

STAFF PERSON: Andrew Knuppel, Planner
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: May 9, 2018
PROJECT: Building Permit #B201800516TWR Shentel – 69203 Proffit Road
PROPERTY OWNER: Virginia Electric and Power Company
APPLICANT: Shenandoah Personal Communications, LLC “Shentel”
c/o Ryan Fletcher, NB+C, LLC
LOCATION: Between 2582 and 2550 Proffit Road, west side of Proffit Road along Dominion Virginia Power transmission lines
TAX MAP/PARCEL: 046000000035B1

PROPOSAL:

This is a request to collocate a platform-mounted antenna array and 10’ extension onto an existing 110’ tall Dominion Virginia Power (Dominion) transmission tower for an overall height of 120’, with new ground equipment to be contained within an approximately 300 square foot fenced equipment area in an approximately 900 square foot lease area located approximately 20’ southeast of the tower. The site would be accessed using the existing gravel driveway.

The request includes the following special exception requests to modify the regulations found in County Code § 18-5.1.40:

- 1) Modify County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(c) projection of antennas and mount type
- 2) Waive County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(3) tree conservation plan

CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

This property is zoned RA Rural Areas. The property has no improvements other than the Dominion Transmission line. The area immediately adjacent is wooded. Scattered residential development is in the area. The Better Living truss plant is immediately east of this site. (Attachment B-Location Map)

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:

None.

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. The policy encourages use of existing structures where possible, specifically identifying electric transmission towers as opportunity sites. However, the policy also discourages the usage of platform mounting techniques due to their visibility, stating that they do not comply with design guidelines.

The proposed facility is both consistent and inconsistent with the wireless policy. Of note in this request is the applicant’s justification for the mounting technique exception, which included a letter from Dominion stating that flush-mounted antenna systems (in line with the Wireless Policy and County Code § 18-5.1.40) are no longer permitted under company policy due to safety concerns for employees and contractors. Strict adherence to the policy’s recommendation to discourage platform mounting techniques would effectively preclude the usage of Dominion transmission towers as opportunity sites. The County has approved two similar requests in recent years. One of those requests was to add a platform of the same dimensions and same maximum height as this request to a powerline structure adjacent to Georgetown Road.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST:

Requests for modifications 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) **County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(2)(c) projection of antenna beyond 18" from tower structure**-This proposal includes a special exception request to modify the requirements of County Code § 18-5.1.40b(2)(c), which limits the standoff distance to 18" from the tower structure to the back of the antenna. The proposed antenna would have 3.5' of standoff distance from the structure to the backs of the antennas due to the use of a platform mounting technique. The platform itself is triangular and measures 11' on each side. As referenced earlier, this mounting technique is necessary in order to utilize this transmission tower as an opportunity site in line with Dominion's policy. The site's location relative to a slight roadway curve and nearby tree buffers mitigate visibility impacts when approaching from Proffit Road, and the existing transmission lines and cleared areas run perpendicular to the road. The facility is not expected to create any significant additional increase in negative visual impact. Dominion's policy is also intended to serve a stated public safety interest.
- 2) **County Code § 18-5.1.40(b)(3) tree conservation plan**-The applicant requests to waive the requirement for a tree conservation plan, which requires submittal of a plan showing tree protection measures, identification of trees to be removed, and identification of dead and dying trees. No trees will be impacted, as the facility will be collocated on an existing structure and the compound area will be located within the cleared section of the property.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the special exceptions request based upon the analysis provided herein.