

SUMMARY OF BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM MORATORIUM PROPOSAL

New Regional Development: The Town of Gorham recently approved a utility scale battery energy storage system next to a CMP substation and powerline in an industrial park. A similar company is interested in locating an even larger facility next to a CMP power line in Durham.



1. **Moratorium Proposal:** The Planning Board has proposed a 6-month moratorium on utility scale battery energy storage systems to conduct an in-depth analysis of potential risks and benefits, with the possibility of extending it for another six months as allowed by State law.
2. **Safety Concerns:** Research reviewed by the Planning Board highlighted significant fire safety concerns associated with battery energy storage systems, influencing the decision to consider a moratorium.
3. **Regulatory Development:** The moratorium aims to explore the potential economic benefits and develop an effective regulatory framework if the analysis supports allowing such systems, or to build a case for an outright prohibition if necessary.
4. **Consultant Involvement:** Due to the complexity of the issue, the Planning Board sees the potential need for a consultant to conduct thorough research on battery energy storage systems.
5. **Exemptions and Refinements:** The Planning Board is considering exemptions for smaller battery energy storage systems, such as those for home or small business use, and systems associated with solar energy, differentiating them from large-scale, grid-based systems.
6. **Town Attorney Input:** The Town Attorney has advised the Select Board that utility scale battery energy systems are currently allowed by the Durham Land Use Ordinance as “essential services,” and the only standards that can be applied by the Planning Board are inadequate to address the significant issues raised by such industrial scale development. The Town Attorney further advised that contract zoning is an effective tool for controlling the location and impacts of such development.
7. **Select Board Decision:** Given the current exposure of the Town of Durham to a development application being submitted before the next Town Meeting in April of 2025, the Select Board has decided to schedule a special Town Meeting on November 19, 2024 to consider the moratorium ordinance to protect the Town’s interests.

PLANNING BOARD INFORMATION MEETING NOVEMBER 13 AT 6:30 PM AT THE FIRE STATION

FOR INFORMATION ON THE UPCOMING SPECIAL TOWN MEETING CHECK THE DURHAM WEBSITE!