

Doña Ana County creates citizens' Project Jupiter watchdog

11-member committee to study data center, hear from independent experts

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LAS CRUCES — Doña Ana County Commissioners authorized a new community monitoring committee focused on Project Jupiter on Tuesday, with opponents of the project expressing guarded support for the initiative while calling for its independence from county government and the

developers.

The resolution creating the committee passed unanimously, with two commissioners – Susana Chaparro and Gloria Gameros — absent. The proposed committee [was brought to the commissioners](#) by local resident Lynn Moorner with the backing of skeptics as well as supporters of the massive data center under construction in Santa Teresa.

Known as Project Jupiter, the facility is being built on 1,400 acres of vacant land to house four data centers supporting AI training for Oracle and OpenAI, with power generation facilities and an office complex.

The resolution creating the committee acknowledges “large numbers of County residents who have questions related to the impact Project Jupiter will have on water, air, noise, pollution, and related environmental concerns and who wish to have a way they can get information related to the impacts from Project Jupiter.” It also cites promises made in public meetings and in news media by the data center’s developers to engage with the community, providing a moderated venue for fulfilling that commitment.

Moorner said the body would function as an independent citizens’ study committee and hear from independent experts with the companies involved in building the data center invited to participate.

“Citizens will be able to research without restraint to discover countless important details about the project that will affect their lives and livelihoods in critical ways far into the future,” she said.

Commissioners will appoint two members of the committee from each of the county’s five districts plus an 11th member selected by the chairman, selected from letters of interest submitted by an Aug. 31 deadline.

The members are to be appointed by Sept. 4, when they will proceed to write their bylaws and elect their officers. The resolution was amended, at the suggestion of Commissioner Susie Kimble, to direct the county manager’s office to hire an attorney to serve as an outside legal advisor for the committee.

Earlier in the commission meeting, a long line of county residents who have organized opposition to Project Jupiter denounced the management of public input at the commissioners’ July 28 meeting, which they said had been stacked in favor of employees who turned out to make supportive comments about the data center.

Several called on County Chairman Manny Sanchez to resign in the aftermath of the [previous meeting](#), during which three people were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and a woman was knocked to the ground by a private

security employee during a scuffle in front of the dais.

The security guard involved in that incident was not assigned to Tuesday's meeting, but several employees of contractor Security Concepts as well as Doña Ana County Sheriff's deputies were positioned around the chambers.

Sanchez expressed concerns about some social media posts concerning the project, citing a comment from an anonymous account over the weekend that publicized Sanchez's home address and was later deleted.

During these remarks, several individuals tried to shout him down, saying opponents did not support such conduct.

By the time the monitoring committee came up on the agenda, there were fewer people in attendance and tempers had cooled. Several opponents, wearing matching T-shirts with the slogan, "We can't drink data," communicated support for the committee while cautioning against letting the committee simply become a promotional tool for advancing the project.

One organizer, Jovany Hernandez, said, "We are still wary of institutional capture."

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