Exhibit C of EBZA Resolutions
Aramis Solar Energy Generation and Storage Project
Statement of Overriding Considerations

Pursuant to the requirements of Public Resources Code Sections 21002, 21002.1, and 21081, and Section 15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the East County Board of Zoning Adjustments (EBZA) finds that approval of the proposed Aramis Solar Energy Generation and Storage Project, whose potential environmental impacts have been evaluated in the Final EIR, and as indicated in the findings presented in Exhibit A, would result in the occurrence of significant effects that are not avoided or substantially lessened, as described in Exhibit A. These significant effects are listed below.

Impact AES-1: The proposed project would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista

Impact AES-3: The proposed project would degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings resulting in a significant aesthetic impact

Impact AES-5: The proposed project would contribute to a significant cumulative impact on aesthetic resources

Impact LUP-2: The proposed project would conflict with a land use plan, policy, or regulation which would result in a significant land use and planning impact

Impact LUP-3: The proposed project would contribute to a significant cumulative impact with respect to land use and planning.

Further, as required by CEQA Section 21081(b) and State CEQA Guidelines Section 15093, the EBZA finds that the unavoidable significant effects listed above are outweighed by specific overriding economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits offered by the project. Specifically, the Project will provide the benefits described below.

Environmental Benefits

California's Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) requires all electricity retailers in the State, including publicly owned utilities (POUs), investor-owned utilities, electricity service providers, and community choice aggregators, to adopt RPS goals of obtaining 33% by the end of 2020, 40% by 2024, 50% by 2026, 60% by 2030, and 100% by 2045. Originally established in 2002 under Senate Bill (SB) 1078 and amended in 2006 and 2011 by SBs 107 and X1-2, respectively, the current RPS was codified at its current level by SB 100 in 2018.

Solar energy is a renewable energy source. The Project would assist California in meeting the legislated RPS for the generation of renewable electric energy in the State by increasing renewable energy output by 100 MW.

Assembly Bill (AB) 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, establishes a statewide goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and requires ARB and other state agencies to develop and enforce regulations and other initiatives for reducing GHG emissions. This statute also requires ARB to develop a “Scoping Plan” that describes the specific programs that

California will employ to meet this goal. The Scoping Plan was first considered by ARB in 2008 and its first update was adopted on May 22, 2014. The RPS program is an integral part of the suite of GHG emissions reduction programs that are relied upon by the Scoping Plan. Therefore, the program would assist California in maintaining its legislated Global Warming Solutions Act criteria that require reductions in carbon dioxide and other GHG emissions, which in turn represent benefits in the region. Approval of the program would aid the County and the rest of the Bay Area in meeting energy needs in an efficient and environmentally sound manner, as provided in the County General Plan, which encourages utilization of renewable energy resources.

The project's four-hour battery storage system would help to stabilize energy supplies and would provide energy generated from solar well into the peak-demand evening hours. This would reduce the need to employ backup generators, thus improving efficiency of the grid, reducing costs, and reducing the emissions that would come from the operation of the backup generators. Further, this project would allow utilities within the Bay Area to secure locally-generated renewable energy to meet their requirements under the Resource Adequacy framework adopted by the California Public Utilities Commission in 2004.

Economic Benefits

The Project would provide up to 400 temporary living wage jobs during construction and up to four living wage permanent positions during operation. The Project would provide economic benefits to the County and its residents by increased spending in the community as a result of construction and development-related work. It would provide opportunities for local tradespeople to develop their skills and gain experience installing solar facilities and would reduce the amount of time that many of these people spend commuting by offering a local job opportunity. In addition, the program is compatible with agricultural use. It would promote the long-term economic viability of grazing in unincorporated Alameda County by providing financial support to property owners through a second income stream from ground leases within the Project area. The property owners could use the funding to enhance or continue agricultural operations. Further, it would provide opportunities for existing sheep ranchers and beekeepers to allow their animals to forage and produce additional products for sale.

Social Benefits

This project would provide social benefits including employment stability and sources of income through the direct and indirect employment opportunities described above. It would make available land to be potentially developed into a trail along a portion of Cayetano Creek and its tributaries that are adjacent to the site; if that trail were developed, it would provide an additional local recreational opportunity and an opportunity for students and other interested parties to learn about solar technology and the opportunities for combining solar farms with agriculture. Finally, the project would minimize power outages and disruptions by providing a reliable local source of renewable power that would help reduce rolling blackouts during peak demand periods and some instances of public safety power shutoffs.

Technological Benefits

The project would contribute to technological benefits through the installation of approximately 267,000 single-axis tracking solar panels and the use of an existing substation for power distribution. It would involve the installation of state-of-the-art battery storage technology and would provide a proof of concept for other potential large utility-scale solar facilities with battery storage in the Bay Area.

Safety Benefits

The project would involve the installation of 410 acres of solar panels and a battery storage system. The battery system would include state of the art safety features using lessons learned from previous installations in other areas and implementing updated requirements from the 2019 California Fire Code. A sheep grazing program would manage fuels on the project site to help minimize wildfire risk. The project applicant has committed to coordinating with Alameda County Fire Department and CAL FIRE SCU to allow for pre-incident planning opportunities on site and to facilitate additional training to enable both agencies to better respond to solar emergencies. The applicant would cover the costs of these additional training opportunities if requested to do so. The enhanced training would not only enable firefighters to properly respond to any incidents on the project site, but it would better prepare them to respond to incidents involving solar panels throughout the area, including the nearby proposed Livermore Community Solar Farm project.

Benefits to the Knowledge Base

Project operation monitoring, which would be required once the solar panels and fencing are installed, would provide data to quantify the actual the extent of bat and avian fatalities from solar panels and fencing. This would contribute to the body of knowledge about bat and avian fatalities in the Livermore Valley region associated with utility-scale solar project. This would also have broader applications throughout California given that bat and avian mortality from solar facilities has been poorly studied, and it would support future environmental analyses and mitigations.

Summary

The County is obligated by Section 15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines to balance the competing interests of identified project benefits against the unavoidable environmental impacts when determining whether to approve a project. The County finds that the project, with all the mitigation measures proposed, would best balance the advancement of solar technology and renewable energy, while also reducing the significant and unavoidable impacts on aesthetics and land use and planning to the lowest level practicable.