



HERON ENERGY STORAGE OPEN HOUSE FAQ

During the recent open house for the Heron Energy Storage project, members of the Gun Plain Township community asked several questions of the project team. This document categorizes and captures the inquiries that were answered during the event.

About the Project

Q: Why was this site chosen? Why here?

A: The site was selected because of its proximity to existing electrical infrastructure, including the Argenta Substation. The 345 kV substation is not just nearby – it also has sufficient capacity to support a battery energy storage project of Heron’s size, allowing operation without straining or adding unnecessary cost to the local electricity system.

In site selection, the project team also evaluated land availability, environmental factors, and compatibility with local planning requirements. The existing and surrounding land uses are compatible with a battery energy storage system (BESS) facility, as the site is not located within a dense residential area and allows for the maintenance of required buffers and safety setbacks. Site studies confirmed no impact to wetlands or protected habitats.

Allegan County was selected in part because local utilities have identified a need for energy storage to support continued load growth. As one of the fastest-growing counties in Michigan, Allegan County requires a more reliable and resilient electric grid. Increasing electricity demand, frequent outages caused by severe weather, and aging infrastructure are creating growing challenges for Gun Plain Township and the surrounding region.

Q: Will the batteries kick in when electricity demand is high?

A: Yes, electricity demand rises and falls over the course of the day. Battery energy storage projects rapidly deploy energy when it is needed to help meet electricity demand spikes.

Q: What type of batteries will the project use?

A: The Heron Energy Storage Project will use purpose-built battery energy storage systems that employ Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) battery cells and the latest safety features.

Permitting and Operations

Q: When will it be built, and when will it come online?

A: Under the project's current timeline, construction is anticipated to begin in mid-2027, which would put it on schedule to begin operations in late 2028.

Q: What is the expected lifespan of the project? What happens if changes or an expansion is proposed in the future?

A: The project is expected to operate for approximately 20 years. Once the project receives permitting approvals, if the project owner were to propose any changes to the technology or an expansion, those changes would not be automatic. Any modification or expansion would be required to go through the same local permitting and review process, including submitting new permit applications and site plans for review and approval by the Gun Plain Township Planning Commission.

Q: What happens when the project reaches the end of operation?

A: Gun Plain Township's ordinance requires a rigorous decommissioning process that places the entire responsibility for restoration on the developer. This process includes:

- **Complete Site Restoration:** At the end of the project's life, we are legally required to remove all battery storage equipment and associated infrastructure. The land will be restored to its pre-development condition, ensuring it is left in a safe, stable and productive state.
- **Approval by the Township Attorney:** Prior to construction, a formal Decommissioning Plan and Agreement must be reviewed and approved by the Township Attorney to ensure it meets all local standards and is in a recordable legal form.
- **Paid for by Developer:** To protect the Township, the developer must post financial security (such as a surety bond or cash deposit) before a building permit can be issued. The amount of this funding is reviewed every two years to account for inflation and updated removal costs, ensuring the money set aside is always sufficient to cover the work.
- **Zero Taxpayer Risk:** These financial security funds are held independently of the project and are accessible to the Township. No costs for decommissioning will ever fall on the local government or the residents of Gun Plain.

Q: Is there a financial or other benefit for the developer to go through the state permitting process (PA 233)?

A: No. Michigan's PA 233 is designed to encourage a local-first approach, not to provide a financial incentive or shortcut around local review. That's how we prefer to work.

Because Gun Plain Township already has an existing and workable battery energy storage ordinance, our intent is to work directly with Gun Plain Township through its local permitting and review process. Our goal is to develop a project that reflects local standards and priorities while helping deliver more reliable power for families and businesses in the area.

Q: How is your company making money from this project?

A: We'll earn a fixed fee for providing power to the grid when it's most needed – during times of peak demand – we do not profit from high electricity prices. We contract directly with utilities to provide wholesale power capacity, essentially running our batteries down when the utilities need electricity from us. We're effectively renting the storage capability for a steady payment regardless of price fluctuations. By providing a reliable source of extra supply, we help utilities avoid purchasing expensive emergency power during peak times, which ultimately helps keep consumer rates stable and prevents blackouts.

Community Impacts

Q: Will the project impact property values in the area?

A: [Independent academic studies](#) across the U.S. have found no evidence that battery storage facilities reduce property values. The facility will be quiet, landscaped and screened to minimize visual impact, with ongoing compliance to local zoning standards.

Q: Will this project be an expense that is passed along to residents?

A: No. The Heron Energy Storage project is privately developed and financed, and its construction and operation costs are not paid for by Gun Plain Township residents. Local taxpayers are not responsible for funding the project.

In fact, the project is expected to generate new tax revenue for Allegan County, helping support public services like public schools and infrastructure without increasing local taxes on residents.

Q: What tax revenue will the project generate for Gun Plain Township?

A: The Heron Energy Storage project is projected to generate approximately \$20 million in property tax revenue over its 20-year lifespan. Of that total, about \$320,000 per year would go directly to Gun Plain Township and the Plainwell Community School District, with the remaining property tax revenue distributed to Allegan County and other taxing jurisdictions as required by law.

Q: Will the project create odors or emissions similar to those from wildfires?

A: No. The system is a sealed electrical facility and produces no smoke, odor or emissions of any kind during operation. It is not a combustion source and will not affect local air quality.

Q: Will the site include a retention pond to collect stormwater?

A: Yes, the site plan includes a retention pond to manage rainwater and stormwater. The project will use no chemicals or process water and will not use water during operations. The retention pond is designed to capture and contain rainwater and stormwater runoff, preventing drainage offsite. It will meet all relevant stormwater standards.

Q: Will the site release pollutants that will be picked up by the stormwater and rainwater that collects in the retention pond? If pollution occurs, who will be responsible for clean up, and how much will that cost?

A: Our systems are designed to effectively manage all stormwater on-site, so removal is very rarely needed. However, if the retention pond water ever requires treatment, our Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) explicitly mandate that we contract a licensed hazardous material handler to manage the removal and disposal at a permitted regional facility. The project carries specific insurance for these scenarios, guaranteeing that all costs for testing, removal, and disposal are covered entirely by the project owner – never by the Township, County, or local fire department.

Q: What happens if there is wear and tear on the roads during construction?

A: If construction activity causes damage or excessive wear to local roads, the project developer is fully responsible for the repairs. This typically includes working with the Township and County Road Commission to assess road conditions before construction begins, following approved haul routes, and repairing or restoring any roads impacted by construction traffic once work is completed.

Safety Measures and Emergency Response

Q: Will the company send anyone to help if there is a fire?

A: Yes. The project will maintain a trained operations and maintenance team, with experts available 24/7. Because of the 24/7 monitoring, this team would be the first to know about anything that is happening at the facility, including any malfunctions. In the event of a fire, this team would be immediately dispatched to the site and would coordinate directly with local first responders.

Q: Will the Gun Plain Township Fire Department know what to do?

A: Yes. The Gun Plain Fire Department and Fire Chief Currier have already been engaged to discuss safety and begin emergency response planning. The Fire Department will receive on-site training emergency response plans prior to the site beginning operations. There will be ongoing coordination to ensure all first responders are prepared for any emergency.

One of the first steps in this coordination was to partner with the Fire Department on a third-party assessment of the department's current resources and potential needs. We will continue this work with Chief Currier.

Q: What's the fire risk from equipment or vegetation?

A: The equipment is designed with multiple layers of fire protection, including monitoring and suppression systems. The setbacks provide an additional safety margin, so even in a worst-case scenario, all available engineering data indicates that any potential heat and flame would be fully contained within the site boundary.

Q: If there's a fire, will that impact any homes or residents?

A: This is not a concern based on the location and available data. The project commissioned site-specific modeling that uses Allegan County weather data, including prevailing winds, to assess worst-case scenarios. Results show that even in the worst-case scenario, no toxic or harmful impacts – heat, smoke, gases, etc. – would extend beyond 260 feet from the battery site. The community of homes is more than 4X that distance from the project.

Additionally, Heron Energy Storage will be built in compliance with Gun Plain Township's BESS Ordinance and will comply with NFPA 855, which is the world's leading battery energy storage safety standards. The project will be built with equipment and technology from well-established manufacturers with strong safety and performance records, using the safest battery chemistry available. It will be run by experienced operators, and it will have 24/7 monitoring and multiple redundant safety systems, to keep operations safe and unobtrusive.

There are currently more than 900 utility-scale BESS projects operating safely across the United States, some for more than a decade.

Additional Resources

- [American Clean Power Fact Sheet on NFPA 855](#)
- [U.S. EPA BESS Considerations for Safe Installation and Incident Response](#)
- [Montgomery County \(CA\) Report on Moss Landing Fire and Soil Impacts](#)
- [Montgomery County \(CA\) Report on Moss Landing Fire and Water/Marsh impacts](#)
- [Impact of electric reliability on home values](#)
- [The surprisingly positive community-wide impact of wind energy installations on property values](#)