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Ava - 11/20/24 - Susan Silber public comment

Adrian Bankhead <abankhead@avaenergy.org>
To: Ava Board of Directors <cob@avaenergy.org>

Thu, Nov 21, 2024 at 9:40 AM



Dear Ava Board of Directors,

Please see the written public comment below from Susan Silber. This public comment letter will be added to the agenda packet and saved on the public meetings page.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,
Adrian

My name is Susan Silber and I am a resident of Berkeley. I am the founder and Project Director of the nonprofit organization [Collective Resilience](#), and have been working for the past 7 years with nonprofits and governmental agencies to support and develop resilience hubs here in Alameda County, including collaborating closely with the Local Clean Energy Alliance.

We want to thank you for committing to support resilience hubs, but are asking to specifically allocate at least \$3 million dollars more from the 2023-2024 budget surplus into the development of a comprehensive Community Resilience Hub program, beyond the net billing tariff solar and storage programming that has been outlined in the current budget surplus description.

I wanted to share a brief story about why comprehensive funding is needed. I had the good fortune to be in Asheville North Carolina a few weeks ago, about a month after Hurricane Helene devastated this region, which was heartbreaking to see and hear about. Residents were without energy for about 5 days, and without potable water for about a month. That being said, the stories of resilience blew my mind. Asheville is known for its plethora of community initiatives and groups which cultivate trust and relationships with community members, and it showed in a big way during the hurricane.

I love hearing stories of neighbors coming together to share food, volunteers bringing water to seniors and other vulnerable populations, countless businesses and schools immediately turning into pop-up resilience hubs to distribute supplies. These stories really solidified my belief in the power and potential of supporting a decentralized network of sites serving as resilience hubs, the need to provide training and to consider not just energy needs but food, water and other basic needs as well.

With a comprehensive Community Resilience Hub program, resilience hubs can not only more comprehensively serve their communities during climate or energy disasters, but also better help their communities thrive on a day-to-day basis.

As you know, the definition of resilience hubs is that they are *spaces where community members can access services for disaster response and recovery, as well as “to gather, organize, and access resilience-building social services on a daily basis.”* So by their true definition, resilience hubs are holistic, they are community-led and community-driven.

Energy resilience through solar and storage are very much needed, but they alone cannot create a resilience hub. A resilience hub needs funding for programs that center building relationships and social cohesion (which are even more important in today's polarized world), and funding for food distribution and other programs, or nature-based solutions like community gardens and rain gardens.

Moreover, resilience hubs cannot exist as islands. We need funding to develop a coalition which could provide capacity building, communications portals and connections between the sites, governmental agencies and the nonprofits providing support for them.

We are at a make or break moment in history here, having just elected the most anti-environmental administration which could tear down safety nets and defund climate resilience programs. That means that resilience hubs will be even more urgently needed, as they replace some of the programs that our government had previously relied on.

As climate change worsens and with uncertainty in a new federal administration, there will be an increased need for localized energy services and investments in day-to-day resilience

I have seen a great deal of excitement for resilience hubs over the years, but planning for them and their programming will not magically appear. It will take resources. Ava Community Energy, we know you have those resources, you have a \$179 million dollar surplus. Put it to good use. Urge you to jumpstart this proposed **coalition** of resilience hubs, and funding for not just solar and storage but also for other programming needs, funding which should be accessible to trusted smaller, less resourced Community-Based Organizations in frontline communities - in other words, an expansion of your successful mini-grants programs.

Let Ava Community Energy think outside the box a little bit. Fund what the community wants and needs. Listen to the community and what we want, what we know is best for our community. We ask Ava Community Energy to invest in creative, holistic solutions to make sure communities can thrive.

Susan Silber

supporting resilience sites - hubs, spaces and neighborhoods - to evolve and flourish

Project Director: www.collectiveresiliencenow.org

[Calendly appointment link](#)