

Petition to Oppose the Hillman Energy Center LLC BESS Project in Tewksbury, MA

To:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB)
Town of Tewksbury Town Officials
Governor Maura Healey
Local and State Representatives

We, the undersigned residents, neighbors, and concerned citizens, hereby oppose the petition of Hillman Energy Center, LLC (EFSB-25-08) to construct a 125 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) at 73-75 Hillman Street, Tewksbury, MA, for the following reasons:

1. Public Safety Risks

- Lithium-ion battery storage systems pose a **significant risk of thermal runaway and fires**, even with proposed safety measures.
 - The facility will store massive amounts of energy in an area close to residential homes and public infrastructure, creating **unacceptable fire and explosion risks**.
 - Emergency response plans, even if coordinated with the Tewksbury Fire Department, **cannot guarantee containment** of a major thermal event.
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2. Environmental Concerns

- The project is located within a **Zone II Wellhead Protection Area**, increasing the risk of **water contamination** if there are leaks, fires, or chemical spills.
 - Although mitigation measures are promised, **accidents can and do happen** — putting Tewksbury's groundwater at risk.
 - Construction activities will **temporarily and permanently disrupt wetlands and protected areas**, despite the claim of minimal impacts.
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3. Incompatibility with Zoning and Community Character

- The Hillman site requires **numerous zoning exemptions** because the project is **not an allowed use** under Tewksbury's zoning bylaws.
 - The project's size, height (sound walls, substations, overhead lines), and industrial nature are **incompatible with the surrounding area**, threatening to **lower property values** and **degrade the community's character**.
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4. Health and Quality of Life Impacts

- Continuous operation of the facility, including nighttime cooling fans and inverters, will **increase noise pollution**, even if within allowable limits.
 - Visual blight will result from **28-foot-tall sound walls and high fences**, negatively impacting the neighborhood.
 - The project could lead to **increased traffic and disruption** during years of construction, which the town's small roads are ill-equipped to handle.
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5. Insufficient Local Benefit

- The project's energy storage primarily **serves the regional power grid**, not the Tewksbury community.
 - Tewksbury **bears all the risk** (environmental, safety, health, visual impacts) **with little to no direct benefit**.
 - Tax revenues from the project do not outweigh the potential costs of emergency services, environmental mitigation, and property devaluation.
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6. Uncertain Long-Term Viability and Decommissioning

- Lithium-ion batteries have a **limited lifespan (around 10 years)** and will require **frequent replacement and augmentation**.
 - There is **no clear plan for safe decommissioning or disposal** of aging batteries, raising concerns about **future contamination and site abandonment**.
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We respectfully urge:

- The **Energy Facilities Siting Board** to **deny** the requested zoning exemptions and permit for the Hillman Energy Center LLC project.
 - The **Town of Tewksbury** to **protect its zoning bylaws, its residents' safety, and its environmental resources**.
 - Elected officials to **stand with the community** against risky, unnecessary industrial development that endangers Tewksbury's future.
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Respectfully submitted,
[Petition Name]
[Signatures, Addresses, Dates]

What are the numerous zoning exemptions?

1. Use Prohibitions

- **Problem:** Energy storage facilities are **not a permitted use** in the Industrial 2 (I2) zoning district, where 73-75 Hillman Street is located.
 - **Violations:**
 - Section 5.1 (General Provisions)
 - Section 5.4.2 (Prohibited Uses)
 - Section 5.4.3 (Table of Uses)
 - Section 5.4.5 (Accessory Uses — steel storage units are banned)
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2. Groundwater Protection District Restrictions

- **Problem:** The entire site is in a **Zone II Wellhead Protection Area**.
 - **Violations:**
 - Section 5.6 (Groundwater Protection Overlay District)
 - BESS facilities aren't listed as a permitted use.
 - Even if they were, handling hazardous materials and managing stormwater would require **special permits**, which could be denied.
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3. Dimensional Violations (Setbacks, Height, Frontage)

- **Problem:**
 - **Front setbacks, side setbacks, and rear setbacks** are violated by battery containers and sound walls.
 - **Height limits** (40 feet max in I2) are exceeded — the substation's lightning protection masts will be up to **65 feet** tall.
 - **Frontage requirements** are not met for parcels crossed by the transmission lines.
 - **Violations:**
 - Section 5.3.4.A (Industrial District Dimensional Requirements)
 - Section 5.3.5 (Other Districts Dimensional Requirements)
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4. Accessory Structure Limits

- **Problem:**
 - Accessory structures (like sound walls, substations, transmission towers) are **limited to 20 feet height** — their walls and structures far exceed this.
 - Accessory structures must be **behind the main building** — impossible for this type of facility.
 - **Violations:**
 - Section 5.3.1.E (Accessory Structures)
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5. Multiple Principal Structures

- **Problem:**
 - Only **one principal structure** is allowed per lot.
 - They want **169 battery containers**, a substation, and transmission structures — many principal structures on one lot.
 - **Violations:**
 - Section 5.3.1.A (Single Principal Structure Limit)
 - Section 5.3.4.B.1 (Industrial District Special Permit for Multiple Structures)
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Quick Summary:

Provision	Violation
Sections 5.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.5	Prohibited use
Section 5.6	Groundwater protection violations
Sections 5.3.4.A, 5.3.5	Height, setback, frontage issues
Section 5.3.1.E	Accessory structures too tall/wrongly located
Sections 5.3.1.A, 5.3.4.B.1	Multiple principal structures

In short:

The project **does not comply with local zoning in almost every way possible**.
That's why Hillman is **asking for a *comprehensive exemption*** — basically a total override of local zoning.