

Docket SU26-04

Special Use Authorization
for a Solar Energy Power Plant with BESS

Planning and Zoning Commission

April 8, 2026



Sample Motion

I move to approve Docket SU26-04 with conditions of approval recommended by staff, the factors in favor constituting the findings of fact.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

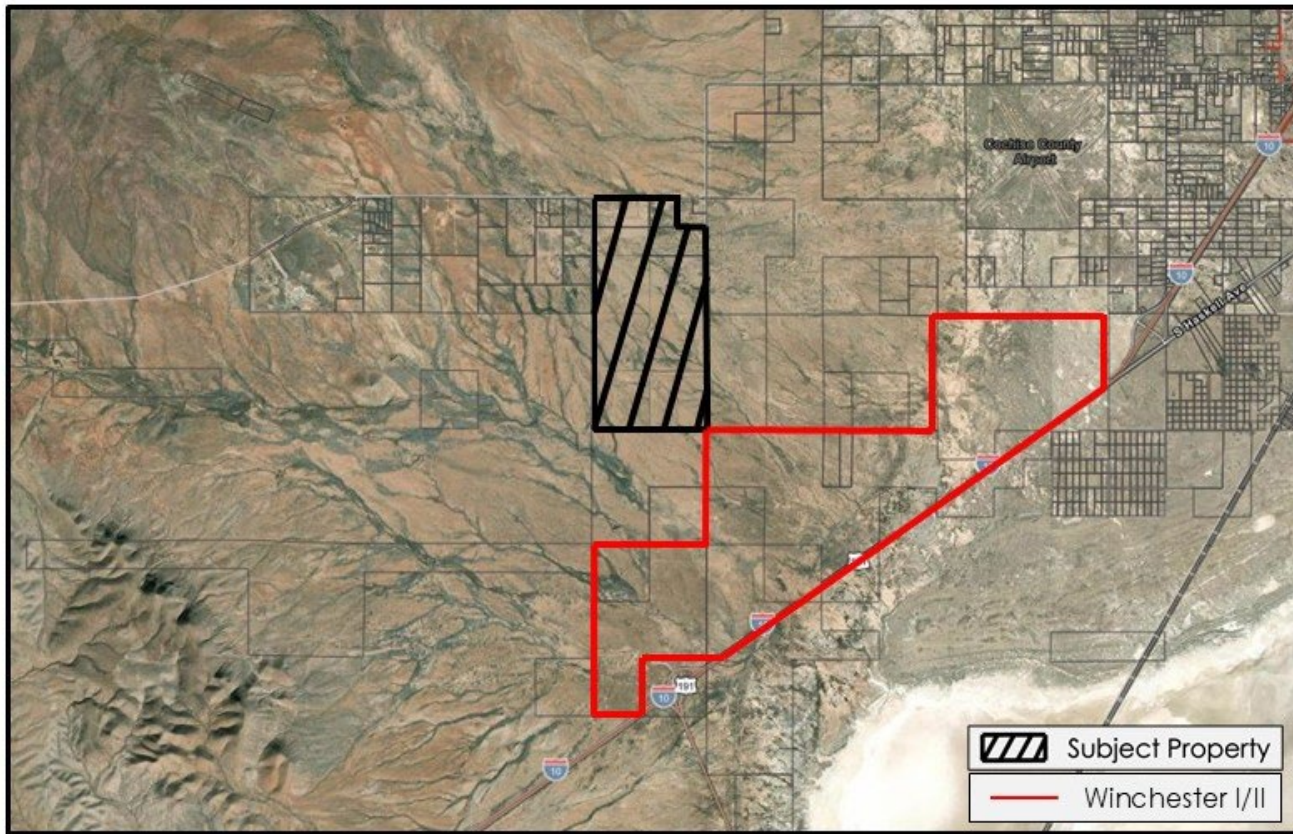


Applicant:	Winchester Solar III, LLC
Location:	Airport/Permenter Roads (Willcox) APNs 209-86-010B, 016E, 016F, 016G, and 016H (~1250 acres)
Zoning:	RU-4
Plan Designation:	Rural
Growth Area:	D – Rural
Current Use:	Undeveloped
Proposed Uses:	SEPP w/BESS

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Property Location and Zoning



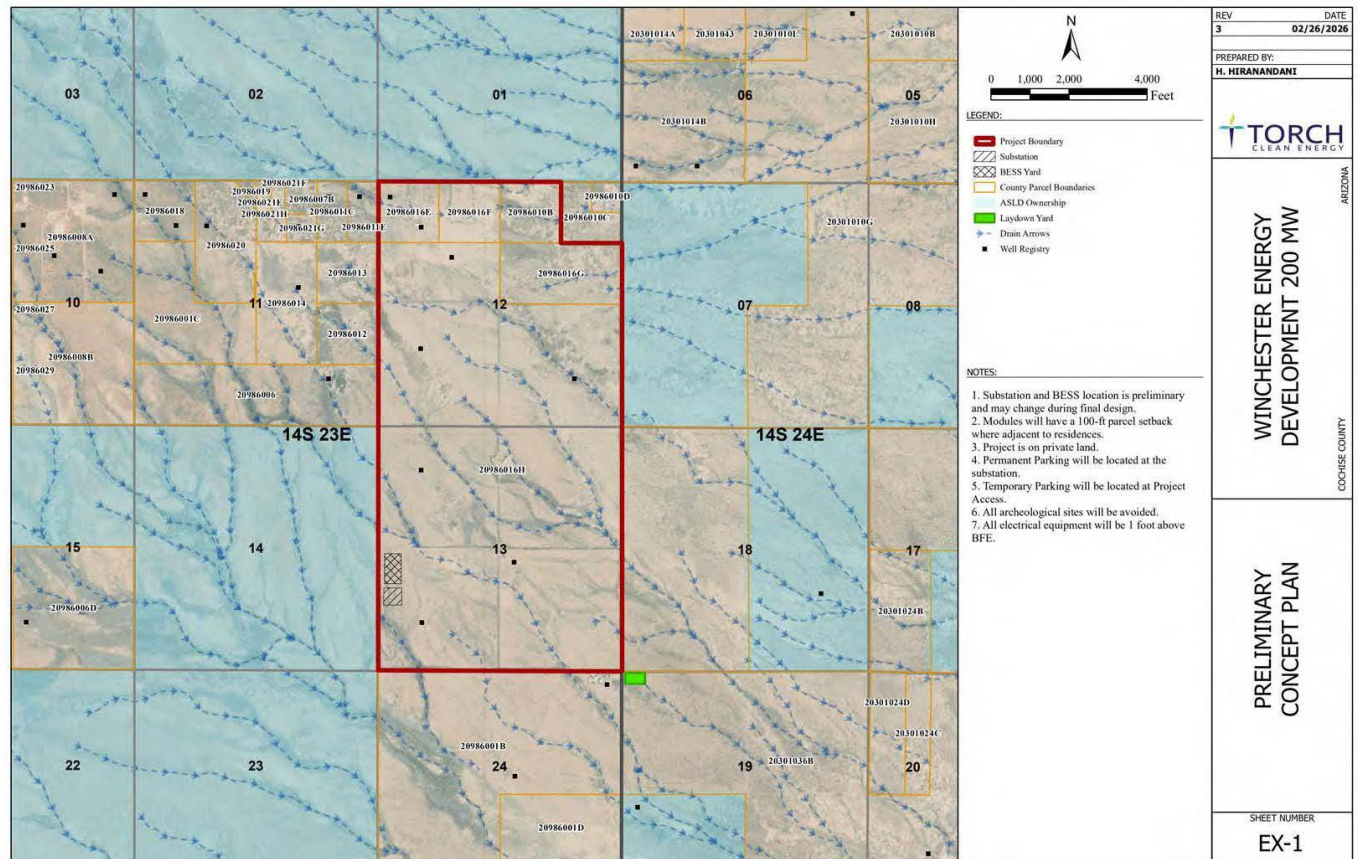
SU26-04 (Winchester III Solar)

Airport/Permenter Rds (APNs 209-86-010B, 016E, 016F, 016G, 016H)

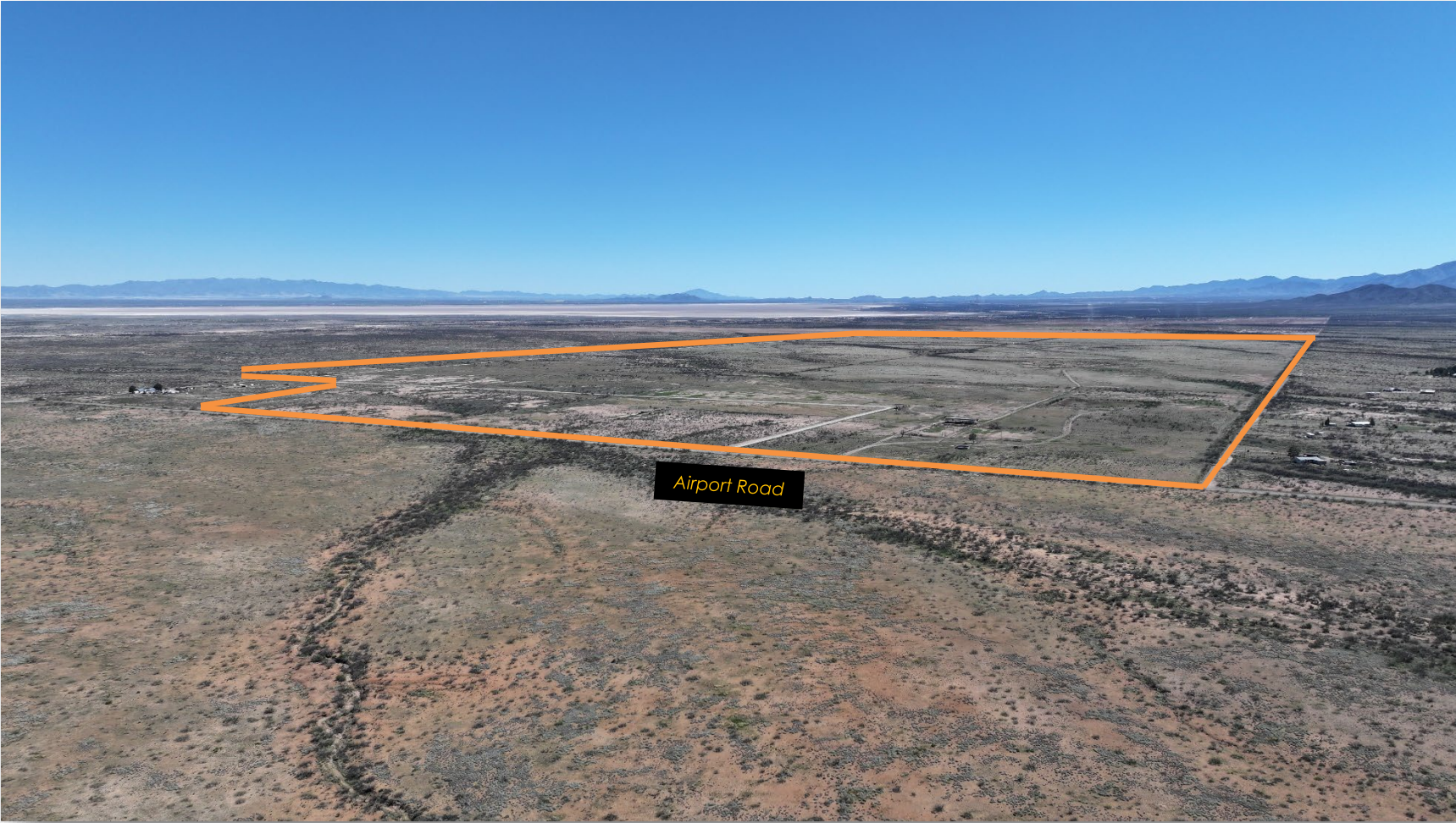
N.T.S



Concept Plan



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Special Use Authorization Factors

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Compliance with adopted plans | Complies |
| 2. Compliance with zoning district purpose | Complies |
| 3. Development along major streets | Complies w/Conditions |
| 4. Traffic circulation | Complies w/Conditions |
| 5. Adequate services and infrastructure | Complies |
| 6. Significant site development standards | Complies |
| 7. Public input | Complies |
| 8. Hazardous materials | Complies |
| 9. Off-site impacts | Complies w/Conditions |
| 10. Water conservation | Complies |

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Factors in Favor of Approval

- Complies with applicable factors
- Comprehensive Plan encourages renewable energy projects
- Low water land use in Willcox AMA
- Limited demand on local services and infrastructure
- Enhance grid reliability and support future load growth
- Near previously approved Winchester I/II solar project

Factors Not in Favor

- Fugitive dust during construction
- Natural view obstruction for nearby residents
- Biological and wildlife concerns
- Opposition from a nearby property owner

Citizen Review / Public Notice

- 27 February
 - Applicant letters
- 18-20 March
 - Notices
 - Posting
 - Legal ad



Applicant Presentation / Discussion



Staff Recommendation

Based on the factors in favor, staff recommends approval of Docket SU26-04 to allow a Solar Energy Power Plant with BESS with the following conditions:

1. An Emergency Management Plan is required at permitting. The Plan shall include documentation confirming subscription service agreement(s) with responding Fire Department(s)/District(s) that provide annual site visit access for grounds review and facility relevant training activities and resources. The Plan shall be updated a minimum of every five (5) years.
2. Update existing Traffic Management Plan for the Winchester I/II solar project to incorporate the Winchester III solar project, including site access, roadway improvements and restrictions, and dust control measures.
3. All project components including photovoltaic (PV) arrays shall be setback a minimum of 100' from all perimeter property lines. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) shall maintain a minimum setback of 1000' from existing residential dwellings and residentially zoned property, and a minimum setback of 100' from adjacent properties held by Winchester Solar LLC.
4. Project owner shall maintain the project site with perennial vegetative

Staff Recommendation (cont.)

4 (cont.). groundcover and noncompacted soils. Where grading is not required during project construction, any existing vegetation will be mowed rather than removed completely.

5. Project owner shall exclusively use PV panels with an anti-reflectivity coating that is integral to the panel.

6. All panels shall be regularly inspected and continuously maintained by the project owner. Any broken or damaged panels shall be properly and safely removed in a timely manner from the site.

7. To reduce the optical illusion of water that closely spaced panels can create, the project shall be designed with no less than a 12' distance between all tracker rows.

8. Project owner shall submit a completed wetland delineation, confirmed by USACE prior to commercial permit issuance, if applicable. Wetland features shall be avoided except where crossings are needed for roads and cables.

9. Project owner shall conduct baseline soil testing prior to issuance of building permits to document existing site conditions. Post-construction, soil testing shall be

Staff Recommendation (cont.)

9 (cont.). conducted at year one (1) and every five (5) years thereafter for the life of the project to evaluate potential leaching impacts to soils and groundwater. Results shall be submitted to the County within 60 days of each sampling event.

10. To the extent feasible, non-fenced wildlife corridors within project boundaries shall be reserved near washes or in areas determined by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) to be appropriate for a wildlife highway crossing.

11. Incorporate AZGFD best management practices including:

- a. Utilize bird diverters and near-ultraviolet light Avian Collision Avoidance Systems (ACAS) for new above ground power lines;
- b. Implement post-construction monitoring to assess avian injuries and fatalities resulting from “lake effect” conditions caused by PV arrays;
- c. Conduct western burrowing owl occupancy surveys prior to final project design using an AZGFD certified surveyor;
- d. Conduct nesting bird surveys prior to vegetation removal and construction activities that occur during breeding season;
- e. Coordinate with AZGFD to incorporate open corridors across the project area to facilitate wildlife movement;

Staff Recommendation (cont.)

- f. Maintain 200' setbacks from ephemeral washes and ¼ mile setbacks from perennial waters, if applicable;
- g. Reserve a 6"-8" gap between the ground surface and the bottom of perimeter fencing;
- h. Conduct minimal grading to retain habitat features underneath PV arrays;
- i. Relocate wildlife encountered during project activities no more than ¼ mile out of harm's way;
- j. Ensure crew coordination to minimize the number of open holes or trenches at any given time;
- k. Use minimum amount of light needed for safety, including motion sensing lighting and warm, narrow spectrum lighting (amber, orange, red);
- l. Comply with Arizona Native Plant Law and wash and/or decontaminate equipment to minimize the introduction of spread of invasive species;
- m. Revegetate disturbed areas with native, drought-tolerant species representative of the natural surrounding landscape.

Standard conditions relative to condition acceptance, permitting timelines, and modification to an approved special use apply to this request.

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