

RESOLUTION NO. 3262

CITY OF WESTFIELD

IN CITY COUNCIL

DECEMBER 19, 2024

**A RESOLUTION OF THE WESTFIELD CITY COUNCIL REGARDING BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS (BESS) AND
A PETITION BEFORE THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

WHEREAS, Westfield is a municipality of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, Article 97 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts states that, "The people shall have the right to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of their environment; and the protection of the people in their right to the conservation, development and utilization of the agricultural, mineral, forest, water, air and other natural resources is hereby declared to be a public purpose;"
and

WHEREAS, The General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has defined *environmental justice principles, environmental benefits, environmental burdens, meaningful engagement,* and the related requirements placed upon the Secretary of the Environment and all departments, boards, commissions, and authorities of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, The City of Westfield has created a Water Resources Protection District to protect the Barnes Aquifer from contamination; and

WHEREAS, The City of Westfield is home to environmental justice populations as defined by both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the United States Environmental Protection Agency; and

WHEREAS, The City of Westfield has already been burdened by discharges of hazardous materials and wastes into our aquifer, including a very significant contamination of our municipal and private drinking water supplies by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS); and

WHEREAS, There is a proposal for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on Medeiros Way in Westfield, at a site that is partially located over Westfield's Zone II and adjacent to Southampton's Zone II, and located in the secondary recharge area for both municipal drinking water supplies; and

WHEREAS, This proposed site is:
~ 315 ft from the Armbrook Village Assisted Living and Memory Support home;
~ 900 ft from a designated environmental justice (EJ) census blockgroup;
~ 1,100 ft from White Oak School and ~1,000 ft from its well;
~ 2,280 ft from Heritage Park, a resident-owned manufactured home community which had been designated EJ prior to the 2020 census; and

WHEREAS, BESS failures are such a frequent occurrence that the Electric Power Research Institute maintains a database of BESS failure incidents whose consequences pose a very real potential threat to our environment, first responders, and residents; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Public Utilities is reviewing the BESS project proposed to be located on Medeiros Way in the City of Westfield to determine:

1. Whether the project is necessary, serves the public convenience, and is consistent with the public interest under G.L. c. 164, § 72; and
2. Whether the zoning exemptions should be granted, and if the proposed use of the Parcels is *reasonably necessary for the convenience or welfare of the public*, pursuant to G.L. c. 40A, § 3; and

WHEREAS, The only way the DPU can approve the BESS on Medeiros way is to decide that having clean energy infrastructure is more important than our city's Water Resource Protection District zoning ordinance, which protects our largest aquifer; and

WHEREAS, We must balance clean energy progress with vigilant oversight to prevent environmental and public health harm from emerging technologies.

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it ordained by the City Council of Westfield as follows:

RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Westfield in agreement with its caring and concerned citizens, hereby urges the DPU to find that:

The potential benefits of this project do not outweigh the very real environmental and public health risks associated with it; and


The violation of Westfield residents' Article 97 rights and of the Water Resource Protection District's protections should not take place for the public convenience of residents anywhere; and

Siting this project in close proximity to already overburdened EJ and disadvantaged communities, schools and long term care facilities, and in a water resources protection district is *not equitable distribution of environmental burdens and environmental benefits*; and

The proposed use for this particular set of parcels is *not reasonably necessary for the convenience or welfare of the public.*

Presented to the Mayor

Approved by the Mayor

December 20, 2024

Katilyn Bruce, City Clerk


12-20, 2024

Michael McCabe, Mayor

Figure 1. Medeiros Way project area zoomed out and annotated.

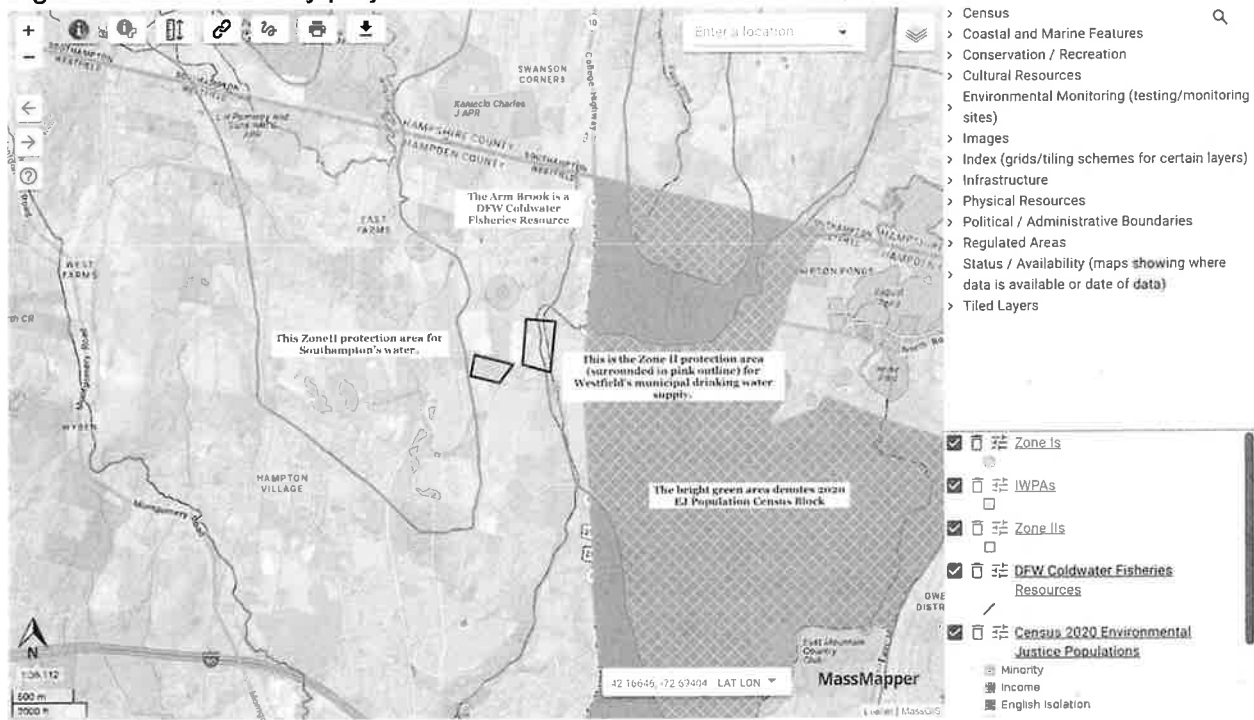


Figure 2. Medeiros Way project area zoomed in.

