



ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: B2015-02132TWR Dominion Power Antenna Platform Co-location	Staff: Rebecca Ragsdale, Senior Planner
Planning Commission Public Hearing: February 2, 2016	Board of Supervisors Hearing: To be determined
Owners: Marilyn P. Bartoes Flinn	Applicant: Cellco Partnership/Verizon Wireless-c/o Stephen Waller
Acreage: Approximately 3.82 acres	Special Exception: Modify Section 5.1.40b(2)(c)- Projection of antenna beyond 18 inches from the tower structure for proposed antenna platform
TMP: 060A0090000400 Location: 195 Georgetown Road	By-right use: RA, Rural Areas
Magisterial District: Jack Jouett	Proffers/Conditions: No
Requested # of Dwelling Units/Lots: N/A	DA RA - X
Proposal: Request for alteration to an existing 110 foot electric transmission tower to add antenna mounted on a 10 foot wide platform for wireless communication at a new top height of 120 feet, along with ground equipment in an approximately 400 square foot lease area.	Comp. Plan Designation: RA, Rural Areas
Character of Property: This property is zoned RA Rural Areas. A single family residence is located on the partially wooded site, with the Dominion Virginia Power line running through the middle of it.	Use of Surrounding Properties: The property is surrounded by a variety of residential uses, including Hessian Hills which is zoned R4 Residential.
Factors Favorable: • This facility would fill in coverage gaps in wireless service to surrounding neighborhoods and adjacent roadways. • The facility would utilize an existing structure, not located in an avoidance area.	Factors Unfavorable: • The height of the proposed antenna platform, relative to the surrounding trees, increases visibility. • The proposed “top hat” or platform mounted antenna array is specifically discouraged by the Wireless Policy because of negative visual impacts.
Zoning Ordinance Waivers and Recommendations: Based on findings presented in the staff report, staff recommends denial of the requested modification (special exception).	

STAFF CONTACT: Rebecca Ragsdale, Senior Planner
PLANNING COMMISSION: February 2, 2016
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: To be Determined
AGENDA TITLE: B201502132TWR Verizon Wireless 195 Georgetown Rd.
PROPERTY OWNER: Marilyn P. Flinn
APPLICANT: Verizon Wireless-c/o Stephen Waller

PROPOSAL:

This is a request for a Tier I facility to be located on an existing Dominion Power electric transmission tower. Tier I wireless facilities are approved with a building permit application. The proposed antenna installation would be placed on a 10 foot high, 6-inch diameter extension pipe the existing transmission tower with a three-sectored platform measuring 10 feet on each side. All ground equipment would be contained within a 396 square foot area and screened from adjoining properties. The site would be accessed from an existing gravel driveway. This permit includes a special exception request to modify the requirements of Section 5.1.40b(2)(c) to allow the 10 foot wide platform that would project beyond the ordinance limit of 18 inches from the tower structure. (Attachment B)

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

The property is located in Rural Areas of the Comprehensive Plan, at the edge of the Development Area. A summary of the Personal Wireless Service Facilities Policy is below.

- This Policy allows for the location of personal wireless service facilities throughout the County.
- The Policy encourages the construction of facilities that have limited visual impact on the community.
- Visibility is the primary focus in the review of personal wireless service facilities.
- Facilities with limited visibility are encouraged.
- Personal wireless service facilities should not be located on ridgetops or along the ridgeline and they should be provided with an adequate backdrop so that they are not skylined.
- Personal wireless service facilities should not adversely impact resources identified in the Open Space Plan or designated as Avoidance Areas.
- Personal wireless service facilities should utilize existing structures where possible.
- Personal wireless service facilities, if appropriately sited and designed, may be appropriate in any zoning district.
- Ground based equipment should be limited in size and be designed in keeping with the character of the area. Antennas should be mounted close to the supporting structure and be designed to minimize visibility.
- The personal wireless service facilities policy is primarily intended to address facilities providing personal wireless service. Other types of wireless facilities are encouraged to adhere to this policy to the extent possible.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

This property is zoned RA Rural Areas. A single family residence is located on the partially wooded site, with the Dominion Virginia Power line running through the middle of it. The personal wireless facility is proposed to be located on the electric transmission tower located towards the rear of the property. The property is located on the Rural Area and Development Area boundary with Neighborhood 7. It is surrounded by a variety of residential uses, including Hessian Hills which is zoned R4 Residential. (Attachment A-Location Map)

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:

There are no prior approvals for personal wireless service facilities.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST:

Requests for modifications must be reviewed under the criteria established in Section 33.9(a) taking into consideration the factors, standards, criteria and findings for each request; however no specific finding is required in support of a decision.

This proposal includes a special exception request to modify the requirements of Section 5.1.40b(2)(c) to allow the 10 foot wide platform that would project beyond the ordinance limit of 18 inches from the tower structure. (Attachment E)

Projection. No antenna shall project from the facility, structure or building beyond the minimum required by the mounting equipment, and in no case shall the closest point of the back of the antenna be more than twelve (12) inches from the facility, structure, or building, and in no case shall the farthest point of the back of the antenna be more than eighteen (18) inches from the facility, structure, or building; and

This regulation, among others in Section 5.1.40, is meant to minimize the visual impacts of wireless facilities, consistent with the wireless policy. The application will comply with all other requirements of the ordinance except the proposed projection of the antenna. This type of antenna platform is requested because Virginia Dominion Power changed their policy to no longer allow antennas to be flush-mounted below any of the lines on their high tension transmission towers. (See Attachment C-Applicant Description and Special Exception Request)

The most important guideline for siting personal wireless service facilities in Albemarle County is visibility. The wireless policy specifically addresses facilities collocating on electric transmission towers. While they are considered opportunity sites for collocating personal wireless service facilities, visibility of antenna are still a concern. The policy recommends that antenna attachments to structures complement or match the structure, not overwhelm them. The “top hat” or platform mounted antenna array is specifically discouraged by the Wireless Policy. (Attachment D) Staff believes as the proposed facility is designed, will have significant visual impacts. This particular parcel is located in a residential area and the proposed transmission tower is visible from many adjoining roads and properties. For these reasons, staff has not recommended approval of this facility.

SUMMARY:

Staff has identified factors which are favorable and unfavorable to this proposal:

Factors favorable to this request include:

- This facility would fill in coverage gaps in wireless service to surrounding neighborhoods and adjacent roadways.
- The facility would utilize an existing structure, not located in an avoidance area.

Factors unfavorable to this request include:

- The height of the proposed antenna platform, relative to the surrounding trees, increases visibility.
- The proposed “top hat” or platform mounted antenna array is specifically discouraged by the Wireless Policy because of negative visual impacts

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends denial of this special exception request based upon the analysis provided herein.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Applicant Photo Simulations
- C. Applicant Project Description and Request for Modification
- D. Personal Wireless Service Policy
- E. Site Plan

Motion: The Planning Commission's role in this case (**B201502132TWR**) is to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to approve or deny modification

- A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of the modifications of Sections 5.1.40b(2)(c).

I move to recommend denial of the modification for reasons outlined in the staff report.

- B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of the modification for this personal wireless service facility:

I move to recommend approval of the of the modification based on the determination it will not have negative visual impacts.