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# 'Not yet time-tested': City urged to halt lithium-ion battery storage sites on Staten Island

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NineDot Energy recently constructed this battery energy storage system in the Bronx, complete with Tesla batteries and supporting equipment and solar canopies. The company is now planning a similar site in Great Kills -- a project opposed by Borough President Vito Fossella. (Courtesy NineDot Energy) (Courtesy NineDot Energy)

**By [Jessica Jones-Gorman | jgorman@siadvance.com](mailto:jgorman@siadvance.com)**

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Borough President Vito Fossella is vehemently opposed to the idea of building battery energy storage systems (BESS) in the heart of residential Staten Island communities, and he is voicing his concerns over several such proposed projects to the office of Mayor Eric Adams.

“I am writing to express my concerns about the proliferation of battery energy storage systems (BESS) throughout Staten Island, and to ask for an immediate moratorium of approvals for BESS applications filed with the Department of Buildings (DOB) near residential and in local retail commercial districts,” the borough president wrote in a Dec. 16 letter addressed to Meera Joshi, deputy mayor for operations who oversees New York City’s infrastructure portfolio.

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“Why are we thinking that BESS sites (of any size) should be located along local commercial service districts?” the letter continued. “There is no synergy created between viable streetscapes supporting existing uses like restaurants, hair salons, bakeries and ice cream stores, and these facilities. I also wonder how the agencies having jurisdiction could theoretically add a private electrical substation to use historically reserved for regulated public utility companies, without any public discourse.”

His letter comes as residents in Bulls Head are waging a war against BESS development that is proposed for a section of parking lot at Our Lady of Pity R.C. Church. New Leaf Energy, a clean energy development group, intends to install six large-scale rechargeable lithium-ion battery systems there, each capable of storing up to 20 megawatt-hours (MWh) of electricity. According to New Leaf, Con Edison plans to draw power from the facility when demand peaks in the summer months.

“We are proactively addressing this issue, because we are not comfortable with the idea of these units -- which are not yet time-tested for fire safety and toxic emissions -- being located 100 feet from our school,” noted Gina DeSantis, president of Moore Catholic High School, which borders the site along with five other schools: New World Preparatory Charter School, also on the Moore Catholic campus; PS 60, located at 55 Merrill Ave.; Children At Play Preschool, 40 Merrill Ave.; Hellenic Classical Charter School, 1641 Richmond Ave.

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And the proposed Bulls Head project is not the only BESS facility planned for the borough.

In September, during a Land Use Committee public hearing, representatives from New Leaf presented an application for a special permit to develop a BESS facility at 405 Arthur Kill Rd, a 6,878-square-foot fenced-in site adjacent to Holtermann’s Bakery in Great Kills.

“We do have major concerns about these units,” said Frank Morano, chair of Community Board 3, which unanimously passed a motion to deny the application at the hearing. “We see on the news that lithium-ion batteries easily catch fire, and we know that those particular fires are extremely hard to put out. Toxic chemicals are also at play. There are too many issues, so our final decision was to deny recommendation.”

But according to DOB records, another [lithium-ion battery storage unit is currently being built on Giffords Lane in Great Kills](#). Its developer, NineDot Energy, said it should be operational and ready to harvest energy by 2023.

“While I understand the priority that the state and city have placed on reforming our energy vision, I am opposed to de facto text amendments that could potentially destroy the character of the commercial areas are desperately trying to reimagine,” Fossella’s letter concluded, referring to zoning amendments that could potentially allow for their construction. “There are places for BESS facilities. I just don’t think they are on Main Street. Nor do I believe they should be ‘air dropped’ near residential neighborhoods, as already proposed for Staten Island communities like Great Kills and Eltingville, or near schools and churches, as in the case of Bulls Head.”

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