

The Black Squirrel

Lithium battery facility fire in Westfield poses risk for Connecticut Valley



Jupiter Power plans to install 219 lithium battery storage units in Westfield, near the Barnes Aquifer. “The company” is seeking exemptions of local zoning ordinances and Water Resource Protection District, from the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities.

This new technology has the potential of fires that cannot be extinguished. In 2023, 4 out of 8 battery energy storage systems (BESS) in New York experienced fires. The fire in January 2025 at the Moss Plant in California burned for 5 days, releasing toxic smoke containing heavy metals.

Local officials described the fire as a worse case scenario that no one predicted. Local residents reported a range of health issues. Scientists from San Jose State University found toxic heavy metals in the soil, hundreds to thousands of times higher than before the fire, despite the Environmental Protection Agency’s initial claim the fire did not release toxins. The fire forced evacuations, shelter in place orders and road closures

Lithium fires in California and New York led governors to call for investigations into the safety of plants. Legislators filed bills to 1) pause siting lithium battery storage sites, 2) require buffer zones between battery storage sites and communities or ecologically fragile areas, and 3) mandate local engagement in permitting, rather than allow state agencies to approve on their own.

Westfield and nearby cities are connected in the Connecticut Valley River basin by low elevations, ranging from 54 to 248 feet above sea level, and surrounded by mountains on three sides. UMASS–Amherst is 125-245 feet above sea level.

The Holyoke Mountain Range average height is 900 feet, the Worcester hills 600 feet and the Berkshires range from 1200 to 1724 feet. The low-lying areas trap air, contribute to weather inversions, which can worsen air quality. This is one reason the Springfield area ranks among the highest in the nation for asthma and other respiratory conditions. The toxic smoke, poisonous gases and heavy metals from a fire lasting 2 to 5 days would not be confined to the proposed site. Fumes would become concentrated in the valley, but could travel 35 to 50 miles.

Westfield is the pre-glacial route of the Connecticut River. 10,000 feet of ice formed the Holyoke Mountain range. The river was cut off and diverted to the other side of Holyoke and the Oxbow in Northampton was formed.

Due to the valley’s topography, pollution from a fire could spread to Southampton, Easthampton, Northampton, Amherst, West Springfield, Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee, South Hadley,, Longeadow, Agawam, Southwick, the Barnes Aquifer, the Tighe-Carmody and Quabbin reservoirs, Boston’s drinking water supply.

“Clean energy” technology should not pose a risk to our first responders, communities, the environment or our drinking water. Massachusetts should be proactive and learn from other states. We all want safe, reliable, efficient and affordable energy. We have a right to clean air, water and soil. We cannot take the risk that nothing bad will ever happen.

- Dan Allie, Westfield City Councilor

What can you do to help?

Many people are not aware of the proposed lithium battery storage facility in Westfield. Lawn signs in high traffic locations are an effective ways to build public awareness. To request a lawn sign, email your name and address to danallie@comcast.net



“The project” was never before the elected officials in Westfield or any town. We need your help to educate neighbors, friends, editors and local officials of:

1. The proposed project in Westfield and the risk a lithium battery storage facility fire presents,
2. Due to the low elevation connecting the cities and towns, water resources, rivers, colleges and agriculture land in the Connecticut River Valley basin, the potential of a fire burning for days and toxic smoke and poisonous gases being trapped and concentrated in the valley, make it an unacceptable risk. We simply cannot just hope that nothing bad will ever happen

Volunteer to help build public awareness.

Share information with friends by email, social media, and letters to the editor. Contact local officials. To print or email copies of The Black Squirrel, simply download PDF at www.danallie.com

Donate to help cover printing costs, postage and lawn signs at www.danallie.com

Contact your state legislator and ask them to support Bill # 4558.

On April 10, 2025 Representative Kelly Pease filed Bill # 4558, An Act establishing a temporary moratorium on the siting of lithium battery storage facilities.

Sen. John Velis - 413-572-3920	john.velis@masenate.gov
Rep. Kelly Pease - (413) 875-8787	Legislative Aide Ethan Flaherty - Ethan.Flaherty@mahouse.gov
Rep. Michael Finn - 413-363-1965	Michael.Finn@mahouse.gov - Agawam Ward 2A, Ward 3A, Ward 4A, Chicopee West Springfield, Ward 2 Precinct A1 and Ward 6 Precinct B in Westfield,
Rep Lindsay Sabadosa -(413) 270-1166	lindsay.sabadosa@mahouse.gov Northampton, Westhampton
Rep Nicholas Boldyga - (413) 274-8084	Nicholas.Boldyga@mahouse.gov Agawam, Blandford, Chester, Granville, Montgomery, Russell, Southwick
Rep. Mndy Domb - (413) 335-1362	mindy.domb@mahouse.gov Amherst
Rep. Homar Gomez 413 977 2676	Homar.Gomez@mahouse.gov Easthampton, Prec. 2, Granby, Hadley, South Hadley

The Energy Facilities Siting Board is providing two opportunities to comment on the Project, with a virtual (remote) public comment hearing on April 29, and a period to submit written comments ending May 13, 2025.

Siting Board virtual (remote) public comment hearing Tuesday, April 29, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

TO JOIN PUBLIC HEARING type link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84632716786> A link is on www.danallie.com

For audio-only participation, dial (646) 558-8656 (not a toll-free number) and enter Webinar ID: 846-3271-6786

Register to provide oral comments during the virtual public comment hearing, please email: Yonathan.Mengesha@mass.gov with your name, email address, and mailing address by noon, April 29, 2025

Email written comments. Filing Instructions for written comments.

Written comments on the Project must be filed with the Siting Board in two places by email or attachment, to dpu.efiling@mass.gov; AND donna.sharkey@mass.gov no later than 5 PM on Tuesday, May 13, 2025.

E-mail must specify: (1) docket number (**EFSB 25-04/D.P.U. 24-151**); (2) brief description of the document and include your name, title, and telephone number to contact in the event of questions about filing.

Comments must be emailed to counsel for the Company: Shane Early, searly@sheppardmullin.com