



Haverhill

Economic Development and Planning
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To: Planning & Development Committee

From: Jacki Byerley, AICP, Planning Director

Date: August 19, 2026

Re: Review of Proposed BESS Zoning Areas

Over the last several weeks, the Planning Department has coordinated with the Fire, Police, Conservation, Engineering, Department of Public Works, Water & Sewer, Assessing, and Inspectional Services Departments to review potential areas for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) zoning district.

Six areas were initially identified for review: Amesbury Road, Computer Drive, Cross Road, Groveland Road, Hilldale Avenue, and Neck Road. These areas were identified based on their existing Business Park zoning in some cases the current use and characteristics of the land this was done in coordination with the Conservation Division.

The purpose of the departmental review was to have each department look at the proposed areas from the perspective of its own area of responsibility and provide information that would assist the committee in evaluating the sites.

Fire, Water & Sewer, Conservation and Engineering have provided a scoring spreadsheet evaluating the six areas based on accessibility to the site, proximity to residential & commercial structures, wetland & riverfront, open space protection, topography & soils, wildlife habitat, water supply protection, water infrastructure, sewer infrastructure, stormwater infrastructure and future projects.

The scoring ranks for Water & Sewer and Engineer have Computer Drive first, followed by Hilldale Avenue, Neck Road, Groveland Road, Amesbury Road, and Cross Road. The spreadsheet also identifies specific infrastructure issues that would need to be considered with each site.

Conservation has Hilldale Avenue first, followed by Groveland Road, Neck Road, Cross Road, Computer Drive and Amesbury Road. Review of proximity to wetlands and riverfront, public water supply, open space, wildlife habitat were all factors within each of the areas.

The Assessor's Office has provided a written review of the six areas from the perspective of

highest and best use and potential tax revenue. The Assessor did not identify one preferred location but provided comments and considerations for each site. In several cases, the review notes that if conventional industrial development is not feasible, a BESS could provide the City with a source of tax revenue through a PILOT agreement. The review also identifies potential advantages associated with individual sites, including the capped landfill at Groveland Road and the possibility of BESS use at Amesbury Road if industrial development is not feasible because of the site's characteristics and infrastructure limitations.

Planning has reviewed the six areas and identified Amesbury Road as its suggested location. The Fire Department has also indicated that it supports Amesbury Road as the zoning location, with the understanding that any future BESS project proposed within the district will be subject to a thorough review by the Fire Department to ensure that it meets all applicable fire safety requirements. The Fire Department's support of the zoning location does not mean that every future project will necessarily meet those requirements or receive its approval.

The departmental reviews do not result in one unanimous recommendation. Planning and Fire have identified Amesbury Road as their preferred location, while the most recent Water & Sewer and Engineering scoring ranks Computer Drive highest from an infrastructure standpoint and Conservation has Hilldale Ave as their highest ranking. The Assessor's review provides additional information regarding the potential tax implications and highest and best use of the individual sites.

The different results are a reflection of the different factors each department considered. The purpose of bringing this information together is to provide the committee with the various perspectives so that it can weigh the land use, infrastructure, public safety, environmental, and fiscal considerations when making its recommendation.

For example, Amesbury Road has the support of Planning and the Fire Department, but the Water & Sewer and Engineering review identifies infrastructure and environmental considerations, including the need for substantial water improvements and on-site stormwater mitigation. Computer Drive received the highest infrastructure score and has strong existing water and sewer infrastructure, although additional water infrastructure would still be necessary. Hilldale Avenue and Neck Road also scored well from an infrastructure standpoint. Groveland Road has the potential benefit of being a capped landfill but has greater water and sewer limitations. Cross Road received the lowest infrastructure score and presents several infrastructure and access challenges.

The Assessor's review also provides a fiscal perspective. Depending on the site and whether conventional development is feasible, a BESS could provide a potential source of tax revenue to the City through a PILOT agreement.

At this point, the information gathered from the departments is before the committee for its consideration. Planning's identification of Amesbury Road is intended to provide the committee with the benefit of our professional review but the final determination of which area should be recommended for the BESS zoning district is up to the committee.

Items to keep in mind are that a Tier 3 BESS (energy capacity greater than 10 MWh) requires 20 acres of land under the proposed regulation. Of the six areas proposed, Hilldale Avenue does not currently meet that requirement. The committee still has the ability to make a decision that is consistent with the proposed regulation, either by selecting another proposed area that meets the 20-acre requirement or by determining that the regulation should be amended to allow a 15-acre minimum or by adding additional acreage to the Hilldale Avenue proposal.

If the committee decides to select a different area than the one proposed in the original hearing, a new public hearing advertisement will be required. This would also provide an opportunity to address the acreage of the Hilldale Avenue proposal if the committee determines that a change to the proposed acreage is appropriate.

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Additional reports from the U.S. and
Haiti's murder register lists¹
Cabinets with nationalized fire
supply system²

Report showing potential future
and an aspect of modeling
for any regression (SS)
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and 1/2010-2011