



Haverhill

Economic Development and Planning
Phone: 978-374-2330

To: City Council

OCT 15 PM 12:57
HAVCITYCLERK

From: Jacki Byerley, AICP, Planning Director

Re: Battery Energy Storage Systems Overlay District (BESS) Hildale Ave

Date: October 15, 2026

At the regularly scheduled Planning Board meeting of October 14, 2026 the Planning Board voted to send a favorable recommendation of the attached Battery Energy Storage Systems Section 7.9 and overlay district on Hildale Avenue.

The Planning Board previously recommended adopting the BESS regulations along with an overlay district on Amesbury Road. That recommendation was forwarded to the City Council, which then referred the matter to the Planning & Development Committee for further review.

On August 24, 2026, the Planning & Development Committee reviewed six potential locations (Computer Drive, Hildale Avenue, Neck Road, Groveland Road, Amesbury Road, and Cross Road) along with input from various departments regarding operational needs. Based on this evaluation, the Committee determined that the overlay district should be located on Hildale Avenue. Because the proposed overlay district location has changed, a new public hearing was required. A revised map reflecting this change has been prepared and submitted with the ordinance.

The proposed ordinance establishes a local regulatory framework governing the siting, permitting, construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of BESS facilities within the City.

The ordinance appropriately differentiates between small-scale accessory systems and larger utility-scale facilities by establishing Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 classifications based on system capacity and operational characteristics. Smaller Tier 1 systems are permitted by right subject to site plan review and applicable code requirements, while larger Tier 2 and Tier 3 systems require a Special Permit and are restricted to the BESS Overlay District.

The ordinance also incorporates substantial public safety protections consistent with current industry standards and state guidance. All facilities are required to comply with applicable state building, fire, and electrical codes, including NFPA 855 standards governing stationary energy storage systems. The ordinance further requires emergency

operations plans, fire safety compliance plans, emergency access roads, containment systems, and ongoing coordination with local emergency responders.

The ordinance limits larger-scale facilities to the BESS Overlay District and provides the City Council, acting as the Special Permit Granting Authority, with the ability to evaluate each proposal on a case-by-case basis through the Special Permit and Development Review process.

The Planning Board voted to send a favorable recommendation to the City Council for approval of the proposed Battery Energy Storage System Ordinance with the overlay district of Hilldale Ave as drafted.