

Opposing The Development, Construction, And Operation Of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) In Ulster County

Referred to: The Energy, Environment and Sustainability Committee (Chairman Hewitt and Legislators Donaldson, Greene, Litts, Nolan, Stewart, and Walls), and The Economic Development, Planning, Education, Employment, Arts and Agriculture Committee (Chairwoman Sperry and Legislators Clinton, Corcoran, Hewitt, Litts, Stewart and Walls)

Legislators Corcoran, Hansut, Kitchen, Litts, Lopez, Maloney, Roberts, Stewart, and Walls offer the following:

WHEREAS, Ulster County, New York, is a region of approximately 182,000 residents, noted for its natural beauty, including the Catskill Mountains, Shawangunk Ridge, and Hudson River Valley, which support a thriving agricultural economy and tourism industry vital to the County's cultural identity and economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature is committed to safeguarding the health, safety, welfare, and environmental integrity of its residents and communities while remaining supportive of the development of safe, reliable energy sources; and

WHEREAS, Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), such as the proposed 250-megawatt (MW) facility in the Town of Ulster at the site of the former Coleman Catholic High School envisioned to include about 300 containers of batteries on 12 acres at the site in close proximity to a densely populated residential area, are being advanced; and

WHEREAS, local residents and elected officials, including those in the Town of Hurley, have voiced significant opposition to BESS facilities, specifically citing the project's proximity to over 500 homes, two churches, and three schools within a short distance, posing potential risks to such densely populated areas; and

WHEREAS, concerns have been raised about the fire and environmental risks associated with lithium-ion BESS facilities, including potential thermal runaway events, toxic chemical releases, and extreme challenges in fire suppression; and

WHEREAS, such risks present potential hazards not only to long established residential areas, but also threaten designated or potential environmental justice areas and critical habitats for endangered species located within Ulster County, which could be impacted by BESS development, including serious contamination risks to soil, groundwater and air quality from potential accidents or fires; and

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WHEREAS, the siting of BESS facilities within Ulster County, conflicts with Ulster County's commitment to preserving its rural character, agricultural heritage, and tourism-driven economy, which relies on the scenic beauty of the Catskills and Hudson Valley as well as to preserving the health, safety and welfare of its residents; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature seeks to protect its residents from potential health, safety, and environmental hazards while advocating for a balanced approach to achieving New York State's clean energy goals; and

WHEREAS, such BESS facilities are typically managed on a remote basis with minimal permanent onsite staffing which will therefore result in little or no sustained positive job creation or economic impact to Ulster County; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature hereby opposes the development, construction, and operation of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) anywhere within the boundaries of Ulster County, New York, due to the significant risks they pose to public health, safety, and welfare, to environmental justice communities, and to the county's significant natural and cultural resources; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature urges the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and other relevant state agencies to prioritize safe alternative energy storage technologies and siting strategies that minimize risks to residential areas, environmental justice communities, and ecologically sensitive regions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Ulster County Legislature supports a moratorium on all BESS projects in Ulster County until such time as these regulations are established and the concerns regarding fire safety, environmental impacts, and community impacts are fully addressed; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor of the State of New York, the New York State Senate, the New York State Assembly, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and all City, Town and Village governments within Ulster County,

and moves its adoption.

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ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

Passed Committee: Energy, Environment and Sustainability on _____.

Passed Committee: Economic Development, Planning, Education, Employment, Arts
and Agriculture
on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:
NONE