



Town of Orange

6 Prospect St Orange, MA 01364

Town Administrator's Office

Matthew Fortier, Town Administrator
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May 27, 2025

Andy Greene, Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB)
Rick Collins, Department of Energy Resources (DOER)
EFSB/DOER Siting Staff

Subject: Energy Storage System Locations and Drinking Water Protection

Dear Mr. Greene, Mr. Collins, and EFSB/DOER Siting Staff,

As the Town Administrator of Orange, Massachusetts, I am writing to share a perspective that I believe is vital to the ongoing discussions around the siting of industrial-scale energy storage systems (ESS), particularly in relation to drinking water protection. To give you some local context, the Orange Planning Board recently denied a special permit for a battery storage facility on Daniel Shays Highway, citing health and safety concerns. This decision reflects the Board's caution in the face of what is still a relatively new and evolving technology. With limited long-term data on the safety and environmental impacts of large-scale battery storage systems, particularly in proximity to critical resources like drinking water, the Board acted in what it believed to be the best interest of public health and safety. That decision is now the subject of litigation, and the Town is currently expending taxpayer resources to defend the Board's denial of the permit.

While many in our community support these projects for their potential tax revenue, development opportunities, and contribution to the Commonwealth's carbon-neutral goals, I feel it is important to also elevate serious concerns shared by other residents and stakeholders. The proposed site location is within the Zone II aquifer recharge area for what the Water Department Superintendent has stated is the primary source of water for the system, providing approximately 70% of the drinking water for over 6,000 residents and businesses. ESS fires, as seen in other states, can burn for hours or days, releasing contaminants and requiring hundreds of thousands of gallons of water to suppress. As a small municipality, we lack the infrastructure and financial capacity to provide alternative water supplies at the scale required if the well were contaminated.

As I understand it from conversations with our Fire Chief, a major ESS fire would strain local resources and even with maximum effort the fire suppression water could not be contained. Contaminants would be able to travel through soil and bedrock fractures directly into the aquifer. If compromised, this public drinking water source cannot be replicated, and the consequences would be immediate and long-lasting. We urge the EFSB and DOER to consider regulations that prohibit the siting of ESS facilities within Zone II recharge areas. While we support the broader goals of strengthening our energy independence and modernizing infrastructure, these efforts must not come at the cost of compromising essential public resources like drinking water.

Sincerely,

Matthew Fortier
Town Administrator

The Town of Orange is an equal opportunity provider.



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CC: Representative Susannah Whipps

Senator Joanne Comerford