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June 26, 2025

The Honorable Bob Ferguson
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

RE: Report from dissenting councilman Matt Chiles on the Carriger Solar/BESS Project

Dear Governor Ferguson:

I am writing as the dissenting EFSEC councilperson on the Carriger Solar/BESS Project in Klickitat County. I am the Klickitat County representative on the EFSEC board for this project. I believe it is important for you to understand the reasons for my dissenting vote on this project, as you will ultimately decide its fate.

Foremost, this project has been widely opposed the by people of Klickitat County, including all three County Commissioners. There has been consistent loud and vocal opposition to this project from what appears to be an overwhelming percentage of the local Klickitat County population. The primary reasons for this are:

1. This project is poorly sited in an area with many residences, close to the town of Goldendale. Because of the nature of this site in a large bowl-shaped valley it will be viewable from multiple directions for many miles.
2. This project includes a Battery Energy Storage Component. BESS system technologies are not yet safe, and these systems (including the technology proposed for the Carriger project) have been shown repeatedly to melt down in catastrophic fires. These fire events drop toxic fallout, including heavy metals, on neighborhoods downwind. Furthermore, the County does not have resources, training or equipment to notify residents in such a BESS fire emergency or to safely fight such a fire.
3. This system will remove thousands of acres of productive agricultural land from our County.

Solar systems are a needed component of our energy grid for the foreseeable future. However, this system is a poor example of how a solar installation should be designed. It is sited here only because of its proximity to existing energy infrastructure, with no regard for other factors.

I would strongly encourage you, as governor, to not approve this system.

The following steps should be taken by State government in the future to continue progress in installing new solar systems:

1. All new solar systems should be required to be agrivoltaic. That is, they will complement existing agriculture by including various types of agriculture under and around solar panel instead of replacing agriculture it by exclusion.
2. New solar energy facilities need to be required to give back to the greater community (not just owner landlords). Solar facilities have an outsized geographic footprint and impact on communities and need to repay those communities, especially considering that the energy generated is not typically used locally.
3. New BESS systems need to be required to use new technologies that are engineered to not overheat and catch fire, or alternatively the systems need to be placed in bunkers designed to completely contain noxious smoke and heavy metals in the event of a BESS fire.

Thank you for your consideration, and your work towards making solar a healthy and accepted green energy option in Washington. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like to discuss any options further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Chiles', is written over a horizontal line.

Matt Chiles

Klickitat County Representative for EFSEC
Carriger Solar/BESS Project