Milford battery farm paused after local opposition

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Developer Flatiron Energy announced a pause on the construction of a New Milford battery farm during a Jan. 22 meeting opposing the project, according to a Zoom by New Milford Clean Water Coalition.

The announcement came in the last couple of minutes of the Zoom meeting. Before that, Kate Losey, a presenter with the coalition, said there was a lot of hope when a concerned resident asked about the possibility to "quash" the battery farm.

"There's still people in your neighborhood [New Milford] who aren't even aware of it," Losey said, pointing to how the community had only begun to hear about the project six weeks ago. "And already, we've gotten over a thousand people [to sign a petition against construction]."

The last opportunity to ask a question to the New Milford Clean Water Coalition (NMCWC) speakers was taken by Charlie McGovern, a director of development at Flatiron Energy, who instead took the time to update the community members about the project.

"We are here to listen; there are clear concerns we seek to address. It is our intention to pause our permitting application with the Connecticut Siting Council while we better engage with the community," McGovern said.

President of the NMCWC, Joe Quaranta, said in an interview on Tuesday he was surprised at the pause because Flatiron was a large organization who "invested a tremendous amount of money into planning," but he also said there were factors that made him expect the pause.

"In our short time being able to communicate with them... Flatiron has been very receptive in listening to our concerns and ultimately are in a decision where they decided to pause," Quaranta said.

A battery farm refers to battery energy storage systems built to the scale of a utility which uses electrochemical devices to charge from an electrical grid and redistribute energy during peak demand to reduce strain on power plants, according to the National Laboratory of the Rockies.

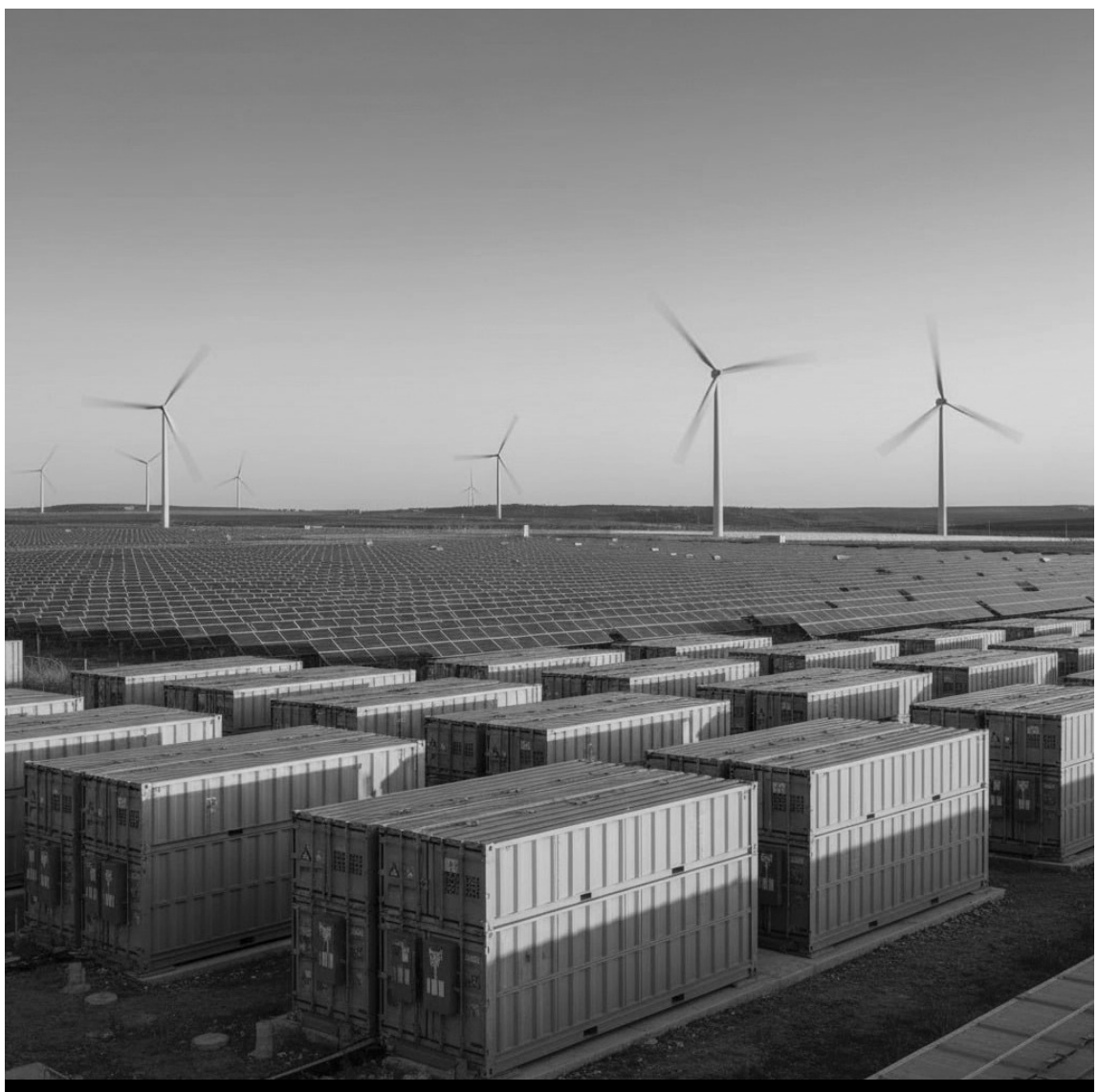
One NMCWC presenter, Sam Brauer, who has a Dartmouth doctorate in bioinorganic chemistry and was described as a battery storage expert, said he supports battery energy storage systems, but took issue with the Flatiron proposal.

"We think that battery storage is a good idea. We think that New Milford's connection makes it easy, but we have some concerns," Brauer said.

Brauer pointed out three concerns involving the site location being on an environmentally sensitive flood zone. These included the safety risks of Flatiron using lithium technology in its batteries and possible negative economic impacts of the project, like with home values.

The other safety concern of battery storage systems with lithium is previous utility scale battery farms catching fires that can't be easily put out. During the Zoom, Brauer played an infamous example of the Vistra Moss Landing Energy Storage Facility fire, which burned for several days and distributed heavy metals around the area, according to Inside Climate News.

During the meeting, Brauer mentioned that in discussions with NMCWC, Flatiron claimed their batteries don't catch fire. McGovern added that they're already constructing a battery farm in Uxbridge, Mass., which has been vetted by the Boston Fire Department.



Energy units seen on a battery farm. Development of a battery farm in New Milford, Conn. was paused following local opposition.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HANWHA DATA CENTERS

Brauer disputed some of this reassurance by pointing out how Flatiron hasn't addressed their other concerns about a major lithium fire releasing hazardous hydrofluoric acid around the site. He also said advice from the National Fire Protection Agency says to let lithium fires burn, which prolongs the air quality impacts.

To move forward with Flatiron and any New Milford battery farm, the NMCWC president said the coalition feels strongly about having no development on the current Aspetuck Ridge site and to find a technology alternative to lithium for battery energy storage.

"It's our interpretation that Flatiron has taken our criticism of the current proposal and current technology... and there's talks that they may be looking at different technologies, safer technologies," Quaranta said.

In the Zoom meeting where the pause was announced, McGovern reiterated that Flatiron plans to use lithium technology in their battery energy storage system plant.

New Milford Mayor Pete Bass said that Flatiron was looking at other locations for the battery farm in the town, but would not disclose where those sites were, according to newstimes.

Bass confirmed on Facebook that Flatiron has not given up their option to purchase the original location on the Aspetuck Ridge property as they look into other options.

US Dept. of Ed. temporarily delays involuntary collections of student loans



The U.S. Department of Education Building in Washington D.C. The department has announced that they will temporarily delay involuntary collections on student loans. PHOTO COURTESY OF @THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH ON FACEBOOK

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The U.S. Department of Education announced in a press release on Jan. 16 they would temporarily delay the involuntary collections on federal student loans, including wage garnishing and federal tax return withholding.

Wage garnishing, according to the Federal Student Aid website, requires employers to "withhold a portion of your pay and send it to your loan holder to repay your defaulted loan." Loan holders are allowed to withhold up to 15% of "disposable pay" to repay the loan, and the withholding continues until the default status is resolved or the loan is paid in full.

The announcement also delays the Treasury Offset Program, which allows the Department of Education to ask that the Department of The Treasury withhold money from defaulted borrowers' federal tax returns according to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administration's Managing Editor Hugh T. Ferguson.

According to the press release, the delay would allow the department to implement the reforms of the Working Families Act and give borrowers more options for repayment.

The Working Family Tax Cuts Act, better known as One Big Beautiful Bill, was passed by Congress on July 4, 2025. According to the department press release, the act reduces the number of federal student loan repayment plans, "eliminating a confusing maze of options."

Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent said in the press release that President Donald Trump's administration is committed to helping borrowers find clear options for loan repayment, "which will support a stronger financial future for borrowers and enhance the long-term health of the federal student loan portfolio." He said the delay in involuntary collections would allow the administration to make "significant improvements to our broken student loan system."

As of now, there are many federal student loan repayment options. The fixed payment plans include Standard Repayment Plan, the Graduated Repayment Plan and the Extended Repayment Plan, which "base your monthly payment amount on how much you owe, your interest rate, and a fixed repayment time period," according to the Federal Student Aid website.

There are also currently several income-driven repayment plans, which are based on the borrower's income and family size. The different plans include the Income-Based Repayment Plan, the Income-Contingent Repayment Plan, the Pay As You Earn Repayment Plan and the Saving on a Valuable Education Plan, according to Federal Student Aid.

Under One Big Beautiful Bill, borrowers will be able to choose between a single standard repayment plan — which is usually a 10-year fixed payment plan, according to the Federal Student Aid website — or an income-driven repayment plan including a new kind "that waives unpaid interest for borrowers with on-time payments whose payments do not fully cover accrued interest, and that includes small matching payments from the Department [of Education] in certain circumstances to ensure that outstanding principal is reduced each month," the press release said. The new plan will be available to borrowers on July 1, 2026.

"The delay in collections will give defaulted borrowers additional time to evaluate these new repayment options once they consolidate their loans or complete a repayment or rehabilitation agreement," the press release said.

The new reforms will also give borrowers a second chance to rehabilitate defaulted loans. According to Federal Student Aid, one option to get out of default is to make "a certain number of consecutive, on-time payments to your loan holder under a rehabilitation agreement." Before One Big Beautiful Bill, borrowers were only allowed one opportunity to rehabilitate their loans, the press release said.

The department has not yet announced a date when the involuntary loan collections would resume.

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