

**PLANNING BOARD
SEPTEMBER 15, 2011
MINUTES**

Chairman Burke called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Members present: Burke, Barringer, Capes, Giger, Parent, and Perkins

Member absent: Wilson

PUBLIC HEARING – AT&T SPECIAL PERMIT MODIFICATION

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, Sections 9 and 11, the Groton Planning Board held a public hearing on Thursday, September 15, 2011 at 7:30 PM in the Town Hall to consider the application submitted by New Cingular Wireless PCS, d/b/a AT&T, to modify Special Permit 2002-05 to add three additional antennae to AT&T's antenna array of six antennas located at a height of 150 feet on the tower. The proposed modification is shown on the plan entitled, "AT&T, Site Number MA3174," prepared by Hudson Design Group, dated August 5, 2011. The modification of the special permit is subject to the provisions of Groton Zoning By-law Section 218-25.1 Personal Wireless Services Facility. The existing tower is located on land owned Cell Tower Lease Acquisitions, LLC, Assessors Map 224, Parcel 1, at 149 Lowell Road.

Chairman Burke called the hearing to order. Clerk Parent read the notice posted with the Town Clerk on August 23, 2011 and published in the August 26 and September 2, 2011 issues of *The Groton Herald*. Frank Kelly of SAI Communications represented AT&T at the public hearing.

Mr. Kelly said AT&T is upgrading its network to include "Long Term Evolution" or LTE, a data-only system that relieves pressure off the voice network. Three new antennas are required at a height of 148 ft on the 150 ft existing tower. The new "T" arms are slightly wider than the existing antennas. The new antennas will improve technology.

Member Giger asked how the length of the "T" arms would change. Mr. Kelly said the length of the antennae would change from three feet to ten feet. He noted that other carriers have 12 foot arms.

Member Giger asked if there would be GPS antennas. Mr. Kelly said the FCC requires that GPS for enhanced 9-1-1 be included in any updates. The new equipment will improve the accuracy of locating emergency calls.

Member Giger asked about potential interference with the public safety department's radio communications. Mr. Kelly said AT&T's proposed system is licensed by the FCC. It would not be licensed if there was interference.

Member Giger asked what the applicant would do if there is interference. Mr. Kelly said they would fix the problem, but such an occurrence is very unlikely. Member Giger asked if the applicant would agree to such a condition in the special permit. Mr. Kelly said "yes."

Member Capes asked about the remote radio heads on the monopole. Mr. Kelly said the radio heads are typically in the cabinet on the ground. If radio heads are on the tower, they are closer to the antenna and would improve performance without visual impact.

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Member Giger asked if people must climb the tower to maintain the equipment. Mr. Kelly said, "no."

Chairman Burke asked about the color of the antennas. Mr. Kelly said it would match the color of the monopole.

Member Capes if anything other than the GPS changes in the cabinet on the ground. Mr. Kelly said a new 23-inch cabinet will be installed inside the shelter. The cabinet will contain two-inch flexible conduit to the monopole.

Member Parent asked about the height of the monopole. Mr. Kelly said it is 150 ft above ground level (AGL) and would not change. AT&T's equipment is located at the top of the tower today.

Member Parent asked whether the height of the tower would be increased in the future. Mr. Kelly said the FCC is considering mergers and consolidations of carriers.

Chairman Burke read the e-mail messages from the Police Chief and Fire Chief. Mr. Kelly said he does not have the authority to allow public safety departments to have space on the tower, but the applicant will work with the town if necessary.

Chairman Burke asked about the capacity of the tower. Mr. Kelly said it is at 96.1% capacity now. The additional AT&T equipment will bring the capacity to 110%. The carriers would have to modify the tower structurally to add more equipment. Carriers would be responsible for any upgrades.

Abutter Bill Willcox said his property is 417 ft from the tower. He said Verizon modified its plans to reduce visual impact on his property. Verizon provided screening, but the tower is still visible. He requested that the Planning Board to ask the applicant to install more compact equipment to reduce visual impact.

Member Capes asked if AT&T could do anything to address Mr. Willcox's concerns. Mr. Kelly said he would ask the radio frequency engineers to explore other configurations.

Mr. Willcox asked if AT&T could install its equipment on the tower at the transfer station rather than on the tower at Gibbet Hill. Member Giger said the transmission would not reach the center of town.

Member Perkins requested that the applicant submit additional information on reducing visual impact for the Planning Board to consider.

Chairman Burke said the Board would prefer that carriers utilize existing towers rather than construct new towers. He said the applicant should minimize visual impact.

Member Capes said he would like to understand how the new equipment would improve performance. Mr. Kelly said this is a new technology that would not show up on computer modeling. He said he would discussion alternative design options with the radio-frequency engineer and submit new plans to the Planning Board.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on October 6, 2011 at 7:30 PM.

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PUBLIC HEARING – SPECIAL PERMIT, BOYNTON MEADOWS, 134 MAIN STREET

(Member Giger did not participate because he missed two sessions of the public hearing.)

At the request of the applicant, the Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on September 22, 2011 at 8:30 PM.

MEETING WITH AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Member Jason Parent and Town Planner Michelle Collette reported on the meeting with the Agricultural Commission to discuss possible zoning amendments. The Zoning By-law should be amended to comply with the exemptions for agricultural use as provided in Chapter 40A, section 3. The Agricultural Commission is interested in working with the Planning Board on this project.

The Agricultural Commission, along with the Stormwater Advisory Committee, will sponsor a workshop in the winter/spring of 2012 on proper manure management techniques.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Land Use Director/Town Planner