



DATE: December 11, 2024

TO: Orange County Planning Commission

FROM: OC Development Services/Planning

SUBJECT: Initiation of General Plan Amendment GPA 24-03 and Zoning Code Amendment CA 24-03 – County of Orange Battery Energy Storage System Ordinance

PROPOSAL: Staff is requesting authorization to initiate General Plan Amendment GPA 24-03 and a corresponding Zoning Code Amendment CA 24-03 to develop guidelines and standards for Battery Energy Storage Systems.

ZONING N/A

**DISTRICT/
GENERAL PLAN
DESIGNATION:**

LOCATION: Unincorporated Areas of Orange County

APPLICANT: OC Development Services/Planning

STAFF Scarlet Duggan, Land Use Manager

CONTACT: Phone: (714) 667-1606
Email: Scarlet.Duggan@ocpw.ocgov.com

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

OC Development Services/Planning recommends the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive staff report and public testimony; and
- b. Authorize staff to initiate General Plan Amendment GPA 24-03 and Zoning Code Amendment CA 24-03.

BACKGROUND:

On October 8, 2024, the Board of Supervisors approved Supplemental Item #S14D directing staff to research and draft an ordinance setting forth development guidelines and standards for Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), also known as Lithium-ion Battery Storage projects (Attachment 1).

In the last decade, BESS technology has become more prominent due to its ability to capture and store energy for use during outages and high-use periods. BESS technology is popular statewide because it

addresses temporary gaps in the supply of renewable energy available and the increased demand during both evening and peak use hours. BESS facilities raise concerns related to public safety, wildfires, public health, and the environment because the facilities involve Lithium-ion batteries. While these concerns are more pronounced with respect to larger, commercial sized BESS facilities, staff proposes to also look into incorporating references to existing state guidelines and standards to address smaller, residential-focused BESS facilities for a comprehensive approach.

The establishment of guidelines and standards for BESS facilities will help the County of Orange address health and safety concerns related to BESS facilities through objective development standards.

PROPOSED PROJECT:

Staff is requesting authorization to initiate General Plan Amendment GPA 24-03 and Zoning Code Amendment CA 24-03 to research, develop guidelines and standards for BESS within the unincorporated areas of Orange County.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

This action is not a project within the meaning of CEQA Guidelines Section 15378 and is therefore not subject to CEQA, since it does not have the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. The approval of this agenda item does not commit the County to a definite course of action in regard to a project since the action being authorized involves the initiation of a General Plan Amendment and Zoning Code Amendment, which is administrative. This proposed activity is therefore not subject to CEQA. Any future action connected to this approval that constitutes a project will be reviewed for compliance with CEQA.

Submitted by:

DocuSigned by:
Scarlet Duggan
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Scarlet Duggan, Land Use Manager
OC Development Services/Planning

Concurred by:

DocuSigned by:
Cindy Salazar
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Cindy Salazar, Division Manager
OC Development Services/Planning

ATTACHMENT:

- 1. Board of Supervisors Supplemental Item #S14D (October 8, 2024)