

STAFF PERSON: Rebecca Ragsdale, Senior Planner
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: June 1, 2016
PROJECT: Building Permit #B201600518ATWR Ntelos
Earlysville Water Tank
PROPERTY OWNER: 4F LLC
APPLICANT: Virginia PCS Alliance, L.C. (Ntelos)
LOCATION: 391 Reas Ford Road
TAX MAP/PARCEL: 03100000021A0

PROPOSAL:

This is a Tier I request to upgrade wireless equipment on an existing water tank. With this proposal, the applicant would remove six (6) existing panel antenna and replace them with three (3) tri-band panel flush mounted antennas at the 110' above ground level as measured from the radiation center ("above ground level") and place six (6) remote radio head amplifiers on the handrail of the water tank beside the proposed antennas. Ground equipment changes can be accommodated within the existing 10' x 16' Ntelos lease area. The proposal includes a special exception request to modify the antenna size requirements of County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(b). The proposed antenna will meet the stand-off distance requirements of County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(b) and all other requirements of § 18-5.1.40.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

This property is zoned Light Industry and is located in the Rural Area of the comprehensive plan just west of Earlysville. The parcel is developed with industrial buildings, parking areas, and the existing 125' water tank located behind the building. It has had various commercial and industrial users and was previously occupied by Murray Manufacturing. Existing antenna array are mounted to the handrail of the water tank at 110' above ground level. A portion of the property, towards the back, is open and wooded. Surrounding properties are zoned RA Rural Areas and include a mix of residential and wooded areas. The Earlysville Fire Station, also zoned Light Industry, is adjacent to the property (see Attachment B - Location Map).

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:

The existing wireless antenna on the water tank were approved through building permit applications. Because those antenna complied with the standards found in County Code § 18-5.1.40, no special exceptions were needed. Ntelos first installed its equipment on this site in 2000.

PERSONAL WIRELESS SERVICE FACILITIES POLICY:

The wireless 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, and facilities with limited visibility are encouraged. This wireless facility utilizes an existing structure that is visible from surrounding locations. However, the addition of wireless service antenna to the structure would not increase the visibility of the structure, does not adversely impact resources identified in the Open Space Plan, and is not in an Avoidance Area. The policy encourages the use of existing structures where possible.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST:

Requests for special exceptions must be reviewed under the criteria established in County Code § 18-33.9(a), taking into consideration the factors, standards, criteria, and findings for each request; however no specific finding is required in support of a decision.

§ 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(b): antenna size-The applicant requests a special exception to modify the following requirements of this section:

"Size. Each antenna proposed under the pending application shall not exceed the size shown on the application, which size shall not exceed one thousand four hundred (1400) square inches."

Two of the three proposed antenna would exceed the 1,400 square inch limit and are proposed to be 1,677.6 square inches (72" x 23.3"). The antenna are shown on Sheet C-6 of the plan (Attachment C). The applicant's justification for the request and photosimulations are provided as Attachment D. Allowing the larger size of antenna reduces the number of antenna needed on the structure from six (6) to three (3). Allowing the increase in antenna size would not increase the visibility of antenna on this facility. The antenna will be of a color that closely matches the water tank, be flushmounted, and would not extend above the water tank. Because the existing water tank provides a backdrop to the antenna, the visibility of the antenna is not excessive. Therefore, staff recommends approval of this special exception.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Board adopt the attached Resolution to approve the special exception to modify the requirement of County Code §18-5.1.40(b)2(b) to allow antenna to exceed the size limit of 1,400 square inches, subject to the conditions attached thereto.