

Eyeing 2024 for Return of Battery Facility

By Christopher Walsh

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The 5-megawatt lithium-ion battery energy storage system, or BESS, that caught fire at a Cove Hollow Road, East Hampton, substation on May 31 is expected to be out of commission until the middle of 2024, a spokesman for NextEra Energy Resources said last week.

The fire at the facility, a partnership between NextEra and National Grid, was one of three at battery energy storage facilities in New York State this year.

Bill Orlove, a NextEra spokesman, told The Star in a Nov. 1 email that since the fire in East Hampton “we have been safely and diligently working toward substantially rebuilding the facility, which included a comprehensive assessment of the site. By the end of the year, the damaged equipment will be removed. We plan to have the facility back online by mid-2024. We are following all local and state regulations and our contract with the Long Island Power Authority as we remove the damaged equipment and rebuild the facility. There are no safety or power concerns for local residents and businesses as a result of the facility being out of service.”

The May 31 fire, and other BESS fires in June and July in Warwick and Chaumont, N.Y., respectively, contributed to Southampton Town’s August enactment of a six-month moratorium on BESS applications. An application for a facility on North Road in Hampton Bays, close to Montauk Highway, the Long Island Rail Road track, and the Shinnecock Canal, was before the town’s planning board at the time.

NextEra “plans to apply lessons learned from this situation to mitigate future incidents,” Mr. Orlove said. “It’s important to note that the water-based fire suppression systems operated as designed and quickly contained the May 31 fire to the site. No further emergency response was required. All our energy storage facilities are managed, monitored, and cooled in a controlled manner to keep the equipment functioning safely.”