



SIERRA CLUB

SAN DIEGO CHAPTER

Serving the Environment in San Diego and Imperial Counties

August 20, 2020
Mr. Joe Garcia
Candidate for Escondido District 3
Via Email joe@joeforescondido.com

RE: Sierra Club NCG request return of campaign donations from Safari Highlands LLC

Dear Mr. Garcia,

Sierra Club North County Group (NCG) has over 1,500 members and supporters in Escondido including several hundred in District 3. We work to protect human health and the environment, support good planning, and action to reverse the worst effects of climate change.

The controversial proposed Harvest Hills (the remarketed name of Safari Highlands Ranch) sprawl development will have major, negative implications for the city for decades to come. Therefore, it is critical that officials who ultimately decide this project are not conflicted. This project is expected to be voted on in the next few months, perhaps after the November 3rd election. It is important that the public have confidence in the objectivity of its representatives when the project is decided.

During the 2016 election your statements at a public forum were [reported](#) as, *"I don't know yet where I stand on this...**But what I will say is I won't take a cent from the developer**"*¹ (emphasis added) However, in spite of your previous stated intention to refuse campaign donations from developers of that project, we note that on June 29, 2020 your campaign reported receipt of the maximum donation of \$4,300 from Solana Beach-based Safari Highlands LLC, the interest behind the Harvest Hills project.

We understand and appreciate the time, cost, and sacrifice it takes to run for public office. However, Sierra Club holds that receipt of campaign contributions from entities with financial business in front of the City Council is inappropriate and creates a conflict of interest. In addition, it erodes public confidence in the integrity of our democratic processes. **In the name of good government and to remove any potential for future conflicts of interest, we ask that you to promptly return the donation.**

While Safari Highlands LLC is currently legally allowed to make the donation, you are also within your right to refuse it. If you do not return the donation, we request that you make a public statement that you will recuse yourself from future votes on this topic if elected.

Please let us know what action you will take on our request.

Sincerely,

Richard Miller
Chapter Director

¹ <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/sd-no-escondido-candidates-20160915-story.html>