

Attachment F

July 17, 2025, Planning Commission
Minutes

AYES: Harris, Langford, Reed, and Salene
 NOES: None
 ABSTAIN: None
 ABSENT: Ellmore, Gazzano, and Rosene

ITEM NO. 4 COYOTE CANYON LANDFILL-GAS-TO-ENERGY (PA2022-063)
Site Location: 20662 Newport Coast Drive

Summary:

A request for a conditional use permit to allow the construction and operation of a new renewable natural gas processing plant and pipeline interconnection facility. The facility would convert landfill gas from the closed Coyote Canyon Landfill into a pipeline-quality natural gas equivalent, which would be transferred into SoCal Gas infrastructure through an existing onsite tie-in point. Additional project components include a new control room building, new internal access routes, utility upgrades including installation of an additional fire hydrant, a water tank, a septic tank, a storm drain for off-site disposal of stormwater, and new underground power and telecommunication lines. The facility would operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with one scheduled annual shut down for maintenance. Existing onsite telecom facilities approved under PA2016-091 (SCH No. 2016081012) would remain in place and be unaffected by this application. This project was originally noticed for a Planning Commission meeting on May 22, 2025, and was removed from calendar. There have been no changes to the project since the previous Notice of Public Hearing.

Recommended Actions:

1. Conduct a public hearing; and
2. Adopt Resolution No. PC2025-008, adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration (SCH NO. 2024120012) and approving the Conditional Use Permit filed under PA2022-063.

Senior Planner Joselyn Perez used a PowerPoint to present the project location, zoning and surrounding land uses, background of the Coyote Canyon landfill, existing site conditions, a project description, summarized the environmental review process which included preparing an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and Response to Comments received on the IS/MND. She concluded her presentation by summarizing the project, reviewing the written comment letter provided by the law firm Adams Broadwell Joseph Cardozo prior to public hearing, and indicated that the comments reflect those already received during the IS/MND public comment period which were adequately responded to in the Response to Comments portion of the IS/MND.

In response to Commissioner Langford's inquiry, Senior Planner Perez confirmed there are no public trails through the area, and the property surrounding the site is owned by the City of Irvine. Assistant City Attorney Summerhill added that there has been some discussion about adding bike and/or pedestrian trails, but it has not been brought to fruition.

All Commissioners reported having no ex Parte communications.

Chair Harris opened the public hearing.

Tyler Henson, Lead Manager of External Affairs for Archaea Energy, reported that they will be partnering with Orange County Waste and Recycling on the Coyote Canyon project, and Archaea is the largest RNG producer in the country. He presented on the company's safety protocols and benefits of RNG being collected from landfill gas, which would otherwise be burnt off. He acknowledged there will be temporary impacts during construction but expressed a commitment to work with the City throughout the process, adding they have already discussed the project with

Sage Hill School regarding working the site's traffic around school drop-off and pickup times. He presented artist renderings of the completed facility.

In response to Chair Harris' inquiry, Mr. Henson confirmed Archaea agrees with the recommended Conditions of Approval.

In response to Commissioner Reed's inquiries, Mr. Henson reported that construction timelines could range between one and five years, depending on variables including the permitting process. He added they cannot offer a definitive timetable for how long the facility will operate, as it is determined by gas levels.

In response to Secretary Langford's inquiry, Mr. Henson reported Archaea works with the local jurisdictions regarding the look of their site, adding their appearance can vary widely depending primarily on the remoteness of the locations. He expressed a willingness to work with Newport Beach on the facility's outward appearance.

In response to Vice Chair Salene's inquiries, Mr. Henson confirmed he has seen the comment letter from the law firm referenced earlier by Senior Planner Perez and stated City staff's response to the letter is sufficient. He expressed a willingness to put non-interference with school traffic patterns into writing as a Condition of Approval.

Aidan Marshall, speaking on behalf of Orange County Residents for Responsible Development, requested that staff prepare a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) instead of an MND for CEQA compliance and to protect the health and safety of residents and workers. He stated his organization has responded in writing throughout the process with analysis from air quality and noise consultants agreeing the project would result in significant unmitigated air quality, public health, and noise impacts left unaddressed in the MND. He added that there are also health hazards to analyze and mitigate from a potential emergency at the facility, impacting its safe operation.

Mr. Mosher expressed concerns about the project's thermal oxidizer, including the possibility of it collapsing during an earthquake, and creating potential damage to land owned by the City of Irvine.

Assistant City Attorney Summerhill confirmed staff received the letter submitted by Adams Broadwell Joseph Cardozo and feels the comments had been adequately addressed. She added that there is a CEQA consultant who can further respond.

Senior Engineer and project manager Dina El Chammas Gass, on behalf of PlaceWorks, confirmed that none of the comments in the Adams Broadwell Joseph Cardozo letter are new and have been previously responded to. She noted that the letter states there could be significant and unavoidable impacts, which is incorrect. She added that the off-site consequences analysis prepared for the project showed no significant impacts. She continued that the IS/MND includes a mitigation measure to enact a fuel modification plan to mitigate fire risks. She made note of the need to remove 28 trees at the request of the Newport Beach Fire Department to support the goal of preventing a fire in the facility from spreading beyond its walls or vice versa and mitigating fire risk. She reported the RNG Facility itself will be designed with many monitors and sensors to help ensure its safe operation and mitigate fire risk. Ms. El Chammas Gass noted there was a comment made about noise and added that a Noise Analysis was conducted for this project, which is included in the IS/MND, and sufficiently addresses that comment.

Principal Nicole Vermilion, on behalf of PlaceWorks, clarified that the facility will have a closed system, so there will be no fugitive emissions unaddressed by the air quality permit through the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD). She noted the South Coast AQMD is listed as a responsible agency, so it will have to approve the project along with Newport Beach. She expressed confidence in the conclusions of the MND.

Senior Planner Perez stated, in response to Secretary Langford's earlier inquiry about the facility's exterior, staff reviewed both a light blue and camouflage print option for the exterior, with a final design to be determined in plan check. In response to Vice Chair Salene's earlier inquiry about Sage Hill School, she reported that staff have put a mitigation measure into the MND requiring a traffic control plan sensitive to the school.

Chair Harris closed the public hearing.

Secretary Langford lauded the fact that there have been no incidents in the 30 years of operations by the previous facility, and bringing in newer technology to the new facility. He expressed an interest in the fuel modification plan, noting the NBFD has been doing a great job of removing trees at risk for fire. He requested of the applicant if, in addition to removing the trees, they could landscape to better help shield the walls from traffic on Newport Coast Drive.

Motion made by Secretary Langford and seconded by Commissioner Reed to approve the Item as recommended.

AYES: Harris, Langford, Reed, and Salene
 NOES: None
 ABSTAIN: None
 ABSENT: Ellmore, Gazzano, and Rosene

VIII. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER ITEMS

ITEM NO. 5 MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION - None

ITEM NO. 6 REPORT BY THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR OR REQUEST FOR MATTERS WHICH A PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBER WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA

Deputy Director of Community Development Murillo reported that the August 7th Planning Commission meeting will review the Zenk residence on Bayview Drive in Corona del Mar. He reported that the City has received an appeal of the Ford Road Townhome project approved at the last meeting. He added it was filed by a law firm representing a group titled Save Our Sports Park. He reported that staff is working with the applicant to prepare the matter for City Council review.

ITEM NO. 7 REQUESTS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES

Commissioner Reed reported he will not be able to attend the August 7th meeting.

Chair Harris congratulated Commissioner Ellmore and his wife on the birth of twin sons.

IX. ADJOURNMENT – With no further business, Chair Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

July 17, 2025

The agenda for July 17, 2025, Planning Commission meeting was posted on Friday, July 11, 2025, at 9:35 a.m. in the Chambers binder, on the digital display board located inside the vestibule of the Council Chambers at 100 Civic Center Drive, and on the City's website on Friday, July 11, 2025, at 9:34 a.m.

Tristan Harris

Tristan Harris, Chair

Jonathan Langford

Jonathan Langford, Secretary