

The Black Squirrel

Westfield residents concerned over safety of ‘clean energy’ lithium battery storage facilities after fires in CA and NY

Recent fires that released toxic heavy metals around a battery storage facility in California and contaminated drinking water in New York have some leaders wondering whether it’s worth the risk.

Westfield- Residents are concerned over safety and environmental impacts after fires at battery storage facilities have led elected officials in California and New York to call for investigations into the safety and risks associated with this new technology.

The massive fire in January at the Moss Landing Plant in California burned for five days releasing toxic smoke containing heavy metals and described as a worse case scenario that no one predicted.

Scientists at San Jose State University found extremely high levels of toxic heavy metals — hundreds to thousands of times higher than before - in the area near the fire, despite the Environmental Protection Agency’s initial claim the fire did not release toxins.

In a statement from SJSU Professor Ivano Aiello, “These nanoparticles are used in cathode materials for lithium-ion batteries, commonly referred to as ‘NMC’ (nickel manganese cobalt), clearly connecting the occurrence of the heavy metals to airborne cathode material from the Vistra battery fire. These heavy metals will chemically transform as they move through the environments and potentially through the food web, affecting local aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.”

Residents have reported unusual breathing issues, metallic tastes in their mouths, headaches, nausea, nosebleeds, and low energy. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nickel exposure can cause rashes, respiratory problems, and “effects on the stomach, blood, liver, kidneys, immune system, reproduction, and development.” High levels of manganese exposure can irritate the lungs, cause behavioral changes, induce neural and reproductive harm, and damage children’s brains and development.



Moss Landing Plant in California burned for five days

Cobalt exposure can cause respiratory, blood, thyroid, gastrointestinal, reproductive, and developmental harm and is likely a carcinogen.

In New York, 4 of the 8 battery storage facilities had fires in 2023 alone. The fire in East Hampton, NY contaminated the city’s drinking water.

Massachusetts should be proactive as new concerns over the safety and environmental and health impacts of battery storage facilities, after numerous fires at these facilities have led legislators in California and New York to call for investigations into the safety and risks associated with this new technology.

Elected officials in CA and NY have filed bills to:

- **PUT A PAUSE ON SITING LITHIUM BATTERY STORAGE SITES**
- **REQUIRE BUFFER ZONES BETWEEN BATTERY STORAGE SITES AND COMMUNITIES OR ECOLOGICALLY FRAGILE AREAS**
- **REQUIRE LOCAL ENGAGEMENT IN PERMITTING, INSTEAD OF ALLOWING STATE AGENCIES TO GIVE APPROVAL ON THEIR OWN.**

Most Westfield residents were unaware of the DPU public hearing and two-week period for public comment due to the timing and scheduling.

The state failed to provide Westfield residents an opportunity to be aware of a two week period for public comment or attend a December 5th public hearing by scheduling the hearing between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The 5000-page application, was hand delivered to the city clerk on November 19. At the November 21 City Council meeting, Councilor Mello and Allie were aware the DPU scheduled a public comment hearing at Westfield State University at 6:30 pm on December 5th, a night when the city council regularly meets and requested the council meet on another night, so councilors could attend this important hearing.

It was not until the following Tuesday, November 26, just two days before Thanksgiving, that the city clerk notified city councilors of the public comment hearing. Public notices were posted in the basement of city hall and the library. Both buildings were closed on Thanksgiving and on Sunday, with the public hearing being held the following Thursday. The public had little notice or opportunity to be aware of or attend the hearing held, or the period for public comments to be submitted to the DPU was December 5 until December 20th.

Governor Healey's Clean Energy Act was just signed into law in November 2024.

The stated goal of the Executive Office of Energy of Environmental Affairs (EEA) is to ensure an equitable and just transition for all residents, and will embed environmental justice and equity into the work of EEA and its agencies when planning and implementing programs and policies, providing meaningful community engagement, analysis of project benefits and burdens.

Yet, the aggressive push for "clean energy" has not allowed time for the state to put departments or policies in place to protect citizens, the environment, communities or whole regions in Massachusetts from adverse outcomes from a new technology.

In a December 17 press release, the state announced a \$3.5 million dollar fund to help cities intervene in the siting process for lithium battery storage should be "up and running in March 2026". A lot of good that will do for communities currently seeking to intervene with placing facilities in their communities.

This created a window allowing powerful corporations, with layers of limited liability companies that insulate them from responsibility, to push proposals through the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities and seek exemptions from local zoning, including Westfield's Water Resource Protection District.

Placing a lithium battery storage facility next to a city's drinking water supply violates Article 97 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which ensures every citizen's right to clean air and water, and from federal fire codes that require local fire chiefs to sign off on lithium battery facilities.



To request a yard sign, visit danallie.com

Where is the accountability and transparency in the decision to place a lithium battery storage facility next to Westfield's drinking water supply?

At no time in 2024 was "the project" before any elected official in Westfield.

A timeline

In August 2021, Jupiter Power of Texas registered to do business in Massachusetts. Eleven days later, Westfield ESS LLC, a Delaware limited liability company with offices at the same address in Texas, filed to do business in Massachusetts. In November 2022, BlackRock acquired Jupiter Power.

On July 1, 2024, the Westfield Law Department sent a Resolution to the mayor requesting the City Council allow the mayor to execute an easement over a Right of Way on Medeiros Way to Westfield ESS, LLC to install infrastructure (transmission lines) over Medeiros Way for a battery storage project.

On July 8, the mayor sent the request and Resolution to City Council allowing the mayor to execute an easement for a portion of a right of way for a certain parcel of real estate known as Medeiros Way. "The company" and "the project" were not mentioned in the mayor's request to City Council.

According to the Westfield Law Department, at no time in 2024 was "the actual project" before the City Council. Prior to being sent to mayor and city council, the Westfield Law Department negotiated the terms of permanent easement.

On July 10, representatives from Jupiter Power met with the Westfield Board of Public Works to present an easement for approval for Medeiros Way for "a new high voltage line".

On August 6, 2024, the Legislative and Ordinance Committee voted to accept the resolution. "Prior to the vote it was mentioned the committee vote was dealing only with easement portion of the right of way for a portion of Medeiros Way."

The resolution does not mention, "Jupiter Power", "the proposed battery storage project" or the word "lithium," but rather "Westfield ESS LLC requested to install certain infrastructure" and that the Board of Public of Public Works voted on July 9, 2024 to allow for placement of said infrastructure."

At the August 15 meeting, the city council voted 8-4 to approve allowing the mayor to execute an easement for a portion of a right of way for Medeiros Way. Councilors Dan Allie, Karen Fanion, Bridget Matthews-Kane and Kristen Mello voted against the motion. Councilor Nick Morganelli was absent.

Five weeks later, on September 23, Jupiter Power filed its application with the Massachusetts Department of Utilities (DPU) for an exemption from local zoning ordinances seeking approval to place 219 lithium battery storage units on Medeiros Way.

The Clean Energy Act was signed into law in November 2024. On November 19, Jupiter Power's application was hand-delivered to the city clerk's office.

On November 26, city councilors were notified of the December 5 DPU public hearing. During the DPU public hearing, those in attendance were informed of the two-week period for public comment ended on December 20 and learned of the 5000 page application in the city clerk's office. Most residents were unaware of the public hearing or period for public comment.

On December 19, the Westfield City Council voted unanimously on a resolution opposing siting a lithium battery storage facility, which was signed by the mayor on December 20.





“We all want safe, reliable, efficient and affordable energy. “Clean energy” technology should not pose a risk to our first responders, the surrounding community, the environment and certainly not our drinking water.” - Dan Allie

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Dan Allie Committee
38 Union St. Westfield, MA 01085

Your Voice Matters

danallie.com

What Can I Do?

Get Involved. Your Voice Matters.

America was never meant to be ruled by politicians, unelected bureaucrats, the media or special interests, but rather governed by the people.

Helen Keller, born both deaf and blind once said, “I may only be one, but I still am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.”

Volunteer to display a yard sign, distribute information and gather signatures to friends, churches and neighbors.

Donate to help get the message out at danallie.com or mail to

Dan Allie Committee 38 Union St. Westfield, MA 01085

Register to Vote and vote in every election

The best way to hold government accountable is an informed public that votes.

SAVE THE DATE AND ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT MEETING



LITHIUM BATTERY STORAGE

OVER OUR **AQUIFER**

CONCERNED ABOUT A LITHIUM BATTERY STORAGE FACILITY IN WESTFIELD?

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Westfield residents are encouraged to share your concerns and ask questions with **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STATE OFFICIALS**

Wednesday, February 26, 6 PM
Westfield River Elementary School

This is your opportunity to talk about the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project, Air, Water, Noise and other pollution. Truck traffic. PFAS

To RSVP, or request any accommodation you might require, go to <https://forms.office.com/g/63e1WhmVb5>
You can attend virtually if you cannot go in person.