

STAFF PERSON: Rebecca Ragsdale, Senior Planner
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: May 4, 2016
PROJECT: Building Permit #B201600215ATWR Verizon Wireless Innovation Drive Personal Wireless Service Facility
PROPERTY OWNER: David P. Turner & The Marketplace of Virginia LLC
APPLICANT: Verizon Wireless-c/o Stephen Waller
LOCATION: 1756 Airport Road, south side of Airport Road across from Innovation Drive
TAX MAP/PARCEL: 03200000004100/032000000041A1

PROPOSAL:

This is a request to install a fifth array onto an existing 148 foot tall lattice tower at an elevation of 100 feet above ground level. New ground equipment would be contained within a 360 square foot fenced expansion on the south side of the existing compound. Included in the extended compound would be a generator, equipment cabinets, and a utility stand. The existing driveway would be extended to establish a gravel access road to the compound extension. The request includes a special exception requests to modify the following regulations in County Code § 18-5.1.40:

- 1) § 18-5.1.40(a)(4)(f) tree survey
- 2) § 18-5.1.40(b)(3) tree conservation plan
- 3) § 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(a) number of arrays
- 4) § 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(c) projection of antennas beyond 18 inches from tower structure

CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

This property is zoned RA Rural Areas and is located in the Hollymead-Places 29 Development Area of the comprehensive plan. The parcel contains two dwellings, and is mostly wooded with an open field. Surrounding properties include a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses. (see Attachment A - Location Map)

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:

SP199700021 approved construction of the wireless facility. SP200200078 approved a special use permit amendment to allow collocations.

ARB201600015-The Albemarle County Architectural Review Board, at its meeting on March 21, 2016, reviewed Building Permit #B201600215ATWR Verizon Wireless Innovation Drive Personal Wireless Service Facility. The ARB took the following actions:

- Regarding the ground equipment and base station: The ARB, by a vote of 4:0, approved the application as proposed on plans with the revision date of March 15, 2016.
- Regarding the visibility of the monopole: The ARB, by a vote of 4:0, forwarded the following recommendation to the agent: The ARB finds that the additional antenna array is not expected to increase the negative impact on the Entrance Corridor.

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 existing wireless facility pre-dates the current wireless policy, and is visible from many surrounding properties, but 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. This request proposes to collocate an antenna array on an existing structure.

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.

- 1) **§ 18-5.1.40(a)(4)(f) tree survey**-The applicant requests a special exception to waive the requirement to submit a tree survey identifying and labeling all trees within 50 feet of the facility and all trees to be removed. Vegetation to be cleared is just outside of the fence on the south side of the existing compound and is primarily low scrubby shrubs and brush. No vegetation designated for removal contributes to the screening of the ground equipment. Removal of the vegetation described would not make the ground equipment visible or make the antennas more visible.
- 2) **§ 18-5.1.40(b)(3) tree conservation plan**-The applicant requests a special exception to waive the requirement to submit a tree conservation plan showing tree protection measures and identifying trees to be removed and dead and dying trees. Tree conservation plans are more relevant for treetop facilities with reference trees and vegetative screening. This facility was originally approved with no tree survey or reference tree. Extensive existing vegetation will remain and the limits of disturbance are clearly identified on the proposed plans.
- 3) **§ 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(a) number of arrays**-The applicant requests a special exception to modify the number of antenna arrays allowed to exceed three. A fourth antenna array was approved by special use permit in 2003. The proposed fifth antenna array would be placed in the lowest location on the tower (at 100 feet) and mounted consistent with existing antenna on the tower. There is no proposed increase in tower height to accommodate the proposed antenna array. Significant negative visual impact has already been created by the tower, and staff and the ARB believe adding another array of antennas would not change the facility's existing significant negative visual impact. Allowing additional arrays on an existing facility alleviates the need to construct a new facility to provide additional wireless service.
- 4) **§ 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(c) projection of antenna beyond 18" from tower structure**-The applicant requests a special exception to modify the requirement that limits the standoff distance to 18 inches from the tower structure to the back of the antenna to allow an antenna to project beyond 18 inches from the tower structure. The proposed antennas would extend not more than four feet eight inches (4'8") from the structure to the backs of the antennas. The method of attachment is consistent with the existing antennas on the tower. Staff and the ARB do not believe that allowing the additional standoff would significantly increase the existing negative visual impact.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Board adopt the attached Resolution to approve the special exception to waive the tree survey requirement of County Code § 18-5.1.40(a)(4)(f); to waive the tree conservation plan requirement of County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(3); to modify the maximum number of arrays allowed in County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(a); and to modify the requirement of County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(c) to allow an antenna to project beyond 18 inches from the tower structure, subject to the conditions attached thereto.