated by an incidental take permit from the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife. Other special-status species (though, admittedly, not fully-protected species) such as San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat have also been observed at this site, however there is no mention of them or identification of avoidance and minimization measures for impacts to them included in the staff report.

Furthermore, there is a seasonal wetland immediately inside the gate to this property. This wetland provides habitat for waterfowl and other fauna during wet winters, slows and sinks runoff into the subsurface and will inevitably be degraded by vehicular access to the site and altered site hydrology resulting from the additional impervious surfaces associated with the project. Again, there is virtually no discussion of these matters in the staff report.

As the staff report correctly states, the site is also within the Felton Town Plan Scenic Corridor #4. While it may be that the project can be hidden from some site lines as

currently envisioned, it's not clear how that may change if avoidance and minimization of impacts to kite habitat is incorporated in the project.

The project and above potential impacts also point to the broader challenges that Mount Hermon faces regarding stewardship of the entirety of their property in Santa Cruz County. This property is distinguished by highly-sensitive habitat for a variety of species ranging from steelhead to the Mount Hermon June beetle. Given the richness of this habitat and the ongoing threats to it posed by conference center and camp operations, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan or other conservation tool would be valuable in not only making this current proposal more successful and less impactful to this important biodiversity, but also facilitate more thoughtful management of the rest of their significant acreage. This may also facilitate future project planning, project permitting and ongoing maintenance of this property. Recommendations of this nature have been made previously during the Mount Hermon Conference Center Master Plan EIR and Velocity bike park project processes and may prove informative should staff wish to pursue this issue further. Admittedly, this may be a bit out of scope of the current proposal discussion.

Finally, while we should be endeavoring to facilitate development of local, alternative energy sources, this project seems fundamentally misguided. Mount Hermon owns many, many large buildings and parking lots (some within very close proximity to this site) where a similar project could be implemented without sacrificing this beautiful open space. All of which is to say that the project should go through CEQA review in order to identify potentially superior project alternatives, additional required permits, as well as avoidance and minimization measures for potential project hydrologic, biotic and aesthetic impacts.

Thank you for your consideration.

-Chris Berry

MH solar farm proposal

From Wendy Lord <wendywlord@gmail.com>

Date Tue 7/14/2026 10:05 AM

To Rebecca Rockom <Rebecca.Rockom@santacruzcountyca.gov>

******CAUTION:**This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

I am writing to urge you to reconsider the location of your proposed solar farm. We're not against a solar farm and realize why the Mount Hermon Association is proposing one. The solar farm is of no benefit to any residents - only harmful impacts to those who live in close proximity to it.

Consider a compromise of moving it to the west where it is below the ridge, where residents wouldn't see it, where hopefully the noise level would be better and the heat generated by a solar farm wouldn't reach us as it rises into the prevailing winds that have always been directed towards our homes. We have documented the noise level from a smaller solar farm at the Chaminade. Your compromise of an eight foot fence would not help with the visual, noise and heat impact.

All these detriments affect our property values, too. We homeowners have worked hard to pay for and maintain our homes. Why should our property values decrease while only the MHA benefits?

We believe in our community and have shown it. One neighbor spends a lot of time clearing the path around the meadow. My street has spent time clearing MHA property near our homes for wildfire reduction and improving access and egress in the event of a wildfire. We sought the advice of the Felton Fire Department. We got together and cleaned up MHA land, filling 12 trucks, one trailer and two green bins on a Saturday morning. Since then I have filled ten green bins debriding MHA land near our homes. The MHA looked at it and told me and a neighbor it was okay. The firefighter said it was not. We rely on the advice of professional firefighters when it comes to wildfire risk reduction. We have been involved in other projects to improve the Mount Hermon community, such as Helping Hands.

We have put in an investment in our community and ask the MHA to move the location so we're all happy with this solar project. Would you feel the same if your homes were affected by such a project? Would you be willing to sacrifice your property values? Your quality of life? The visual, noise and heat impacts of a project in which you reap zero benefits?

The notice of the proposed project and the public hearing are seriously lacking in an attempt to communicate to the public.

Per the County website, prominent project signs are required. They must be "placed in a prominent, clearly visible location on the development site". The next County requirement states "Signs must be clearly seen and readily readable from the right-of-way providing vehicular access". For a public hearing, "the County must mail notices at least 21 days before taking action. This notice goes to

property owners within 500 feet". We got 10/11 days notice for the public hearing. Notices of a public hearing must also be installed on the signs on the site. Since the project signs aren't visible to the public, neither are the notices of a public hearing.

The signs and public hearing notices are not visible as the public drives down Conference Drive, Graham Hill Road or East Zayante. You have to, by chance, be hiking on the trail around the meadow - not a well-known or well-maintained trail. They are located behind a fence and at a distance from the fence that makes it impossible for a member of the public to read. You'd have to climb over the fence to read them. Therefore, very few residents of Felton and Mount Hermon know about the proposed project or the public hearing.

One of the listed values on the Mount Hermon Association website is "We are Hospitable". Under that "We eagerly live out Christian hospitality that is others-focused, and we take the time to make this place feel like home to all who visit and live here".

Again, we are not against a solar farm but are against being affected by it. This is our community too. The meadow consists of two parcels and is large enough to accommodate a solar farm that would suit the needs of the MHA and the quality of life of all its residents. A compromise needs to be met.