

## Relocate Batteries

To the Editor:

We write to express our deep concern regarding Atlantic City Electric's installation of a lithium-ion Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on Second Street in Beach Haven in the heart of "The Queen City."

This facility, set to begin operation on Aug. 15, contains an estimated 10,000 to 24,999 pounds of lithium-ion batteries, according to Community Right-to-Know disclosures. While BESS technology can support grid reliability and sustainability, its placement in a densely populated, environmentally sensitive area is extremely inappropriate and dangerous.

Lithium-ion batteries carry the potential for catastrophic failure through a phenomenon known as thermal runaway, a self-sustaining reaction that can result in intense fires, toxic gas releases, explosions and long-lasting contamination. Alarmingly, ACE did not disclose to the Beach Haven Land Use Board that this facility contains lithium-ion batteries or that thermal runaway is a known risk associated with such systems.

In the past two years, California and New York have experienced at least seven thermal runaway events at BESS facilities. One of the most serious occurred on Jan. 16 in Moss Landing, Calif., where residents reported serious health issues (eye irritation, respiratory problems and rashes) miles from the fire and have filed a lawsuit against Vistra, seeking long-term medical monitoring. Researchers detected heavy metal nanoparticles – nickel, manganese and cobalt – at hundreds to thousands of times normal concentrations, with unknown long-term impacts to public health and the local ecosystem, an area known as

Elkhorn Slough (similar to our Barnegat Bay).

This is the first BESS facility in ACE's service area, and LBI is being treated as a test subject. Yet our community presents unique risks:

- Only one evacuation route, severely congested in summer and on holiday weekends.
- Proximity to homes, businesses, restaurants and outside activities, making shelter-in-place or evacuation plans nearly impossible to execute efficiently.
- High winds and shifting weather, which could spread toxic gases unpredictably.
- Critical drinking water sources (Kirkwood-Cohansey and Atlantic City 800-foot sand aquifers) lie beneath the Island, vulnerable to contamination from fire runoff, leaching and explosion debris.
- Environmentally sensitive Barnegat Bay and its susceptible fish and wildlife could be jeopardized.

Westfield, Mass., rejected a proposed BESS to protect its Barnes Aquifer. Shouldn't we afford the same level of protection to our residents, environment and drinking water supply?

We strongly support clean energy and a resilient grid, but not at the cost of public safety. The location of this facility in the center of town on a barrier island community is reckless, especially without full transparency or meaningful input from residents and local officials during the approval process.

We call on ACE to immediately remove the BESS facility from LBI to a remote, properly engineered site where it poses minimal risk to life, property and natural resources. LBI should not be an experiment. Our families, businesses, wildlife and future are too important.

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