Caswell County Planning Board Meeting

June 22, 2021

**Members Present***:*

*Chairman*, Russell Johnston, Michael Poteat, Antonio Foster, Scott Oakley, Don Swann, Jason Daniel, Steven Harris, Matthew Hoagland, *Planner*, Commissioner Oestreicher, Ashley Powell, *Administrative Assistant*, Amy Lyle, *Development Services Coordinator*.

**Members Absent**:

**Called to Order**

Chairman Johnston called the June 22, 2021 Planning Board to order at 1:01 p.m.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Daniel made a motion to approve the June 22nd Planning Board meeting agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments submitted.

**Approval of May Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Foster made a motion to approve the May 25th, 2021 Planning Board minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

**Unfinished Business**

**New Business**

1. **Wireless Communication Tower Public Hearing**

Mr. Swann made a motion to go into Public Hearing to consider the proposed Wireless Communication Facility. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hoagland informed the Board that he received an application for a cell tower on Highway 86 South. The tower would be 300-foot-tall and sit on a property that is approximately 67 acres. The property is approximately 310 feet from the Orange County line and 850 feet from the Prospect Hill Dollar General. Public hearing notices were mailed to the surrounding property owners, signs were posted prominently on the road by the property, and a public hearing notice ran twice in the Caswell Messenger

Public comments were received from the following residents which Mr. Hoagland read aloud:   
  
“When I built my house and moved to Caswell County in 1993 cell phones were in their infancy and the internet was at best dial up and a novelty.

Today, the internet is a necessity. My home phone is no longer a hard wire land line, so during storms or when the power is out even for several hours I must rely on my cellphone. Since the cell signal is non-existent, I am out of touch with the outside world. If there were an emergency, such as a fire or medical issue, the end result could be fatal. My son needed to finish his college classes and do his final exams on line this past year and with no internet, and no open library, we needed to take him to South Carolina to stay with family, otherwise drop out of school. As Chair of the Caswell County Recreation Commission, I needed to conduct meetings during the pandemic. With no internet access, this was impossible. I am not alone in this dilemma. This effects the entire community and has become a very serious issue. We need a cell tower and we need it yesterday. Eddie Deluca, Prospect Hill.”

“I live nearby and wholeheartedly support this. Our cell service is TERRIBLE. Even running wifi off a satellite for my internet, I can barely make phones call. Feel like I'm living in another era. Thanks. Julie Smith”

Hello, my name is Chris Deluca. I am a resident of Prospect Hill NC and a college student. I recently heard that there is going to be a vote/caucus about the construction of a cell phone tower across the street from the Dollar General in Prospect Hill. I am emailing you to give you my full support of this. All my life it has been a struggle to stay in my hometown as a young person with zero access to the internet or the ability to make a simple phone call. With me being a college student I have been forced to drive south into Orange County just to be able to do a simple assignment or do anything for work. This has made it nearly impossible for me to ever be able to stay in the place that I call home. If this cell tower is constructed I would be able to hot-spot on my phone and do all the work I would be required to on my laptop. Another issue I have with the lack of service is safety; during the school year, my parents live by themselves and have no access to emergency services outside of their landline. If the landline was to go out they would have no way to get help. To reiterate, I love the peace and comfort of Prospect Hill, but with no cell service or internet, it has made it nearly impossible for me to stay in the place I call home. I hope that this tower will be constructed and I will be able to spend more time at home with my family. Thank you. Chris Deluca, 531 Barnwell Road, Prospect Hill NC, 27314.”

“We need a cell tower it's long overdue. CELL TOWER YES,YES, YES we need a cell tower long overdue bad and all my neighbors think so too. Aletha Broadnax.”

“CELL TOWER YES we need a cell tower long overdue sorry I can't attend the meeting today. Carlyle Broadnax Sr.”

Chairman Johnston then introduced applicant Doug Barker, a representative from HK Consulting and Vertical Bridge Development, who attended the meeting via the Zoom webinar platform. He presented information of the newly proposed tower. He stated that this tower would sit on one-fourth of an acre. It would be a silent tower, and the nearest tower was about 4 miles away. Mr. Barker also stated that in the event this tower fell, it was designed to collapse down. Chairman Johnston asked if any of the guests in attendance would like to add a public comment. The comments are as follows:

In regards to the Locust Hill tower discussed in the May meeting, Dr. Queen Williamson of the Locust Hill community wanted to know the range and timeline of the tower being put in her community. Mr. Baker responded that the range was between two to four miles, and the timeline was around seventy-five days. Dr. Williamson also wanted to know if another tower would be added to provide additional coverage. Mr. Baker stated that there we no plans for additional towers in the Locust Hill community at this time.

Beth Deluca from Prospect Hill asked what the timeline and provider would be for the Prospect Hill tower. Mr. Barker stated it would around mid-October, and Verizon Wireless.

Mr. Rudy Foster from Pelham asked if more towers would be needed because of the two-four mile range. He also asked if broadband internet would be available through Verizon once the towers were built. Mr. Barker responded that Caswell was in need of internet, and the addition of the towers could possibly lead to broadband internet. He also stated that the tower was built by Vertical Bridge, and that this company has to market carrier companies to provide the internet services.

Kandice Stanfield-Ceparano of Prospect Hill asked if any research of health effects on people and wildlife had been conducted. Mr. Barker responded that the tower gave off low emissions. Mr. Poteat asked Mr. Barker if an environmental study could be provided to the public. Mr. Barker stated that a study could be provided. Mrs. Stanfield-Ceparano also asked how the tower would affect property value for the owners around the tower. Mr. Barker responded that in his experience, it has normally increased value. He also stated that he would encourage home owners to speak with realtors in regards to the value of property.

Mr. Oakley asked Mr. Hoagland which department of the county is responsible for county internet service. Mr. Hoagland responded that no one department is responsible. For Caswell county, the county manager handles this task. Mr. Oakley asked if the Planning Board take over this task or be involved. Mr. Hoagland stated that it is something that the Planning Board could look into.

Mr. Johnston asked Mr. Barker if he had a copy of an engineering study for the tower. Mr. Barker responded that he did not, but he could provide one. Mr. Johnston also asked Mr. Barker if he could provide information on the collapse style of the tower. Mr. Barker said that he could provide that information.

Mr. Oestreicher asked Mr. Barker if he had been in contact with River Street. Mr. Barker stated that he had not, but would be willing to. Mr. Oestreicher also asked if the towers would host viper networks. Mr. Barker responded that he was not familiar with that network.

Mr. Poteat asked how many carriers can be on a tower. Mr. Barker responded that the towers are designed for four, but up to six could be installed.

Another public comment was made by Dr. Queen Williamson. She asked if the towers would support emergency weather sirens. Mr. Barker stated that they could, but not rotating sirens.

Mr. Johnston made a motion to close the public hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Oakley made a motion to approve the application for the new cell tower. The motion carried unanimously.

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**Planning Department Updates**

Mr. Hoagland Informed the committee that he received a news release from the Department of Transportation regarding the resurfacing of NC Highway 119. Around thirty-seven miles of Highway 119 in Caswell County will be resurfaced. The work can begin as early as June 28th, 2021 and should be complete by the summer of 2022.

Mr. Oakley made a motion to have a special meeting on July 7th, 2021 or at the earliest convenience for the Planning Board members before the next scheduled Planning Board meeting on July 27th. Mr. Johnston stated that everyone would need to check their schedules and contact Mr. Hoagland. The motion carried unanimously.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Oakley made a motion to adjourn the June 22, 2021 Planning Board Meeting. The motion carried unanimously.