

September 24, 2010

Special Meeting

Minutes are subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen.

Present: First Selectman Mark E. Lyon, Selectman Nicholas N. Solley.

Cell Tower Committee Member Diane Dupuis.

Guests: Rachel Mayo-Robinson & Cole, Sandy Carter-Verizon, Attorney Kenneth Baldwin-Robinson & Cole, Michael Libertine-VHB, Attorney Christopher Fisher-Cuddy & Feder (AT&T), Tom Nolan-Verizon Structure Consulting, Attorney Jesse Langer-Cohen & Wolf, Hans Fiedler-T-Mobile, Joe DelBuono and Dan Soule-Litchfield County Dispatch.

Public: Susan Branson, Nora Connolly, Bill and Elsie McTiernan, Chris Charles, Sandra Canning, Jim Greenfield.

Call to Order:

First Selectman Mark Lyon called the meeting to order at 2:35p.m.

DISCUSSION re:

Proposed Cell Tower on Town of Washington Highway Department property:

Mark Lyon explained that there were two balloon floats on Saturday, September 18th at the original proposed site and the alternate site on the Town's Highway Department property at 130 feet.

Mike Libertine, VHB, presented a Photographic Documentation and Simulation report as a result of the floats. The report had actual and simulated photos from 17 different views. He stated that as a result of this study, he would support the installation of a monopine – feeling it would blend in with the topography, natural backdrop, etc. and being sensitive to the people's concerns about view sheds, etc.

Questions were asked about the height change to 130 feet. Attorney Kenneth Baldwin explained that Verizon's proposal was for a 110-foot tower and this would meet Verizon's needs. The Town asked Verizon to look into co-locator's and what their needs would be. The thought being if one tower, perhaps taller, would handle these other carriers, it would reduce the need for construction of additional towers in Town. He made the point that carriers are going to provide service in Town. The Town, therefore, needs to think about balancing the issue of taller towers accommodating these additional carriers or more towers in more locations. To accommodate AT&T, the tower would need to be 120 feet. T-Mobile explained that they are just beginning to expand into our area but should they co-locate on this tower, an additional 10 feet would be necessary.

Diane Dupuis voiced concern that townspeople were led to believe that AT&T would co-locate on the Marbledale tower and to date, that has not happened. Attorney Chris Fisher explained that AT&T was one of the first to attempt to come into the Town of Washington – had proposed two sites that obviously did not happen. AT&T then merged with Cingular and activity in Washington stopped. They are now again looking at Washington and when Verizon approached them about the Highway property, they were interested and a tower at 110-120 feet would work. Regarding the Marbledale tower, the Siting Council approved that tower with "flushed mount antennas". Although approved by the Council to co-locate, they would need to change their type antenna and or go higher.

Ives Road and Calhoun Street residents who are in or abut an Historic District, have made conservation easements with Steep Rock and the Town to preserve the area as open space, with scenic view sheds, etc.

expressed concern about the height and look of the proposed tower.

Nick Solley asked if Verizon's application to the Siting Council is for a 130 foot tower that could accommodate two more carriers, is there any guarantee that no other towers would be build in the same coverage area. Attorney Baldwin explained that the Siting Council couldn't deny other carriers from applying for other sites but would review and determine if existing towers could accommodate other applicants. The Council does consider environmental impact, etc.

Discussion on the appearance of the tower occurred with Mike Libertine explaining that great improvements have been made on the monopine towers – looking much more natural and in keeping with the surrounding area. Sandy Carter from Verizon used an example of a mono-pine tower they constructed in Windham, VT. That town's Planning Board has told any other carriers that their tower(s) must be "like Verizon's". The Siting Council has recently approved this design for a tower in Shelton, CT.

Representatives from Litchfield County Dispatch spoke of enhancing the public safety communication system network by being able to place antennas on the proposed tower without adding additional height or arms. They, the emergency services in Town and residents have voiced the importance of this service.

If the Town signs the lease with Verizon, they will then apply to the Siting Council for approval of a 110-foot tower. Other carriers would apply to be interveners and ask for 120-130 feet. The Town has input on capping the height.

Attorney Baldwin thanked the Selectmen and the Town for the opportunity to make this proposal and encouraged them to move forward. Verizon can't do much more until there is a lease. If the Town does not feel this is a good location and does not wish to pursue the proposal by Verizon, they will continue to look for other sites.

The Selectmen thanked Verizon for their cooperation in providing any and all information requested of them – including discussions with the other carriers. The next step will be to continue to review the lease with the Town Attorney and consultants knowledgeable on cell tower leases.

Adjournment:

Motion:

To adjourn the meeting at 4:20 p.m. as there was no further business for discussion.

By Mark Lyon, seconded by Nick Solley and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Anne Greene
Selectmen's Secretary