

# County moves to regulate power storage developments

**TERRY FLORES**

tflores@kenoshanews.com

Kenosha County has taken the first step toward regulating future development of battery energy storage systems.

On Wednesday night, the County Board voted unanimously to incorporate the new use into the county's permitting process.

The move was prompted earlier this spring as the Omaha, Nebraska-based Tenaska energy company proposed building a system for a 200-megawatt battery storage project in the Town of Wheatland.

As part of Tenaska's Robin Energy Storage project, developers have offered to contribute a minimum of \$200,000 a year, or \$4 million over a 20-year-period, to the town to aid in paying for roads and public safety services.

Plans have yet to be formally submitted for review for the development proposed for 12-acres at Highway 50 just west of ATC's Balsam Transfer station. The site is a key connection to the power grid with its proximity to the Paris Solar Farm, which at full capacity would generate enough electricity to power 60,000 homes a year.

The proposed battery system would not generate power, only store it, according to officials. The regulations would pertain to battery systems that connect to a transmission grid with a capacity of greater than five megawatts on a large utility scale and to those with less than five megawatts on a localized site.

In May, the County Board



SUBMITTED PHOTO

This photo from KORE Power shows an example of an energy storage battery facility project for Producer's Rice in Arkansas. A 200-megawatt battery facility using similar technology to store power is being proposed by Tenaska, a power development company, for the Town of Wheatland.

placed a six-month moratorium on considering the project or other such systems because the county did not have ordinances that specifically addressed renewable energy technology for battery storage.

County Planning and Development Director Andy Buehler said Oct. 12 the moratorium would allow the county's Planning and Development committee to study the issue and come up with appropriate legislation for conditional use, zoning and building permits. The board was asked to extend the moratorium another 75 days past its original Nov. 22 expiration to finalize work on the ordinance and obtain support from affected municipalities, including the towns of Brighton, Paris, Randall, Somers and Wheatland.

The conditional use ordinance addresses replacement of lost property tax revenue mutually agreed upon by the county, a mu-

nicipality and the developer, along with general maintenance of the system and public safety.

At a community meeting held in Wheatland earlier this spring, town officials and residents expressed concerns about the type of response plan in place, along with other safety measures, in the event of emergencies such as fires.

The permit process establishes safety mechanisms including a hazard mitigation analysis for local fire departments, the Kenosha County Sheriff's Department and local emergency responders; an emergency response plan that includes, but is not limited to, evacuation, firefighting methods and assignment responsibilities for specific scenarios; training; and holding developers responsible for "commercially reasonable costs" of local first responders for any emergency event at a facility.

Also approved was an

amendment to the conditional use permit for de-commissioning on-site battery storage systems or smaller capacity system that would be used businesses, such as, a retail store. Under the change, the business would be required to restore the site to its pre-construction condition within 12 months of ceasing operations.

Battery energy storage systems typically have a lifespan of about 20 years, according to Buehler.

## Public hearing on budget

In other business, the board held a public hearing on the proposed 2025 budget. No one from the public spoke during Wednesday's hearing.

According to next year's proposed budget, the levy will increase 2.52%, up by \$1,912,125 to \$77,794,539. The corresponding tax rate is proposed to decrease by 18 cents from \$3.35 this year to \$3.17 per \$1,000 of equalized property value.

In 2024, the county's equalized value increased by \$1,885,267,800, from \$22,618,272,200 to \$24,503,540,500, up 8.34%. The increase is reflected in the median value for a home in the county, which rose from \$267,706 to \$282,000.

As a result, the owner of such a home could expect to pay \$895.30 in taxes to fund county operations in 2025, a decrease of \$2.83, compared with taxes of \$898.13 for this year.

The board scheduled a vote on the budget and levy Thursday night.