

TO: City Council  
FROM: Dana Bowers, Associate Planner  
DATE: June 9, 2026  
SUBJECT: Battery Energy Storage Systems Briefing

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1) Recommended Action:

Provide direction on whether to prepare amendments to Tumwater Municipal Code (TMC) Title 15 Buildings and Construction and TMC Title 18 Zoning related to battery energy storage systems or to rely on existing state permitting pathways.

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2) Background:

Battery energy storage systems store electricity for later use, helping manage peak electricity demand, support electrical grid reliability, and maintain power during outages. These systems vary in scale from small residential installations to larger utility-scale facilities that support regional electrical infrastructure.

The battery energy storage industry is experiencing rapid growth due to increasing electricity demand and decreasing battery costs. As a result, utilities and jurisdictions throughout Washington State are evaluating how and where these systems may be appropriate. TMC Title 18 Zoning does not currently allow battery energy storage systems.

Like other forms of energy storage already present in the community, such as gas stations and propane storage, battery energy storage systems have both benefits and potential risks that require careful consideration related to land use compatibility, public health, and safety. Tumwater is also exploring the potential use of battery backup systems to support continuity of operations and emergency response at critical public facilities during power disruptions.

Topics of consideration and discussion include:

- Energy Storage Capacity and Use
- Physical Scale of the Facility
- Zone Districts
- Screening and Setbacks
- Fire/Thermal Runway
- Noise
- Decommissioning

At their May 26, 2026, meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed and forwarded a recommendation to City Council to direct staff to prepare code amendments for battery energy storage systems.

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3) Alternatives:

- Option A: Prepare municipal code amendments to TMC Title 15 Building and Construction and Title 18 Zoning to allow battery energy storage systems subject to safeguards addressing identified safety, siting, and compatibility considerations.

- Option B: Do not prepare municipal code amendments. Permitting would continue under applicable Washington State Labor and Industries standards or through the WA State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council process. This option would not prohibit battery energy storage systems, but would rely on state permitting requirements rather than additional local standards.
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4) Attachments:

- A. Staff Report
- B. Presentation