



1601 W Drake Wireless Telecommunication Facility Neighborhood Meeting Notes (3/1/2018)

Overview

Kai Kleer, City Planner
Sylvia Tatman-Burruss, Development Review Liaison
Stephanie Blochowiak, Environmental Planner
Ellen Martin, Art in Public Places
Anna Simpkins, Planning Technician

Randy Maitland, Applicant
Chris Silis, Applicant
Robby, Radiofrequency Engineer

Proposed Project

T-Mobile has an existing wireless antenna approximately 1,000 from the proposed site mounted on a Platte River Power Authority (PRPA) pole carrying the adjacent high-voltage power lines. PRPA is not renewing *any* wireless telecommunication equipment leases due to access and maintenance conflicts.

The applicant is proposing this location to replace the existing equipment that will be removed in July 2018. The facility is needed so there is no loss in cellular coverage in the area. The proposed location is zones Public Open Lands (POL), however, the parcel is privately owned. Wireless Telecommunication Facilities (WTF) are considered a permitted use within the POL zone district. The proposed project is subject to an Administrative (Type 1) Hearing.

The proposed monopole is approximately 36 inches in diameter and 80 feet tall, approximately the height of the existing power poles. The antenna would be shrouded within the pole. The City of Fort Collins Land Use Code requires co-location for WTFs so this facility would have the ability to add an additional antenna for a separate wireless carrier in the future. The equipment at the base would be screened with a wood and brick fence and additional landscaped screening.

Questions/Comments and Answers

- **Where within the parking lot will this pole be located?**

The monopole is proposed adjacent to the western exit, along Drake Rd.

- **Since the City is making steps to provide broadband, won't there be less demand for cell phone use?**

The applicant explained that broadband and cell phone coverage are not necessarily closely related; the internet connection would be similar to today with the City serving as the service provider rather than the national companies (Comcast, Time Warner, etc). Cell phone coverage is not a topic covered in the City's broadband proposal.

- **Will this tower be a fake pine tree?**

The applicant explained that the "monopine" is no longer their plan since it did not fit the surrounding context on the site. Instead, the facility would be a simple metal pole in keeping with the adjacent high-voltage powerline poles.

- **What is the City position on the noise coming from the ground equipment next to the Ross Natural Area?**

The City has not been notified of any noise produced by WTFs. There are strict code requirements regarding light and noise within Natural Areas with required buffering whether publicly or privately owned. Environmental planning reviews wireless development proposals for their compatibility with Natural Areas. Spring Creek has a 100-foot environmental buffer. Natural Areas has also had opportunity to review and comment on this proposal.

- **Why can't you put this tower on the church's main property on the south side of Drake Rd.?**

Project Planner Kai Kleer explained that he did consider this option with the applicant; however, the main church property is within another zone district from a Land Use Code perspective. The church site is within the Low Density Residential (RL) zone district; wireless telecommunication facilities are *not* a permitted use within the RL zone district.

- **What about proposing this tower on the vacant corner at Drake Rd. and Taft Hill Rd?**

The vacant parcel at the northeast corner of this intersection is also zoned RL, so the tower is a prohibited use.

The radiofrequency engineer representing the applicant also clarified that there is an existing antenna mounted on the grocery store at the northwest corner of the intersection so it would not be effective in replacing the existing antenna that will be removed from the powerline. The sites need to be no more than 1 mile apart, but not next to one another.

- **Which carriers will be using this facility?**

Kai Kleer explained that the applicant for this project is T-Mobile, but the city requires that the facility have the capacity for two carriers. A second carrier does not have to be ready at this time, but could the antenna to this facility at a later date without making any changes to the appearance. There is an adjacent AT&T antenna mounted on a PRPA high-voltage power line adjacent to the site with a lease expiring at the end of the year, so they are a possible second carrier.

- **Who will benefit from having this facility in this location?**

Anyone who uses T-Mobile as a wireless carrier. The tower provides the cellular phone service but also the data that allows cell phones, tablets, etc to access the internet without using WIFI. Neighbors, schools and businesses could benefit from this location.

- **How many sites are there currently across the City?**

Kai Kleer explained that there are currently over 136 wireless facilities across the City, including freestanding facilities as well as equipment mounted on other buildings. The equipment mounted on other buildings can only serve one cellular provider. These poles can accommodate multiple cellular providers.

- **Does the City look for sites when the leases with PRPA end?**

Kai Kleer explained that PRPA is terminating all leases with all carriers across their infrastructure. The City does not look for appropriate replacement sites, rather, the carriers work with site acquisition companies to find a site that fits their target coverage area and work directly with the property owner. When they have come up with an agreement both parties agree on, the proposal is submitted to the City and goes through the development review process and is reviewed for compliance with the Land Use Code.

- **Does the City own the east half of this parking lot for bike programs?**

The City leases the eastern portion of this parking lot for their FC Bikes programming. The department and Nature in the City denied a request to locate cellular facilities in this portion of the property since they have invested in updated landscaping and the facility would interfere with their programming. The bike programming and funding was approved and allocated prior to this proposal. The City's lease for this programming continues for the next 5 years.

- **Would the decision-maker also look at the location of the equipment on the ground?**

Yes, the hearing officer would look at things like height, size, scale, buffering and the floodplain. They can add approval conditions to the project if they are deemed appropriate.

- **How can neighbors continue to comment on the proposal?**

Neighbors and any interested parties are invited to email/write to the project planner. Any feedback and notes received concerning the property are included in the record and given to the hearing officer to review prior to the hearing so they can consider the comments in their decision. Meeting notes are also included in the record.

- **Will there be another neighborhood meeting for more people to comment?**

There will not be another neighborhood meeting for this proposal. The Land Use Code requires neighborhood meetings for Type 2 projects only, where the Planning and Zoning Board acts as the decision-maker. In this case, the planner suggested the applicant hold a neighborhood meeting to solicit feedback, but it was not required for this proposal.

- **Will the equipment in the ground be screened in any way?**

Kai Kleer explained that the applicant's initial submittal showed the ground equipment enclosed with a 6' cedar fence and brick columns. The Land Use Code requires this equipment be screened and landscaped. Section 3.2 required equipment housed within the enclosure must be screened from public view, including the road and the Natural Area. The fence is a federal safety requirement, the City does not allow chain-link fencing. A recent facility was required to plant additional trees to mitigate visual changes.

- **How many WTF/WTE proposals have been approved within a residential zone district within the last 12 months?**

One has been approved within the last 12 months after a substantial review process with City Council.

- **How does the Public Open Lands (POL) zoning work?**

Kai Kleer explained that the entire parking lot where this facility is proposed is zoned POL. This property is privately owned and the zoning does not imply the property is city-owned. The POL zone stipulates land uses relative to traditional open lands. Housing is permitted in the POL zone district if it is on private property. Wireless is also permitted on private land within the POL zone district.

- **What is the next step?**

The applicant will refine the design and formally submit to the City for another round of review. This cycle will continue until staff determines that the project is ready for hearing. A hearing officer will review the proposal for compliance with the Land Use Code. An additional mailing would be sent to neighbors notifying them when this project has been scheduled for a hearing. A notice will also be posted in the Coloradoan. City staff will coordinate with Parks and Natural Areas about get trail users involved in review process.