

Town of Westwood Planning Board
Meeting Minutes
Location: 50 Carby Street
November 18, 2008
7:00 PM

Board Members Present: Chairman Robert Malster, Steve Olanoff, Bruce Montgomery, Henry Gale and Robert Moore.

Staff Members Present: Nora Loughnane, Town Planner; John Bertorelli, Town Engineer, Glenn Garber, Westwood Station Planning Manager; Peter Alpert, Esq.; Ropes & Gray.

Chairman Malster opened the meeting at approximately 7:10 p.m.

Public Hearing to Consider Application of MetroPCS Massachusetts for EIDR to Install Wireless Communication Antennas on the Existing Communications Facility at 808 High Street

Chairman Malster read the legal notice. Attorney James Hoyt, Site Acquisition Agent Michael Walsh, and Radio Frequency Engineer AJ Sowat were in attendance to represent the applicant.

Mr. Hoyt began his presentation on MetroPCS' application to install three antennas on the existing monopole at the First Baptist Church, located at 808 High Street. He reminded the Board that an earlier application was filed by MetroPCS and withdrawn shortly thereafter. Mr. Hoyt noted that the earlier application called for the addition of a 10' high extension to the top of the existing monopole. He noted that the proposed installation was found not to be structurally sound, the plans were withdrawn, and effort was made to develop a more desirable plan.

Mr. Hoyt explained that a revised application was submitted on October 15, 2008, calling for the proposed antennas to be externally, flush mounted on the outside of the existing flagpole, with no increase in the height of that pole. He noted that feedback on the proposed exterior mount plan was received from both the Church and the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and that the plans were further revised to address concerns about the operation of the flagpole and the aesthetics of the design.

Mr. Hoyt presented the latest plan to the board, noting that the three proposed antennas would be flush mounted at a height of 80' (antenna centerline) to the exterior of the existing 100' monopole, and shielded by a canister which would be painted the same color as the flagpole. Mr. Hoyt drew the board's attention to photo simulations of the proposed installation. He stated that the proposed equipment cabinets, backup battery cabinets and a power/telephone demarcation cabinet would be installed within an extended fenced compound at the base of the monopole, and that coaxial cabling would run from the BTS cabinets to the antennas on the monopole. There was some discussion about the visibility of the proposed canister and cabling. Mr. Hoyt stated that the cables would be installed on the exterior of the pole, and would run down the rear, least visible side of the pole.

Mr. Sowat, Radio Frequency Engineer for the applicant, presented a map showing current coverage areas in red and proposed coverage areas in green. Mr. Olanoff asked how the map could show a current coverage area since MetroPCS had not yet begun operations in Westwood. Mr. Hoyt explained that the current coverage area was representative of the soon-to-be available coverage based on previously approved locations for MetroPCS antennas in the area.

Chairman Malster asked Mr. Hoyt if the First Baptist Church was supportive of the revised

proposal. Mr. Hoyt stated that the Trustees are in favor of the new proposal for installation. Darren Valentine and Bob Smith, Trustees of the First Parish Church, were present at the meeting. Chairman Malster asked Mr. Valentine and Mr. Smith if they wished to comment. Mr. Valentine stated that the Trustees had initially requested the placement of the antennas within the existing flagpole, so that they would not be visible. He said that the applicant explained to the Trustees that an interior installation would require the replacement of the existing pole with a new pole of increased diameter. Mr. Valentine said that after examining other wireless locations around Town, including one within a pole of the diameter that would be required for an interior installation, the Trustees agreed that the proposed exterior installation would be the preferred design. Mr. Valentine added that the recent revision to include the antennas within a canister made this the least obtrusive and most visually pleasing design.

Lura Provost of the Westwood Historical Society was also present at the meeting and stated that the Historical Society requested that the Planning Board require the most aesthetically pleasing design and installation. Ms. Provost stated that the existing monopole was only partially visible from most of the historic sites along High Street. She noted that the Historical Society would be most concerned if a new monopole was proposed for a more visible location, and added that she did not wish to see an inferior design at this location which could be used as a precedent for any future proposal.

Ms. Loughnane addressed the board in her capacity as a member of the Westwood Historical Commission (WHC). She stated that the WHC had reviewed the applications and plans for the externally mounted antennas at its meeting on November 10, 2008, along with a letter from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) expressing concerns about those plans. Ms. Loughnane told the board that the WHC voted to concur with the MHC in its objections to the proposed externally mounted antennas, and request further consideration of a new pole with interior mounted antennas and more documentation on the affects of the pole on the historic properties in High Street historic districts. Ms. Loughnane noted that the plans reviewed by the WHC were the plans immediately preceding those submitted to the board this evening, and that those plans did not include the proposed canister. She stated that, while the revised plans may in fact be more acceptable to both the WHC and the MHC, there had not yet been any opportunity for either commission to review and comment on the proposed canister design.

Mr. Walsh said that the new canister plans had recently been submitted to MHC but that no feedback or approval had yet been received. Chairman Malster requested that MetroPCS receive feedback from both the MHC and the WHC prior to moving forward. Mr. Hoyt stated that the concerns of both the MHC and the WHC would be addressed as part of the required Section 106 procedure. Mr. Moore asked if this was an advisory process only. Ms. Loughnane stated that filings with the MHC and WHC were required in order to obtain federal or state permitting or funding. She added that the FCC license needed for the use of the proposed antennas would seem to fall within that category. Ms. Loughnane stated that while MetroPCS would not be required to act in compliance with all of MHC and WHC conditions, they would be required to solicit the opinions of both commissions and provide a reasonable justification should they choose not to comply.

There was some additional discussion of the photo simulations and plans. Mr. Olanoff asked about the boundaries of the Fisher School historic district. He noted that the monopole is located in the far corner of the Church property, which is in the far corner of the historic district. Ms. Loughnane stated she had driven along High Street, stopping to check the visibility of the flagpole from each of the properties within the historic district. She said that the top of the flagpole was visible in some locations but that the section proposed for installation of the canister appeared to be right at the tree line and thus barely visible from most of those locations. Ms. Loughnane noted, however, that the canister portion of the pole would be clearly visible from the Fisher School, and from areas along Nahatan Street

across the Middle School fields. She requested that all of the equipment and wires be painted to match the pole and that the stain on the new fence be chosen to match the stain on the existing fence.

Mr. Gale stated that he was opposed to the proposed antenna proposal because he believed that the proposed modification would greatly detract from the aesthetics of the current flagpole. He noted that the proposed canister would end up doubling the diameter of that section of the pole. Mr. Gale asked if MetroPCS had investigated alternative solutions for this installation, either by adding to the bell tower at the Thurston Middle School or installing a second matching flag pole on the Church property. Mr. Walsh stated that other locations had been investigated and the proposed location was selected as the best location. Mr. Walsh stated that the Middle School location is not available, as the bell tower is not structurally adequate to hold additional antennas. Mr. Gale asked if the height of the proposed canister could be lowered. Mr. Hoyt responded that the height is proposed at the lowest height which would allow the antennas to be functional. Chairman Malster asked the Church Trustees if they would consider a second flagpole. Mr. Valentine responded that they were not interested in this option.

Mr. Olanoff asked if the edges of the canister could be tapered or rounded to improve the appearance of the bulge in the flagpole. Mr. Hoyt replied that he did not know if that was technically feasible. He stated that he would investigate the feasibility of having a specially designed collar edge designed for this installation.

Ms. Loughnane told the board that the Trustees of the First Baptist Church had requested several conditions for consideration by the Planning Board, including conditions that the canister and associated cables not interfere with the raising or lowering of the flag, that all construction work be done on Saturdays, and that the equipment, if ever taken out of service, be removed within 90 days. Mr. Olanoff noted that the board does not usually restrict the timing of construction beyond the hours permitted under the Town Bylaw. Mr. Hoyt stated there was some concern about construction taking place on Sundays and schools days when the property experiences the greatest use. Mr. Hoyt stated that major construction work could be scheduled on Saturdays, but there may be times when other work, including emergency work, would have to be done on weekdays or Sundays. He asked that the condition be worded to require reasonable efforts be made to undertake construction on Saturdays.

Other conditions were discussed, including conditions requiring the completion of the Section 108 process, rounding off the corners of the canister if technically feasible, painting the cables and canister to match the pole, and staining the fence to match the existing fence.

Upon a motion by Mr. Montgomery and seconded by Mr. Olanoff, the board voted to close the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Mr. Moore and seconded by Mr. Montgomery, the board voted to approve the application with conditions set forth in the draft decision prepared by the Town Planner, as modified above. The application was approved with Mr. Moore, Mr. Olanoff, Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Malster voting in favor and Mr. Gale voting in opposition.

Endorsement of Tri-partite Agreement for Philips Estates

Board members signed the Tri-partite agreement for the previously approved Modification of the Definitive Subdivision for Philips Estates. Ms. Loughnane will return two originals of this document to the proponent and file copies with the Town Treasurer, Town Counsel and Town Clerk.

Ch. Malster opened the Westwood Station portion of the meeting at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Continuation of Planning Board Public Hearing: Amendment #1 to the MPSP for Westwood Station Area Master Plan

Continuation of Public Hearing: First Amendment and Supplement #1 to the Application for Amendment #1 to the Area Master Plan Special Permit and Consolidated Special Permits for Westwood Station

Continuation of Planning Board Public Hearing: EIDR for Phase 1B of the Westwood Station Area Master Plan

Continuation of Planning Board Public Hearing: Amendment #1 to the Definitive Subdivision for Westwood Station

[A verbatim transcript of these public hearings, Wednesday, November 18, 2008, 8:00 p.m. at 50 Carby Street, Champagne Meeting Room, Westwood, MA 02090, Robert C. Malster, Chairman; Steven H. Olanoff, Vice Chairman; Robert E. Moore, Jr., Secretary; Bruce H. Montgomery, Member; Henry W. Gale, Member; Nora Loughnane, Town Planner; John Bertorelli, Town Engineer, Glenn Garber, Westwood Station Planning Manager; Peter Alpert, Esq.; Ropes & Gray. Pages 1-97, transcribed by G&M Court Reporters, Ltd., 42 Chauncy Street, Suite 1A, Boston, MA 02111-2211 will serve as the official minutes. A copy of this transcript is in the Westwood Station file.]