



Town of Leicester PLANNING BOARD

3 Washburn Square
Leicester, Massachusetts, 01524-1333
Phone: 508-892-7007 Fax: 508-892-7070
www.leicesterma.org

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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
LEICESTER, MASS.

PLANNING BOARD AGENDA

Monday, April 22, 2024, 5:30 PM

Selectboard Meeting Room

- **Old Business**

Discussion on the following Annual Town Meeting warrant articles pertaining to the addition of amendments:

- Article 21: Amend Sections 5.5 and 3.2.02 of the Zoning Bylaws to add Mixed Use, Horizontal Mix to the HB-1 District
- Article 22: Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Bylaw

- **Adjourn**

**Note: Agenda times for items that are not public hearings may be taken out of order.*

"The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before said meeting, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Section 5.5 and Section 3.2.02 Mixed Use, Horizontal Mix

Amendment to Article 21:

Amendments are highlighted and *italic*.

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Zoning Bylaws to include the addition of Mixed Use , Horizontal Mix to the HB-1 District to Section 3.2.02 (Schedule of Use), and Section 5.5 as described below:

3.2.02

14.	<i>Mixed-Use Development, Horizontal Mix</i>	<i>HB-1</i>	<i>SPR</i>
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5.5 Highway Business Industrial District 1 (HB-1 & HB-2)

5.5.01.2: HB-1 Mixed Use– (Horizontal Mix) - Mixed use developments shall have both a residential and a commercial component, regardless of the composition of uses, all mixed use projects shall be scaled to ensure consistency with the surrounding neighborhoods. Mixed use projects may utilize “horizontal “mixed use where commercial, office, and residential uses are designed as a single project, yet constructed in separate and distinct building footprints. *All Highway Business Industrial District 1 (HB-1) Mixed use projects are subject to Site Plan Review standards as outlined in Section 5.2 and Section 5.5.02 through 5.5.02.3 except as detailed in section 5.5.01.3.*

5.5.01.3 HB-1 Mixed Use, Horizontal Mix Density Requirements

Residential Density	
Units/Acre (Max)	20
Units/Acre (Min)	5
Minimum Commercial Requirements ¹	
Residential Building Area	Commercial Building Area
70%	30%
Parking Requirements	
Residential Spaces Per Unit	1.6
Commercial Spaces per 1,000 SF	4

¹. The Planning Board may authorize a reduction in the minimum amount of commercial building area if the amount of mandatory land set aside is equal to: 20% Open Space and 10% useable outdoor space.

5.5.01.4 Design standards for Mixed Use, Horizontal Mix (Amendments noted in *italics*)

1. Newly constructed buildings *shall* not overwhelm or disregard the adjacent context with regard to building location, scale, bulk, massing, material, color, texture and fenestration.
2. Contemporary designs *shall* respect the traditional character of their context and maintain the front setback established by neighboring buildings.
3. Distinguishing features, historic elements and examples of craftsmanship *shall* not be removed or covered during the alteration of existing older structures. Where damaged, they shall be restored or recreated.
4. Signage, awnings, light fixtures and other applied elements *shall* not cover architectural details and should be in scale with the building facade and its immediate context. Generally, materials that have been applied to cover older traditional facade elements should be removed and not replaced.
5. Materials used *shall* complement existing contextual materials.
- ~~6. Consider the effect of small-scale details on visual appeal for pedestrians.~~
- ~~7. Consider the effect of overall forms, materials and colors on visual appeal for drivers.~~
8. All service entrances, dumpsters and loading facilities *shall* be located at the rear of buildings. They shall be screened from view with solid wood fencing, a masonry wall and/ or landscaping from public streets and parking areas.
9. Equipment (such as air conditioner units or exhaust fans) *shall* be screened from view and located either in the rear of the building or on the roof. No equipment shall be mounted on street facade(s) or be visible from the street or customer parking areas.
10. ~~Break up~~ *Long expanses of blank wall shall be broken up* with pilasters or similar architectural features to suggest structural bays or vary massing and/ or roofline to provide visual interest.
11. ~~Break up~~ *Vertical massing shall be broken up* with materials or trim that define a distinct base, middle and top
12. Colors *shall* be complementary and harmonic, and not clash on any given facade. Developer *shall* not use the entire building as a brand identity package in such a way that it becomes an “attractive nuisance.”
13. Applied elements - Such as railings, awnings, signage, and light fixtures – *Shall* coordinate with, rather than overwhelm the proportions of the building.
14. ~~If~~ Equipment is mounted behind louvered panels or other visual screen, screening *shall* be oriented to conceal the equipment from view from any public way or private residence and finished to obscure.
15. Visible roof vents, and other roof elements and penetrations, should be finished to match adjacent roof color when possible. If color matching is not possible, roof elements *shall* be screened from view.
16. Windows and Doors *shall* reflect the style of the building itself in scale, proportion, and construction.
17. Appropriately scaled lighting fixtures are recommended
18. Free-standing fixtures *shall* be coordinated in appearance with building-mounted light fixtures

19. Landscape lighting *shall* be complementary and harmonic to the buildings and landscape design.
20. Expanses of blank wall *shall* be softened through the use of landscape treatments such as foundation plantings or trellises or broken up with architectural elements.
21. Chain link fencing *shall* not be permitted.
22. Landscaping *shall* be designed with consideration of nearby buildings, walkways, and parking areas.
23. Parking lots *shall* be designed with landscaped islands, and islands between buildings, roads and walkways shall be abundantly planned to create a strong horticulture character throughout the year
24. All landscaping *shall* be scaled appropriately for pedestrian traffic and properly maintained in a healthy condition.
25. *All landscaping shall be chosen from the Town of Leicester approved native plantings list*

Section 5.19 Battery Energy Storage Systems

Article 22 Amendment:

All amendments to the original warrant article are **highlighted** and *italic*.

To see if the Town will vote to amend the zoning bylaws to add the following Battery Energy Storage Bylaw as Section 5.19. The bylaw will include definitions added to Section 1.3, Additions to the Schedule of Uses under 3.2.05 and the following zones not outlined under Section 3.2: 3.30 Business Residential - 1 Zone (BR-1), 3.32 Residential Industrial Business Zone (RIB), and 5.6 Greenville Village Neighborhood Business District (NB).

Section 1.3 Definitions

Battery(ies): A single cell or a group of cells connected together electrically in series, in parallel, or a combination of both, which can charge, discharge, and store energy electrochemically. For the purposes of this bylaw, batteries utilized in consumer products are excluded from these requirements.

Battery Energy Storage Management System: An electronic system that protects energy storage systems from operating outside their safe operating parameters and disconnects electrical power to the energy storage system or places it in a safe condition if potentially hazardous temperatures or other conditions are detected.

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS): One or more devices, assembled together, capable of storing energy in order to supply electrical energy at a future time, not to include a stand-alone 12-volt car battery or an electric motor vehicle. A Battery Energy Storage System is classified a Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 BESS as follows:

1. Tier 1 Battery Energy Storage Systems have an aggregate energy capacity equal to 250KWh or less and, whose purpose is to store energy from residential solar energy systems if in a room or enclosed structure, consisting of only a single energy storage system technology.
2. Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage Systems have an aggregate energy capacity equal to 250KWh or less and, whose purpose is to store energy from commercial solar energy systems if in a room or enclosed structure, consisting of only a single energy storage system technology. *The facility must comply with the State's most current code (225 CMR 20.00).*
3. Tier 3 Battery Energy Storage Systems are defined as those that are *designed for Distribution System Connected projects* interconnected to high voltage transmission lines and have an aggregate energy capacity *of less than 20 MW greater 250 KWh but less than or equal to 10 MWh.*
4. Tier 4 Battery Energy Storage Systems are defined as those that are *designed for Transmission Level (High Voltage) projects and* interconnected to high voltage transmission lines and have an aggregate energy *capacity equal or greater than 20 MW 10 MWh.* The facility must comply with the State's most current electrical code (527 CMR. 12.00) and the State's most current Fire Code (527 CMR 1.00)

Cell: The basic electrochemical unit, characterized by an anode and a cathode, used to receive, store, and deliver electrical energy.

Commissioning: A systematic process that provides documented confirmation that a battery energy storage system functions according to the intended design criteria and complies with applicable code requirements.

Dedicated-Use Building: A building that is built for the primary intention of housing battery energy storage system equipment, is classified as Group F-1 occupancy as defined in the International Building Code, and complies with the following:

1. The building's only use is battery energy storage, energy generation, and other electrical grid-related operations.
2. No other occupancy types are permitted in the building.
3. Occupants in the rooms and areas containing battery energy storage systems are limited to personnel that operate, maintain, service, test, and repair the battery energy storage system and other energy systems.
4. Administrative and support personnel are permitted in areas within the buildings that do not contain battery energy storage system, provided the following:
 - a. The areas do not occupy more than 10 percent of the building area of the story in which they are located.
 - b. A means of egress is provided from the administrative and support use areas to the public way that does not require occupants to traverse through areas containing battery energy storage systems or other energy system equipment.

3.2.05 Transportation, Communication, Utility

	SA	R1	R2	B	CB	I	BI-A	HB-1	HB-2
Tier 3 and 4 Battery Energy Storage Systems (standalone)	N	N	N	SP	N	SP	SP	SP	SP
Tier 1 Residential Battery Energy Storage Systems	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage Systems	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP

Section 3.30 Business Residential -1 Zone (BR-1).

43: Tier 3 and 4 Battery Energy Storage Systems are prohibited

44: Tier 1 Residential Battery Energy Storage Systems are allowed

45: Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage Systems are allowed by Special Permit (Planning Board SPGA)

Section 3.32 Residential Industrial Business Zone (RIB)

E: Tier 3 and 4 Battery Energy Storage Systems are prohibited

3.32.B.o: Tier 1 Residential Battery Energy Storage Systems are allowed

3.32.B.p: Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage Systems are allowed by Special Permit (Planning Board SPGA)

Section 5.6 Greenville Village Neighborhood Business District (NB)

5.6.04.5: Tier 3 and 4 Battery Energy Storage Systems are prohibited

5.6.02.2.L: Tier 1 Residential Battery Energy Storage Systems are allowed

5.6.03.6 Tier 2 Battery Energy Storage Systems are allowed by Special Permit (Planning Board SPGA)

5.19 Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

A. Purpose.

The purpose of this bylaw is to provide for the construction and operation of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and to provide standards for the placement, design, construction, monitoring, modification and removal of energy storage systems that address public safety, protection of the Town and private drinking water supply, minimize impacts on scenic, natural and historic resources of the Town of Leicester, and provide adequate financial assurance for decommissioning. The provisions set forth in this section shall take precedence over all other sections when considering applications related to the construction, operation, and/or repair of Battery Energy Storage Systems.

B. Definitions – Refer to definitions in Section 1.3

C. Applicability

1. Building-integrated Battery Energy Storage Systems

- a. Battery Energy Storage Systems that are building-integrated, whether a residential or commercial building, energy storage systems shall not be erected, constructed, installed, or modified as provided in this section without first obtaining a building permit from the Building Inspector.
- b. Building-integrated energy storage systems may be coupled with rooftop solar or behind the meter applications for peak shaving.
- c. Building-integrated battery energy storage systems may be located in any zoning district of the Town of Leicester.

2. Co-located Battery Energy Storage Systems

- a. Battery Energy Storage Facilities are encouraged to co-locate with solar photovoltaic installations, energy, power generation stations, and electrical substations. Leicester Zoning
- b. Battery Energy Storage Systems associated with on-site solar power generation shall be permitted in the same districts as Large-Scale Solar Arrays by Special Permit and Site Plan Review.
- c. If co-located with a solar photovoltaic installation, the BESS shall not exceed the necessary capacity and size generated by the output of the co-located solar photovoltaic installation.

3. Battery Energy Storage systems not associated with on-site solar generation shall only be permitted in the Business (B), Industrial (I), Business-Industrial A (BI-A), Highway Business-Industrial District 1, and Highway-Business-Industrial District 2, districts, and shall require a Special Permit and Site Plan Review from the Planning Board. Battery Energy Storage Systems not associated with on-site solar generation are ~~prohibited~~ *allowed by Special Permit in the Water*

Resource Protection Overlay District if in compliance with applicable environmental standards.

- a. ~~The nameplate capacity of an Energy Storage system shall not exceed the total kw of renewable energy being produced on the 3 phase distribution line that the energy storage system will be interconnected to.~~
- b. Modifications to, retrofits or replacements of an existing battery energy storage system that increase the total battery energy storage system designed discharge duration or power rating shall be subject to this bylaw.

D. General Requirements

1. In accordance with Section C above, all Tier 2, Tier 3 and Tier 4 battery energy storage systems shall require a special permit and site plan approval by the Planning Board prior to construction, installation, or modification as provided in this bylaw.
2. The construction, operation, and decommissioning of all battery storage energy storage systems shall be consistent with all applicable local, state, and federal requirements, including but not limited to all applicable environmental, safety, construction, fire, and electrical requirements.
3. A building permit and an electrical permit shall be required for installation of all battery energy storage systems.

E. Application Materials

1) In addition to requirements of Section 5.2 Site Plan Review the application for a Special Permit under this Section 5.19 shall include the following:

- a. A site plan prepared, stamped and signed by a Professional Engineer licensed to practice in Massachusetts, that shows the following:
- b. An existing condition plan with property lines and physical features, including topography and roads, characteristics of vegetation (trees mature, old growth, shrubs, open field, etc.), wetlands, streams, ledge, for the project site;

1) Proposed changes to the landscape of the site, including grading, vegetation clearing and planting, exterior lighting, screening vegetation or structures, driveways, snow storage, and storm water management systems; including total acreage of disturbed area, total vegetation cleared, not including mowed fields;

2) Trees with a DBH of 20" or greater within project parcel(s) shall be identified to determine tree loss, along with inventorying of diseased or hazard trees slated to be removed due to proposed development;

- 3) Property lines and physical dimensions of the subject property with contour intervals of no more than 10 feet;
- 4) Property lines of adjacent parcels within 300 feet.
- 5) Location, dimensions, and types of existing major structures on the property;
- 6) Location of the proposed battery energy storage structures, foundations, and associated equipment;
- 7) The right-of-way of any public road that is contiguous with the property;
- 8) Any overhead or underground utilities;
- 9) At least one color photograph of the existing site, measuring eight (8) inches by ten (10) inches;
- 10) Locations of active farmland and prime farmland soils, wetlands, permanently protected open space, Priority Habitat Areas and BioMap 2 Critical Natural Landscape Core Habitat mapped by the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) and "Important Wildlife Habitat" mapped by the DEP;
- 11) Locations of floodplains or inundation areas for moderate or high hazard dams;
- 12) Locations of local or National Historic Districts; and
- 13) Stormwater management and erosion and sediment control.
 - a. A preliminary equipment specification sheet that documents the proposed battery energy storage system components, inverters and associated electrical equipment that are to be installed, including manufacturer and model. A final equipment specification sheet shall be submitted prior to the issuance of building permit.
 - b. One- or three-line electrical diagram showing associated components, and electrical interconnection methods, with all NEC compliant disconnects and overcurrent devices.
 - c. Contact information and signature of the project proponent, as well as all co-proponents, if any, and all property owners.
 - d. Contact information and signature of agents representing the project proponent, if any;
 - e. Contact information for the person(s) responsible for public inquiries throughout the life of the system.

- f. An operations and maintenance plan for Battery Energy Storage System. Such plan shall describe continuing battery energy storage system maintenance and property upkeep, as well as design, construction, installation, testing and commissioning information.
 - i) Energy Storage System technical specifications, including manufacturer and model.
- g. Electrical schematic.
- h. Documentation that shows the owner of the Energy Storage System has site control, which shall include easements and access roads.
- i. Documentation that shows the owner of the Energy Storage System has notified the electric utility of this installation.
- j. Emergency Operations Plan. A copy of the approved Emergency Operations Plan shall be given to the system owner, the local fire department, and local fire code official. A permanent copy shall also be placed in an approved location to be accessible to facility personnel, fire code officials, and emergency responders. The emergency operations plan shall include the following information:
 - 1. Procedures for safe shutdown, de-energizing, or isolation of equipment and systems under emergency conditions to reduce the risk of fire, electric shock, and personal injuries, and for safe startup following cessation of emergency conditions.
 - 2. Procedures for inspection and testing of associated alarms, interlocks, and controls.
 - i. This includes hazmat appliances for conducting atmospheric monitoring with a scientific officer to support.
 - 3. Procedures to be followed in response to notifications from the Battery Energy Storage Management System, when provided, that could signify potentially dangerous conditions, including shutting down equipment, summoning service and repair personnel, and providing agreed upon notification to fire department personnel for potentially hazardous conditions in the event of a system failure.
 - 4. Emergency procedures to be followed in case of fire, explosion, release of liquids or vapors, damage to critical moving parts, or other potentially dangerous conditions. Procedures can include sounding the alarm, notifying the fire department, evacuating personnel, de-energizing equipment, and controlling and extinguishing the fire.
 - 5. Response considerations similar to a safety data sheet (SDS) that will address response safety concerns and extinguishment when an SDS is not required.
 - 6. Procedures for dealing with battery energy storage system equipment damaged in a fire or other emergency event, including maintaining contact information for personnel qualified to safely remove damaged battery energy storage system equipment from the facility.

7. Other procedures as determined necessary by the Town to provide for the safety of occupants, neighboring properties, and emergency responders.
8. Procedures and schedules for conducting drills of these procedures and for training local first responders on the contents of the plan and appropriate response procedures.
 - i. Trainings must be provided and organized by the applicant.
- k. Proof of liability insurance: The applicant shall be required to provide evidence of liability insurance in an amount and for a duration sufficient to cover loss or damage to persons and property caused by the failure of the system.
- l. A noise study, prepared by a qualified individual with experience in environmental acoustics, to assess the impact of all noise sources generated from the project to abutting properties, and determine the appropriate layout, design, and control measures. The report should include details of assessment methods, summarize the results, and recommend the required outdoor as well as any indoor control measures.

F. Design and Site Standards

1. In addition to the standards for Special Permit and Site Plan Review in the Zoning Bylaw, the applicant shall adhere to the following standards and provide such information on the site plan:

- a. Utility Lines. All on-site utility lines shall be placed underground to the extent feasible and as permitted by the serving utility.
- b. Signage. The signage shall include the type of technology associated with the systems, any special hazards associated, the type of suppression system installed, and 24-hour emergency contact information. All information shall be clearly displayed on a light reflective surface. Clearly visible warning signs concerning voltage shall be placed at the base of all pad-mounted transformers and substations.
- c. Lighting. Lighting of the systems shall be limited to that minimally required for safety and operational purposes and shall be reasonably shielded and downcast from abutting properties.
- d. Setbacks. Battery Energy Storage Systems not co-located with solar photovoltaic installations shall adhere to: a fifty (50) foot setback from the front, side, and rear property lines and shall adhere to a one hundred fifty (150) foot setback from any residential buildings. . BESS's shall also adhere to a one hundred (100) foot setback from water wells (both private and public) located either on-site or on abutting properties.

- e. Fire protection. Battery Energy Storage Systems not co-located with solar photovoltaic installations shall be located ~~in an area on properties serviced by the public water system or by a water supply~~ acceptable to the Planning Board and Leicester Fire Department.
- f. Vegetation and Tree-Cutting. Areas within ten (10) feet on each side of a system shall be cleared of combustible vegetation and other combustible growth. Single specimens of trees or shrubbery and cultivated ground covers such as green grass, ivy, succulents, or similar plants shall be exempt provided that they do not form a means of readily transmitting fire. Clearing of natural vegetation shall be limited to that which is necessary for the construction, operation and maintenance of the system and that which is otherwise prescribed by applicable bylaws and regulations.

~~g. Noise. The 1-hour average noise generated from the systems, components, and associated ancillary equipment shall not exceed a noise level of 60 dBA as measured at the property line.~~

G. Safety System Certification.

Battery energy storage systems and equipment shall be listed by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory to UL 9540 (Standard for battery energy storage systems and Equipment) or approved equivalent, with subcomponents meeting each of the following standards as applicable:

- a. UL 1973 (Standard for Batteries for Use in Stationary, Vehicle Auxiliary Power and Light Electric Rail Applications),
- b. UL 1642 (Standard for Lithium Batteries),
- c. UL 1741 or UL 62109 (Inverters and Power Converters),
- d. Certified under the applicable electrical, building, and fire prevention codes as required.
- e. Alternatively, field evaluation by an approved testing laboratory for compliance with UL 9540 (or approved equivalent) and applicable codes, regulations and safety standards may be used to meet system certification requirements.

H. Special Permit Criteria

1. The Planning Board may approve an application if the Board finds that the system complies with the Site Plan Review and Approval criteria and with the conditions for granting Special Permits. Battery energy storage systems shall also satisfy the following additional criteria:

- a. Environmental features of the site are protected, and surface runoff will not cause damage to surrounding properties or increase soil erosion and sedimentation of nearby streams and ponds.
- b. The Planning Board may also impose conditions as it finds reasonably appropriate to safeguard the town or neighborhood including, but not limited to, screening, lighting, noise, fences, modification of the exterior appearance of electrical cabinets, battery storage systems, or other structures, limitation upon system size, and means of vehicular access or traffic features.
- c. No occupancy permit shall be granted by the Building Commissioner, nor shall the site be energized or interconnected to the utility until the Planning Board has received, reviewed, and approved an as-built plan that demonstrates that the work proposed on the approved site plan, including all stormwater management components and associated offsite improvements, have been completed in accordance with the approved plan and certified same to the Building Commissioner.
- d. The Planning Board may, in its discretion, approve an as-built plan upon provision of a type of surety as determined by the SPGA, to secure incomplete work where such work is not immediately necessary for lawful operation of the system without negative effect on public health and safety and surrounding properties.
- e. The applicant shall make every effort to coordinate necessary surveying and finalization of the as-built plans and submission of required construction control documents prior to the conclusion of construction. Notwithstanding the above, a temporary occupancy permit may be granted with the approval of the Planning Board subject to conditions for completion of work imposed by the Board.

I. Decommissioning

1. As part of the applicant's submission to the Board, the applicant shall submit a decommissioning plan, to be implemented upon abandonment or in conjunction with removal from property. The plan shall include:
 - a. A narrative description of the activities to be accomplished, including who will perform that activity and at what point in time, for complete physical removal of all battery energy storage system components, structures, equipment, security barriers, and transmission lines from the property.
 - b. Disposal of all solid and hazardous waste in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations.
 - c. The anticipated life of the battery energy storage systems.

- d. The estimated decommissioning costs and how said estimate was determined.
- e. The method of ensuring that funds will be available for decommissioning and restoration.
- f. The method by which the decommissioning cost will be kept current.
- g. The manner in which the site will be restored, including a description of how any changes to the surrounding areas and other systems adjacent to the battery energy storage system, such as, but not limited to, structural elements, building penetrations, means of egress, and required fire detection suppression systems, will be protected during decommissioning and confirmed as being acceptable after the system is removed.
- h. A listing of any contingencies for removing an intact operational battery energy storage system from service, and for removing an energy storage system from service that has been damaged by a fire or other event.
- i. *Decommissioned batteries from Battery Energy Storage Systems shall be removed from site upon installation of replacement batteries.*

1. Decommissioning Fund.

- a. The owner and/or operator of the energy storage system, shall continuously maintain a fund or bond payable to the Town, in an approved form for the removal of the battery energy storage system, in an amount to be determined by the SPGA for the period of the life of the facility.
- b. All costs of the financial security shall be borne by the applicant. The amount shall include a mechanism for calculating increased removal costs due to inflation.
- c. An inspection of the completed decommissioned area shall be reviewed by a consultant hired by the Planning Board before approving the decommissioning work in accordance with the Decommissioning Plan.
- d. The owner and/or operator shall pay for the cost of this review with such payment being provided by the owner and/or operator prior to the consultant undertaking said review, in accordance with MGL Chapter 44, Section 53G.

J. Abandonment.

The battery energy storage system shall be considered abandoned when it ceases to operate consistently for more than twelve (12) months. The system shall be presumed abandoned if the owner and/or operator fails to respond affirmatively within thirty (30) days to a written inquiry from the Building Inspector as to the continued validity and operation of the system. If the owner or operator fails to comply with decommissioning upon any abandonment, the Town, may, at its discretion, and utilize the ~~88~~ for the removal of a system and restore the site in accordance with the decommissioning plan.

K. Severability.

If any provision of this By-Law is found to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this By-Law shall not be affected but remain in full force. The invalidity of any provision of this By-Law shall not affect the validity of the remainder of the Leicester Zoning By-Law.

Massachusetts: Significant increase in number of fires caused by lithium-ion batteries

[Henry Schwan](#)

There is a marked increase in the number of fires in Massachusetts caused by lithium-ion batteries that power items like electric cars, smartphones and e-bikes.

The state Department of Fire Services reported 50 such fires in the past six months, more than double the annual average of roughly 19 from 2019 to 2023.

Worcester had five fires caused by these batteries since June, with four of the five in the last six months, said Assistant Fire Chief Adam Roche, that occurred in a laptop, hoverboard, two cellphones and a flashlight.

The laptop situation was unusual, said Roche, because the battery was still in its delivery box and never installed in the computer. Luckily, said Roche, the fire was caught early when a resident noticed the box was smoking. If nobody was around, Roche said there could have been "thermal runaway," which occurs when a battery becomes overheated and can explode, sending out toxic gases that could ignite nearby items.

As for the statewide increase, a new tool called the Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Investigative Checklist tracked the hike.

"We knew anecdotally that lithium-ion batteries were involved in more fires than the existing data suggested," said State Fire Marshal Jon Davine in a prepared statement. "In just the past six months, investigators using this simple checklist have revealed many more incidents than we've seen in prior years."

Beyond the new checklist, Fire Services noted the 50 fires could be due to more consumer devices powered by lithium-ion batteries, increased attention by local fire investigators or other factors.

Lithium-ion batteries, noted Fire Services, run the risk of failing quickly without warning if they're overcharged, overheated or not used correctly. Thermal runaway could result.

Water and traditional fire extinguishers are significantly less effective in these types of fires.

How does the new checklist work?

It gathers basic information about fires when lithium-ion batteries are involved and enters it into a database to identify patterns and trends.

The State Police Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office is using the checklist. Local fire departments are encouraged to use it. Roche said the city is using the checklist.

It's an improved system because Massachusetts firefighters had put data from battery fires into a state reporting system that fed a national database. That database was incomplete because it lacked key information like the types of batteries involved in fires.

It was also slow, often taking weeks or months to complete and enter online.

More: [Lithium liabilities: The untold hazard of the push for more American lithium mines](#)

A breakdown of the 50 fires

In the most common categories, nine involved micromobility devices like battery-powered scooters, e-bikes and hoverboards; eight were connected to laptops; and eight more involved cellphones, tablets or similar devices.

Power tools accounted for six fires.

The device's charging status could be determined in 41 of the 50 fires. Meanwhile, the majority of the devices (56%) were not charging at the time of the fire.

Tips for preventing lithium-ion battery fires

The following tips are provided by the state Fire Services:

- Have working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home
- Use only the original manufacturer's batteries and charging equipment. Others may be cheaper but are more likely to cause a hazard.
- Store scooters and e-bikes outdoors, if possible. If indoors, keep them and their batteries clear of doors, windows and stairways.
- Charge the battery directly from a wall outlet, not an extension cord or power strip. Place it on a hard and stable surface and not a bed, couch or pillow.
- Charge only one battery or device at a time and unplug it when it's fully charged. Don't allow a charged battery to continue charging.

If you notice changes to the battery or the device — including damage, unusual odor, change in color, too much heat, change in shape, leaking, smoking or not keeping a charge — stop using it right away.

Also, when it's time to dispose of the battery, don't put it in the trash. Lithium-ion batteries should be recycled and you can find a location at call2recycle.org/locator.

Contact Henry Schwan at henry.schwan@telegram.com. Follow him on X: [@henrytelegram](https://twitter.com/henrytelegram).