**TOWN OF CORNWALL**
**PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**
**Memorandum- Battery Energy Storage Systems and Data Centers**
*Prepared by Janell Mullen, dated August 11, 2026 and updated for September 8th, 2026*

## BACKGROUND

This issue is becoming one of the most significant emerging land-use challenges facing Connecticut Planning & Zoning Commissions. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and large-scale data centers are moving from being niche infrastructure projects to major land-use developments that can have profound impacts on local zoning, public safety, utilities, environmental resources, and the scenic quality of a small town like Cornwall, CT.

## 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.

BESS are large-scale facilities that store electricity and discharge it when needed. Utility-scale systems can occupy several acres and contains hundreds of lithium-ion battery cabinets.

**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.

Traditional Data Centers were often 25,000-100,000 square feet. Modern AI facilities can exceed:

- 500,000 square feet
- 100+ MW electrical demand
- Tens of millions of gallons of colling water annually

**WHY CT IS VULNERABLE**

Connecticut is actively encouraging both industries.

The state has established tax incentives and a dedicated office to attract data center development. Connecticut law provides significant tax benefits for qualified data centers and state agencies are actively marketing Connecticut as a data center infrastructure destination.

At the same time, the state's electric grid modernization efforts and renewable energy goals are driving demand for utility-scale battery storage facilities.

Many CT towns are beginning to realize they have little or no zoning language addressing either use.

Connecticut offers:

- Strong electric infrastructure
- Fiber connectivity
- Proximity to New York and Boston
- Tax incentives
- Available land

**WHAT CT TOWNS ARE DOING**

Morris – Two-year moratorium

Groton- One-year moratorium on data centers and developed regulations governing their location and operation.

**NEXT STEPS**

**During the regular meeting of the Town of Cornwall Planning & Zoning Commission that took place on August 11, 2026, the Commissioner members present unanimously supported an outright prohibition of both Battery Energy Storage System Facilities and Data Centers.**

**To prohibit these uses, the P&Z will need to amend their regulations defining both terms and then expressly prohibiting them.**

**Suggested Language**

Add the following two definitions within **Article 3 Definitions & Interpretations:**

**Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)**

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.

**Data Center**

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.

Add Section **4.8 Prohibited Uses** and include:

1. Battery Energy Storage Systems

2. Data Centers