DRAFT

ACTON PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of Meeting
March 16, 2010
Acton Town Hall, Faulkner Room (204)

Planning Board members Mr. Ryan Bettez (Chairman), Mr. Greg Niemyski, Mr. Roland Bourdon, Ms. Leigh Davis-Honn, Ms. Margaret Woolley-Busse, associate members Ms. Kim Montella and Mr. Derrick Chin attended. Also present were Planning Director, Mr. Roland Bartl and Assistant Planner, Kristin Alexander.
Absent were: Mr. Jeff Clymer (Vice Chairman) and Mr. Ray Yacouby (Clerk).

Meeting was called to order at 7:40 PM.

I. Citizens Concerns
None raised.

II. Reports
CPC: Mr. Bourdon reported the committee attended a site walk of the Caouette/Simeone land on 3/13/2010.
CCPC: Ms. Woolley-Busse stated the committee interviewed eight candidates so far. The new committee will have five full members and two associate members. A final decision on new committee members will be made after Annual Town Meeting.
DRB: Mr. Bettez reported that the board discussed the West Acton Village Ecology (WAVE) project.

III. Consent Agenda
Consent Item A. Minutes of 03/2/10 was approved and all voted in favor.

Other – Town Meeting Article Assignments
The Planning Board (Board) designated Mr. Clymer to present Article 32 (Amend Zoning Bylaw – Special Event Signs) and Article 33 (Amend Zoning Bylaw – Flood Plain District) at 2010 Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Bourdon was designated as the alternate.

IV. Wireless Comm. Facility Special Permit – 5-7 Craig Road – Public Hearing Continuation
Mr. Bettez opened the public hearing (continued from 2/2/10) at 7:45 PM and appointed Ms. Montella to sit as a full voting member retroactively since the last hearing for the purpose of this matter. Mr. Kevin S. Eriksen, Esq. from Deschenes & Farrell, P.C., representative for the applicant, SBA Towers, LLC; Mr. Anoop Jaikumar, Radio Frequency (RF) Engineer for Clearwire US LLC; Mr. J.M. Pinard, Clearwire US LLC; Mr. Peter LaMontagne, Site Acquisition Consultant for Centerline Communications LLC as Agent for SBA Towers; Mr. Chris Fagas, Director – RF Engineering for SBA Towers; Mr. David Maxson from Broadcast Signal Lab LLC (Planning Board consultant), and several abutters and members of the public were present.

Mr. Eriksen spoke to the Planning Department 3/12/10 comments. Among other things he noted:
- A barbed wire fence will prevent unauthorized climbing of the tower. In addition, the ladder on the proposed tower begins 10 feet off the ground.
- A plan note will be changed to state that the tower will be painted light gray.
- The tower could be relocated within zoning parameters to improve truck traffic flow.
- Enough space will be provided within the equipment compound for five carriers.

- The landlord will present documentation to demonstrate that truck parking on gravel on the site is a grandfathered use under zoning. Mr. Bartl recommended that without such documentation, the Board should require zoning compliance as a special permit condition.
- If technically feasible, more than five carriers could be allowed on the proposed tower.
- The applicant looked into a silo structure and believes it (1) might not fit on the site, and (2) would be three to four times the cost of a typical monopole. The applicant would consider a 20 to 30 foot height reduction and a "monopine" structure. Photo simulations of a monopine structure could be provided.

Mr. Fagas distributed his resumé to the Board. He also discussed a document titled "Limitations Imposed by Flagpole Concealed Antenna Mounting." Mr. Fagas explained that Clearwire uses microwave antenna technology, which if placed within a concealed antenna monopole (CAM), would limit transmissions to the next microwave antenna. Mr. Fagas added that a silo design would be a little more accommodating than a CAM.

Members of the public had the following comments/questions:

- The proposed tower will be in the way of the vehicle weigh station on the site.
- In regards to the truck parking on the site, there is no such thing as a grandfathered commercial use.
- The special permit granted for 7 Craig Road required that the business/property owner provide annual reports to the Town related to hazardous materials. Has this been done?
- Two principal uses (truck parking and a cell tower) are not allowed on one lot in Acton.
- The trucks cannot park behind the building at 7 Craig Road because of flooding, so the business at 7 Craig Road needs to park trucks at 5 Craig Road.
- A cell tower, truck parking, and the weigh station are too much on the proposed site.

Board members had the following comments/questions:

- How does a flush mounted tower system work? Mr. Fagas – Flush mounted alleviates many of the constraints of a flagpole concealed antenna mounting system.
- Has Mr. Fagas seen the results in communities requiring CAMs and are the communities happy with the results? Mr. Fagas – The result is usually flag pole towers in more locations which affect more abutters.
- What are the limitations of a silo design? Mr. Fagas – The silo option won't fit in the compound on this site. The applicant is considering a lower, 140-foot high monopine to blend in with the trees that surround the site in every direction except from Route 2.
- The monopine might not blend in with the landscape.
- There is uncertainty whether an exhaustive search was conducted for alternative sites.

Mr. Maxson disclosed that he knows Mr. Fagas and they worked on a project years ago but that will not affect his review of the project for the Town.

Mr. Maxson stated that Mr. Fagas' CAM design concerns are not fatal to the proposed project but merely limitations that reduce the carriers' flexibility. He recommends considering a monopine design because it could benefit the neighborhood, however it might not benefit people viewing it from Route 2. Mr. Maxson said that maintaining antennas on a CAM is harder. He also stated that darker tower colors some times work well because shadows are less noticeable. Mr. Maxson cautioned that real silos in this region are 40 – 60-feet high but at the height of a cell tower would look out of proportion. He recommends investigating the silo tower option at two different heights. Mr. Fagas – T-Mobile would not be unduly constrained in a CAM design. However, antenna maintenance is easier with a monopine design compared to a CAM. T-Mobile can tolerate a 135-foot high tower. SBA would be willing to construct the tower so it can be expanded to 170-feet high. Flush mounted design towers have fewer issues than CAMs.

Mr. Jaikumar stated Clearwire has no locations in Acton right now but has applied with the owners for two co-locations in Acton (Great Hill and Post Office Square) and one in Concord (Annursnac Hill). He distributed a proposed coverage map to the Board. Mr. Jaikumar said Clearwire could locate in a CAM but the equipment would have to be smaller resulting in more signal loss and less coverage. He stated Clearwire would prefer an antenna height of 140' to 150'. Mr. Jaikumar said the coverage maps are created by a model based on selected factors and show accessible reliable service for indoors.

Mr. Maxson said Clearwire uses "backhaul antennas" (dishes) trying to get lines of sight between towers. He discussed applications of variably sized dishes for more coverage. Mr. Maxson later noted that drive tests could be used to extrapolate indoor/outdoor coverage for the carriers, however, variable factors such as foliage/no foliage would need to be considered.

Mr. LaMontagne described the field analysis he performed in choosing a location in the area of Craig Road for the applicant. Mr. Pinard assisted with the discussion.

Members of the public had further comments/questions:

- Clearwire didn't use the proper resolution in its coverage model, its viewsheds don't appear to make sense, and justification is needed. An independent consultant should analyze Clearwire's coverage maps.
- T-Mobile should have a representative at the meeting.
- T-Mobile's coverage is more than adequate in the area of the proposed site (Mr. Weir, 305 School St., provided the Board with (1) photo of his phone showing T-Mobile service next to a Garmin GPS unit showing his location, and (2) a map with his location identified at the time of the photo. A member of the public provided the Board with a court case: "Second Generation Properties v. Town of Pelham".)
- T-Mobile's website shows there is already more than adequate coverage in that area.
- T-Mobile should consider locating on the Annursnac Hill tower in Concord.
- T-Mobile should also investigate alternative tower locations in the area.
- The balloon test (photo simulations) provided by the applicant is not accurate. Mr. Maxson also discussed his concerns with the photo simulations.
- The public should be provided with all the data used to create the T-Mobile and Clearwire coverage maps.

Mr. Eriksen agreed to have the applicant provide the Board with the following information:

- Photo simulations of monopine, silo, and flush mounted tower designs at 140 feet high.
- A drive test. The applicant will first investigate whether T-Mobile has already conducted a drive test, and if not, Mr. Fagas will work with Mr. Maxson on conducting a drive test based on acceptable industry standards.
- An analysis of alternative sites based on the Planning Department's memo (last revised 3/12/10) and Mr. and Mrs. Quinn's (299 School Street) comments to the Board (3/12/10).
- Modeling of distributed antenna system (DAS).
- The data requested by Mr. Maxson and answers to all his questions in his report received by the Board on 3/12/10.
- Documentation from T-Mobile stating (1) it still has an interest in locating at the proposed site, and (2) the name of its authorized representative at the public hearing.
- An answer as to whether the applicant will provide more money to the Town to cover the costs of Mr. Maxson completing his review of the proposal.

The motion was made to continue the public hearing on May 4, 2010 at 7:45 PM in the Acton Town Hall, Room 204, and to extend the decision deadline to August 2, 2010; 2nd; all voted in favor.

Motion was made to close the meeting, 2nd; all in favor; meeting adjourned at 10:55 PM.