



Development Review Center
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NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION MEETING NOTES

Meeting Date January 31, 2018

These notes capture staff's interpretation of questions, comments and ideas from the meeting.

PROJECT: Southside Baptist Church Wireless Telecommunication Facility

DATE: January 31, 2018

CITY STAFF: Sylvia Tatman-Burruss, Development Review Liaison
Clay Frickey, City Planner

PROSPECTIVE APPLICANT: Caleb Crossland, Atlas Tower
Michael Powers, Atlas Tower

Project Description

This is a request to construct a wireless telecommunication facility at 620 W Horsetooth Rd. The project proposes the installation of 65 foot stealth bell tower with a 40 foot by 40 foot lease area at the base of the tower. The project proposal is located in a Low Density Residential (RL) district. Wireless telecommunication facilities are not a permitted use in the RL zone district. This proposal is subject to an Addition of Permitted Use (APU) with review by the Planning & Zoning Board and City Council.

Meeting

Sylvia Tatman-Burruss introduced the purpose of the meeting and went through the agenda for the evening. Clay Frickey followed up with a presentation on the City's development review process and Land Use Code. The proposed facility would need to proceed through the City's Development Review process with submittal of plans, staff review of plans, and multiple public hearings. The proposed use, Wireless Telecommunications Facility, is not allowed in the zone in which it is being proposed. This necessitates an APU. Since this proposal is subject to an APU, City Council will be the ultimate decision maker for this project with the Planning & Zoning Board providing a recommendation for approval or denial to City Council. Plans will be available online for public inspection, and, when scheduled, a mailing notice will be sent for the hearing(s) in accordance with the code.

The Land Use Code addresses the placement and design of cell tower facilities and equipment. FCC regulations limit local government authority and specifically restrict State or local governments from regulating wireless facilities on the basis of the environmental effects of radio frequency emissions to the extent that a facility complies with FCC regulations on such emissions.

Caleb Crossland explained the proposal and rationale.

- Service providers are seeing a need for more towers closer to their users.
- Why a tower here? Demand and few other viable locations. This area has poor capacity due to data usage and few parcels have permissive zoning and available land for a cell tower.
- Antennas will be completely shielded from view.
- The proposed tower could accommodate multiple carriers.
- Brick fence to screen ground equipment along Horsetooth Rd. Wood fence proposed for all other sides of fenced area.
- The design concept is a bell tower 55 feet in height.

Any questions or requests for information are welcome at:
Caleb.crossland@gmail.com, phone 303.448.8896

Questions and Discussion:

Q = Question

R = Response

C = Comment

Question: Will the proposed tower be for a GSM or CDMA network? How does this play into the proposal?

Response (Applicant): GSM and CDMA are just two different ways of processing a signal. They don't really make a difference in terms of radio frequency emissions. GSM networks are more common. I believe CDMA has been adopted by Verizon.

Question: I know that you can't consider the health effects as part of the development process, but from what I have read GSM networks emit more radiation, so I would prefer this to be a CDMA network.

Response (Applicant): This might be a CDMA network, I am not sure. Either way, GSM and CDMA networks are subject to the same FCC regulations. Radio frequency emissions do not change based on the encoding/decoding method. As you stated, the federal government has pre-empted the City of Fort Collins with respect to radio frequency emission issues. A way to think about this is how the Federal Drug Administration works with respect to the sale of drugs. The FDA determines what is safe and what isn't and lower levels of government operate within these regulations. For example, the City of Fort Collins does not have different standards for selling prescription drugs compared to other communities. The FCC has taken the same approach with wireless facilities. The FCC conducts studies and uses experts to create rules.

Question: Does the proposed bell tower have real bells?

Response (City): No.

Comment: I think this is appropriate to say here, thank God. With that being said, I think the proposed tower is out of context. I would like to see you work on the shape of the tower so it is more tapered and similar to a

steeple. The proposed tower is jarring. I would also like you to work on the color. The white color is too stark and jarring. A beige color might be more appropriate. Also, consider brick for the fence on the east side as well. This will be very visible from Horsetooth so it would make sense to have brick on the east side as well.

Response (Applicant): These are all great suggestions and we would like to accommodate your suggestions. We chose the white color to match the church but that can certainly be changed.

Response (City): The City is open to suggestions on design so please feel free to offer your suggestions.

Question: Will this site support 5G? Will it require modifications to house 5G equipment?

Response (Applicant): Right now, this site will support 4G equipment. There is no official design standard for 5G equipment so we're not sure how this site could handle 5G equipment. This site will certainly be upgradable, though.

Comment: Just to make this clear, I am not against the tower but I am against the design. New Yorkers would not like it.

Response (Applicant): We will work on the design.

Question: Have you considered a pine tree design similar to the one at Shields and Vine?

Response (City): We jokingly refer to the fake pine on Shields and Vine as the Frankenpine. Monopine designs tend to work better when surrounded by other trees. For example, a new monopine recently went up at Prospect and Shields. It's near my house and hadn't noticed it until a co-worker told me it had been built. Now, I can't un-see the monopine.

Question (City): What other sorts of designs would you prefer?

Response (Community): I would prefer a steeple, a canister, or something integrated into other infrastructure like a power line or light pole.

Question: What will the environmental impacts of this facility be? I've heard we can expect a depreciation of our property value of at least 5%. I would like there to be an Environmental Impact Statement performed for this proposal.

Response (City): The FCC disallows consideration of environmental impacts.

Response (Applicant): We can talk about these things in a neighborhood meeting; the City just can't make decisions based on health impacts.

Comment: The Canadian government seems more unbiased when it comes to cell phone regulations. The US government has been bought. The World Health Organization (WHO) recently upgraded radio frequency emissions to a Type II carcinogen. European governments are also a lot more strict on radio frequency emissions. It took us 30 years before we realized radon isn't good for you, I worry we're doing the same thing with cell phones. I would like to see an Environmental Impact Statement.

Response (Applicant): The WHO has not placed radio frequency emissions on the Category 1 list of carcinogens. Category 1 carcinogens are known carcinogens. Category 2A agents are probably carcinogenic, meaning studies show they likely cause cancer but are not conclusive.

Comment: I'm talking about radio frequency emission's impact on birds and bees as well, not just humans.

Response (Applicant): Ok, let me finish. Category 2B agents are possibly carcinogenic, meaning there is some evidence they cause cancer in humans but it is not conclusive. Category 2B is not as conclusive and it means there needs to be more research to prove there is a causal relationship between the agent and it causing cancer. Under current rules with current research, there is not causal relationship between radio frequency emissions and cancer, like microwaves. Most of these studies look at the radiation from handsets, not from

cell towers. There is RF everywhere. Handsets also operate at a higher wattage when they are further away from cell towers, so having a tower closer to you reduces your exposure to RF.

Comment: I'm mainly concerned about the homes around the fence line and their exposure to RF since they will be closest to the tower.

Response (Applicant): When you are 50 feet away from the tower, the RF is 1/100th of the safe level approved by the FCC. RF follows an exponential curve in terms of its reduction of power compared to distance from the antenna. We also had to perform a NEPA study as part of this project and we would be happy to share it with you. The NEPA study raised no concerns.

Question: Can you comment on the 5% reduction in property values?

Response (City): We cannot consider property values either as part of our decision making. There are too many factors when determining the value of a home to single out a cell tower as causing a change in the value of a home.

Question: What frequencies will you be using? I'm also concerned about interference with other devices.

Response (Applicant): We're not 100% sure. Verizon typically operates around 700 MHz. We can get that information to you, interference with other equipment is tightly regulated.

Question: Will this facility be operating in at a wavelength similar to FM radio?

Response (Applicant): No, we will not be operating in a similar frequency range as FM radio. If we cause interference, we have to resolve this issue and it is a very big process.

Comment: I disagree, there is some leakage.

Response (Applicant): If we interfere with other equipment, we have to address it and we will make sure there is no interference.

Question: What is the duration of the lease?

Response (Applicant): This is a 20-year lease with renewals, similar to a telephone pole.

Question: Will this be located on the church's property?

Response (Applicant): Yes.

Comment: This doesn't look like a bell tower, it looks like a box kite getting ready to take off. I would like something more artistic with more colors. Did the church approve this design?

Response (Applicant): We have worked together with the church on the design.

Comment: Maybe the church wants to put their motto on the tower.

Response (Applicant): If you see some other design you like, please let us know so we can consider it.

Question: Did a designer make the proposed tower?

Response (Applicant): Yes, not me, but we have used this design in the past. We've also reduced the height to 55 feet. The 65-foot reference in the City's presentation was from a previous iteration of the plan.

Question: What is the maximum height in this zone district?

Response (City): This is a grey area of the code. In this zone district, the maximum height for a non-residential building is 3-stories. Since stories are measured from floor-to-floor, however, a one-story structure could technically have an unlimited height. There's also the issue that per the Land Use Code, this may not be considered a building since it may not have a roof and doesn't enclose anything. Due to this, we rely on the compatibility requirements of the Land Use Code to deal with height issues for cell towers.

Comment: I live on Coronado Court and I miss critical calls all the time due to the lack of coverage. I work from home and have lost business because of this, so it is a real problem.

Response (Applicant): Thanks for the feedback. Also, most 911 calls are from cell phones. Most emergency services also rely on cell phones so this is a safety issue. A lot of people look for good cell phone coverage when purchasing a home so the price of homes might drop with no cell phone coverage.

Question: How much area will this facility cover?

Response (Applicant): Back in the 2G and 3G days, you used to be able to put up a tower on a hill and cover a whole city. Now, cell phones are like mini-computers so the network needs more facilities to service cell phones. Carriers have started building a higher number of low powered facilities closer to end users to fill in gaps. This all depends on network usage and available locations. Either way, we need more facilities so antennas can handle the demand.

Question: So this facility won't provide coverage to the north part of the city, correct?

Response (Applicant): That's right. In some cities, a cell tower will cover only one block. We still have dead spots in Fort Collins and Verizon customers demand that we fix these gaps.

Question: Could you put the tower in a less obtrusive location? What is the potential coverage area?

Response (Applicant): This facility could theoretically serve up to a mile radius, but that is impossible with the demand we see.

Question: So you're saying you need at least one of these towers every two miles?

Response (Applicant): No, we need more than that. Rather than thinking about coverage in terms of an area, think of it in terms of number of users served.

Question: Do you have a study showing coverage by height of the tower and the bandwidth of the tower? I think the new stadium would be a much better location.

Response (Applicant): We don't have that level of technical expertise, but Verizon would have that sort of information.

Question: What are the closest towers to this location?

Response (Applicant): There's a tower on Shields and Horsetooth as well as some facilities on Drake. These other locations are small, hidden, and often times only support one carrier. The issue is we have hit or miss coverage and it is tough to meet the expectations of Verizon's customers as well as the City's expectations with respect to the Land Use Code.

Comment: In New York, I've seen they rely more on micro towers.

Response (Applicant): Small cell sites like the ones you are referencing augment macro towers. We need both kinds of facilities. Cities like New York and Los Angeles use different technology because of how densely

populated those cities are. That technology is not coming to Fort Collins. There's not enough density of users to support that sort of technology.

Response (City): Small cells are coming to Fort Collins. There was a recent statute passed at the state level that requires cities to allow small cells in the right-of-way. The City is currently negotiating a Master License Agreement with Verizon on what these facilities in the right-of-way will look like.

Question: Can we just wait for small cells?

Response (Applicant): I can tell you that if there wasn't a need for this sort of facility, we wouldn't be trying to build it.

Question: If they spend \$2 million here on a large tower, why would they spend money on small cell in this area?

Response (Applicant): There aren't any plans for small cell here. As Clay stated, Verizon is working on a master plan with the City. Small cell technology is for low power equipment in densely populated areas. This area isn't dense enough for small cell.

Comment: I'm pro-wireless but I am anti this design, it needs some work.

Response (Applicant): Please submit your ideas to Clay, we will work with you.

Comment: I have terrible service and can't even get data in my front yard. The density in this area is only increasing and I can't wait 5 years for better coverage. Sign me up for the tower. I even got a booster from Verizon and I still have coverage issues.

Comment: I agree on the design, it looks like three billboards. Brick would be a more appropriate material for the tower. I would also like a neutral color better. Also, try to work on the shape.

Comment: Perhaps it could be triangular or more tapered? Make it the color of brick so it is more natural?

Comment: I'm in favor of the project but I don't like the design. I know this could take some more time but could you submit this to design classes at CSU or a local high school? Maybe you could do a design competition where you pick the winning design and use it. Maybe you could see if they could use natural materials and make it more artistic. You could use the design on other sites and give credit to the designer.

Response (Applicant): I like that idea, thanks.

Question: Why was this site chosen? Is there a better fit elsewhere? I'm concerned about the health of the students here.

Question: Could we see the front view of the tower again? What shape is it, a square?

Response (Applicant): It's triangular.

Comment: They look like billboards, the City could lease them out.

Response (City): This would violate the sign code. I hear that you all are concerned about the design so we will work on improving the design.

Comment: I agree this tower is a necessary evil and that there is consensus to work on the design, but I have never seen something so out of place. What happened with the proposal at Southridge?

Response (Applicant): The City backed away from that proposal. Due to all of the pushback against that tower, the City decided to not allow any new leases on City-owned property.

Question: What replaced the facility at Southridge?

Response (Applicant): A silo, I dare you to find it.

Question: Did you try to get a lease at the nearby farm?

Response (Applicant): Yes, and we got chased off the property.

Question: Do you live here? I just ask that you please respect our concerns.

Response (Applicant): No, I live in Denver now but grew up in Fort Collins and appreciate your concerns. You'll start seeing these sorts of facilities in other places.

Question: Can you send me examples of other facilities?

Response (Applicant): Yes.

Question: This seems like an exercise in futility. Is the lease already finalized?

Response (Applicant): No, we need to get approval for the facility first. The Planning & Zoning Board cares about the community and considers everyone's testimony. There are no slam dunk project in Fort Collins. We want what's best for the community. The Planning & Zoning Board will hear your concerns and say no if everyone comes out against the project.

Question: It sounds like the church is at risk here, too. So there's no guarantee on the lease?

Response (Applicant): We have an agreement that if we get approved and get a building permit, then we will have a lease. There are no guarantees.