

TOWN OF MORRIS, CONNECTICUT ZONING MORATORIUM ON BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS AND DATA CENTERS

Prepared by Janell Mullen, Town Planner dated March 23, 2026

Section 1. Authority

This Moratorium is adopted by the Town of Morris Planning and Zoning Commission pursuant to the authority granted under Connecticut General Statutes §§ 8-2 and 8-7.

Section 2. Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this Moratorium is to temporarily prohibit the acceptance and approval of applications for Battery Energy Storage Systems and Data Centers in order to:

- Allow the Commission sufficient time to evaluate the potential land use, environmental, infrastructure, and public safety impacts associated with such uses;
- Ensure that any future regulations are consistent with the Town of Morris's Plan of Conservation & Development, natural resource protection goals, and limited infrastructure capacity;
- Prevent the establishment of uses that may be incompatible with existing development patterns, including low-density residential areas, agricultural uses, and environmentally sensitive lands;
- Protect the public health, safety, and welfare while appropriate regulatory standards are developed.

Section 3. Definitions

A. Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is defined as:

A stationary system or facility designed to store electrical energy using rechargeable batteries or similar technologies for later use, whether as a principal use or accessory use. Such systems include all associated components and infrastructure, including but not limited to:

- Battery modules, racks, or containers;
- Power conversion systems, including inverters and transformers;
- Thermal management and cooling systems;
- Fire detection and suppression systems;
- Control systems and associated equipment;
- Fencing, screening, and security infrastructure.

This definition includes grid-scale, commercial, and utility-owned energy storage facilities, whether standalone or co-located with renewable energy systems or substations.

B. Data Center is defined as:

A facility, structure, or campus of structures primarily used for the storage, processing, and distribution of digital data and information, including cloud-based services and network operations. Data Centers typically include:

- High-density server and data storage equipment;
- Telecommunications and networking infrastructure;
- Mechanical systems for cooling, including HVAC or liquid cooling systems;
- On-site electrical substations, backup generators, and/or battery storage systems;
- Security, monitoring, and operational support infrastructure.

This definition includes hyperscale, colocation, and enterprise data centers, but does not include small-scale server rooms or equipment that are clearly incidental and accessory to a permitted principal use.

Section 4. Moratorium

A. Prohibition

Effective upon adoption of this Moratorium, the Town of Morris Planning and Zoning Commission and any other municipal land use authority shall:

- Not accept, process, hear, or approve any application for:
 - The establishment, construction, installation, or expansion of a Battery Energy Storage System; or
 - The establishment, construction, or expansion of a Data Center.

B. Applicability

This prohibition shall apply to all forms of land use approval, including but not limited to:

- Zoning permits;
- Special permits or special exceptions;
- Site plan approvals;
- Subdivision or resubdivision approvals;
- Zoning amendments or map changes intended to facilitate such uses.

Section 5. Exemptions

The following shall be exempt from this Moratorium:

1. Battery storage systems that are clearly accessory and subordinate to a single-family or two-family residential use, including systems paired with rooftop or ground-mounted solar installations for on-site consumption;

2. Small-scale backup power systems (including batteries or generators) that are customary and incidental to a permitted use and not intended for commercial energy storage or grid services;
3. Any application that has received all required zoning approvals prior to the effective date of this Moratorium.

Section 6. Duration

This Moratorium shall remain in effect for a period of **twelve (12) months** from the effective date of adoption, unless earlier terminated or extended in accordance with applicable law.

Section 7. Planning and Regulatory Study

During the Moratorium period, the Town of Morris Planning and Zoning Commission shall:

- Review applicable state, federal, and industry standards, including guidance from the National Fire Protection Association (including NFPA 855 for energy storage systems);
- Evaluate potential impacts on:
 - Fire safety and emergency response capacity;
 - Groundwater, wetlands, and environmental resources;
 - Traffic, noise, and visual character;
 - Electrical infrastructure and grid interconnection;
 - Water usage and cooling demands associated with data centers;
- Consider appropriate zoning mechanisms, including:
 - Use regulations (permitted vs. special permit);
 - Dimensional standards;
 - Siting restrictions and buffers;
 - Performance standards and operational limitations;
- Prepare and adopt amendments to the Morris Zoning Regulations as appropriate.

Section 8. Severability

If any provision of this Moratorium is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions.

Section 9. Effective Date

This Moratorium shall become effective upon publication in a newspaper of general circulation and filing with the Town Clerk in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes.