

CITY OF EASTHAMPTON PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
50 Payson Avenue, Easthampton, MA 01027



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 19, 2022

Planning Board Chair: Jesse Belcher-Timme

Planning Board Members:

X	Christopher Cockshaw (CC)	X	Harry Schumann (HS)	X	James Zarvis (JZ)
X	Daniel Hartman (DH) (attended remotely)	X	Kenneth Iavecchia (KI)		

Absent: None

Recording Clerk: Eli Bloch (EB)

City Planner: Jeff Bagg (JB)

Assistant Planner: Eli Bloch

Guests:

- 1. Call to Order: 6:00pm JBT**
- 2. Public Speak: None**
- 3. Planning Board Minutes:**

6/21/2022 – JBT mentioned that member Iavecchia’s name was spelled two different ways in the minutes. JZ made a motion to approve the minutes with the name changed. DH seconded. All voted in favor with the exception of CC who abstained because he was not in attendance.

4. Other Business:

- 5. Public Hearings: Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless-** Seeking a special permit to modify an existing mono-pole wireless tower: to increase the height from 120’ to 130’, install an additional sector of antenna panels, and a waiver of the property line setback requirements under sections 7.2, 7.24 h, and 12.7. of the zoning ordinance. The property is located at 51 Brook St. rear (Map 167- Lot 21). Easthampton, MA zoned Rural Residential B (R-40).

Attorney Ellen Freyman of the legal firm Shatz, Schwartz, and Fentin was present and representing the applicant. Atty Freyman began the presentation with a slideshow summarizing the application and included the following information:

- The tower has been up for seven years and is currently 120’ tall.
- Due to an increase in demand for service the applicant needs to provide a more robust signal which can be accomplished by increasing the height of the tower by 10’.

- The antenna will be changed from a triangular orientation to a square which will send the signal out in four directions rather than three. The number of antennas will be increased from 12 to 16.
- The applicant is asking the Planning Board to approve a reduced setback as allowed under section 7.24(h) from the required 143' setback to a 133' setback. Atty Freyman stated that the tower met the criteria of being in a residential zone and having been designed to collapse on to itself in case of structural failure.
- Jay Latorre of Verizon Wireless, Sylvester Bhembe of Hudson Design Group, Mike Libertine of All Points Technology, and Brett Smith of Shatz, Schwartz, and Fentin were all in attendance either remotely or in person to speak on behalf of the proposal.

Atty Freyman presented slides with plans and photosimulations of the proposed tower including:

- The proposed antenna design.
- The platform design.
- The location of the tower in the property and the non-conforming setback. JZ asked about what was on the other side of the property line. DH specified it is a residence, EB clarified the nearest house that did not belong to the property owner was over 300' away.
- Photo simulations of the tower from Brook St, Nonotuck Park, Hendrick Street, and Christopher Clark Rd. The photo simulations were made by Mike Libertine. JZ asked about foliage affecting the view. Mike Libertine explained that the first time they did photo simulations it was in the winter and the foliage did not provide much effect.

Jay Latorre an engineer at Verizon Wireless presented about the coverage maps including the following information:

- Verizon felt it was prudent to get more service into the southwestern portion of Easthampton.
- The fourth sector would improve service on Route 10.
- Verizon has existing facilities on a mill smokestack and a monopole on Route 10.
- There has been an increase in demand for in building coverage due to COVID and remote work.
- JZ asked if other carriers could utilize their antenna. Mr. Latorre answered that the technology does exist in other applications but it is not common because different carriers have different license spectrum. He did state that the added height may encourage co-location of other carriers on the tower. Atty Freyman clarified that co-location would require a new special permit.
- JBT asked if there was other infrastructure that Verizon could use that would provide a similar opportunity to improve service. Mr. Latorre stated that there were no new towers that could be used.

KI asked for clarification that the tower would fall on itself. Atty Freyman stated that there is a designed "break point" that allows the tower to collapse on itself but that it is essentially irrelevant because the towers never fall.

JZ asked if abutters were notified and if there had been any comments. EB stated that abutters were notified and that there had been no comments.

JZ discussed the possibility of a camouflaged tower and that after researching the idea found that it was unnecessary and in communities where they exist they are generally disliked.

JBT brought up the height is only being considered because the tower is currently so well hidden by the surrounding trees and if it was in an open field the height would make no difference in appearance. He also stated that there is no mandate for the tower to be invisible.

DH asked if the trees could potentially still continue to grow and hide the top of the tower to screen the top of the tower. Later in the meeting John Atwater stated it is unlikely the trees would grow larger.

DH asked about the staging of materials and equipment. Mr. Bhembe stated that a crane will be brought in and situated inside the compound and that no tree removal would be necessary and there would be no ground disturbance.

HS asked if Conservation Commission approval was needed. Atty Freyman stated that it wasn't because there would be no ground disturbance. EB stated that the Conservation Agent did not have any concerns about the project.

Public Speak:

John Atwater of Brook Street, a direct abutter and chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals said he did not have concerns but did ask if the original footing was installed to accept the additional load of another 10' of height. Mr. Bhembe stated that the tower was designed to hold 20' more of height. He also asked if they had plans to continue to add height. Mr. Bhembe and Mr. Latorre said there were no plans to raise the tower further but that it is impossible to say what will be necessary in the future.

JBT asked if Atty Freyman was okay with the conditions from the previous special permit. Atty Freyman stated that she was okay with those conditions being in a new special permit.

JBT read through a draft decision and the criteria for a special permit.

JBT stated that the Board had to have the finding that the shorter setback was sufficient for safety and aesthetics. DH stated that the engineered splices were in the spirit of meeting the setback and that the nearest neighbor spoke and had no concern.

JZ made a motion to approve the special permit for Verizon Wireless. CC seconded. All voted in favor.

As there were no more items on the agenda JZ made a motion to adjourn the meeting, JBT seconded, all voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.

Next Meeting 6:00 PM August 2nd, 2022