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Business

Lost in Germany,
Chrysler is coming
home to America.
INSIDE, C3



Study best options for paying off student loan

WASHINGTON — Karen Wons of Maryland finds herself in a quandary that is confronting many parents right now.

She is struggling with how best to advise her daughter — a recent college graduate — on paying down her \$25,000 in student loans.

Wons did what any wise parent would do. She asked for help. Here's the back story. Wons'

Fresno won't halt airport project

Council denies labor union's appeal to stop \$16m solar power plan for further environmental review.

By Jeff St. John
The Fresno Bee

The Fresno City Council on Tuesday unanimously rejected a labor union appeal to halt a \$16 million solar power project at Fresno Yosemite International Airport for further environmental review.

The appeal brought by the International Brotherhood of Electrical

Workers contended that the 2-megawatt solar project didn't go through a proper environmental review process, potentially exposing neighbors to dangerous dust and diesel exhaust pollutants.

But representatives of a nonunion contractors group accused the union of using the appeal as a bargaining chip to secure guarantees that union workers would be hired on the

project.

The solar project, expected to be the largest airport-based photovoltaic solar system in the country, could save the airport \$13 million in energy costs over 25 years.

It will install about 2,350 solar panels to a new covered rental car facility to be built at the airport and an additional 9,400 panels on 20 acres at the southeast corner of McKinley and Clovis avenues.

With the City Council's rejection of the appeal, the project can move for-

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"We're in favor of solar power. But it needs to be done right. Every time a project goes in and earth is moved and equipment goes in, air quality decreases."

— Gerald Zumwalt,
business manager for IBEW
Local Union 100 in Fresno,
which filed an appeal

Airport: Union denies pursuing labor deal

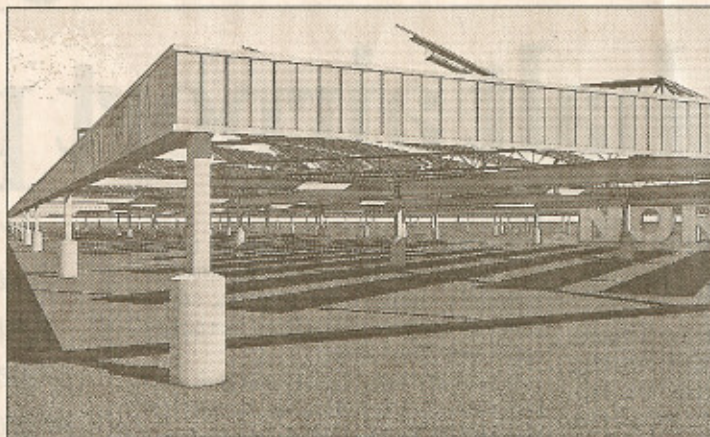
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ward without delays, although the attorney representing the union said he may sue to try to force the city to do the environmental studies the appeal had asked for.

But Kevin Dayton, state government affairs director for the Associated Builders and Contractors of California, said that threat fit a pattern of union objections to other power projects across the state, such as an energy park in the Sacramento suburb of Roseville in 2004.

"We call it greenmail, and they've been doing it for years," he said.

Dayton cited the Roseville project as one instance in which unions have been successful in obtaining project labor agreements, which can set hiring and wage and hour standards that can favor union workers, at power projects that they had ob-



SPECIAL TO THE BEE

An artist's rendering shows the \$16 million solar power project planned for Fresno Yosemite International Airport.

jected to on environmental grounds.

But Gerald Zumwalt, business manager for IBEW Local Union 100 in Fresno, which filed the appeal, said that environmental is-

ssues, not labor agreements, were at the heart of the appeal.

"IBEW's position is, we're in favor of the project, if it's done properly," Zumwalt said. "We're in favor of solar power. But it

needs to be done right. Every time a project goes in, and earth is moved and equipment goes in, air quality decreases."

Thomas Enslow, the attorney representing the union from the Sacramento-based law firm Adams Broadwell Joseph & Cardoza, said the airport project didn't meet guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act because it hadn't been subjected to a separate environmental impact report, among other reasons.

But all seven City Council members voted to deny the appeal after hearing City Attorney James Sanchez's opinion that the project was legal as it exists.

A city staff memo said the project and efforts to lessen any environmental impacts from it comply with the 2025 Fresno General Plan Master Environmental Impact Report.

That report meets the state's

environmental law, the memo stated.

After hearing Sanchez's opinion, Council Members Jerry Duncan and Larry Westerlund said they questioned whether the union's motivation was truly based on environmental concerns.

Duncan also pointed out that city law prevents Fresno from entering into project labor agreements.

Council Member Mike Dages and Council President Henry T. Perea said they didn't accept the argument from the Associated Builders and Contractors of California that the appeal was all about union jobs, not environmental issues.

Dages also questioned whether World Water & Solar Technologies Corp., the contractor for the airport solar project, had fulfilled its promise to the City Council to work with the union

to find a way to involve it in the project.

Larry Slominski, Western region director for the contractor, said his company had been trying to set up a meeting with the union. Because the project is still in the design stages, no final decisions on contracting and hiring have yet been made, he said.

Slominski and Zumwalt agreed that the company and the union would hold meetings on the project.

But union attorney Enslow said talks on labor issues wouldn't solve the environmental issues at the heart of the denied appeal. He said the union would consider further action in light of Tuesday's denial, including the possibility of a lawsuit.

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