

Petition No. 1099

AT&T

743 Murdock Avenue, Meriden

Staff Report

June 6, 2014

On April 1, 2014, the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) received a petition (Petition) from New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC (AT&T) for a declaratory ruling that no Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need is required for the proposed installation of an 82-foot stealth silo telecommunication facility.

The Petition was field reviewed by Dr. Barbara Bell – Council member, Melanie Bachman – Acting Executive Director, Fred Cunliffe – Supervising Siting Analyst, and Michael Perrone – Siting Analyst. The following individuals representing AT&T also attended the field review: Lucia Chiocchio, Esq. from Cuddy & Feder LLP; Adam Braillard, Kevin Woodley, and Douglas Rife from Smartlink; Dan Goulet from C Squared Systems; Jay Thiabault from Chappelle Engineering; Russ Dasta from Virtual Site Simulations; Clem Salek from Chappelle Engineering; and Megan Pezio from EBI. The following representatives of the City of Meriden also attended the field review: Dominick Caruso, City Planner, and Tom Skoglund, Assistant City Planner. Abutting property owner Lynn Faria also attended the field review.

Specifically, AT&T has a need to provide service to a coverage gap in southern Meriden and northern Wallingford in certain residential areas located between Route 15 and Interstate 91. As part of its site search, AT&T has looked at existing towers and structures. The nearest existing tower is a rooftop facility on Research Parkway in Meriden located approximately 0.68 miles to the northeast of the proposed site. However, AT&T is already located on this facility. There is an existing 120-foot monopole located at Paddock Avenue approximately 0.7 miles to the northwest of the proposed site. However, this tower would not meet AT&T's coverage objectives. Even at the highest available height of 87 feet on the Paddock Avenue tower, AT&T would not be able to provide reliable service to Isabelle Drive, Pinehurst Drive, Tankwood Drive, Murdock Avenue, and Carriage Drive East. The only other known available existing structure in the vicinity that could come close to meeting coverage objectives is a silo structure located at 743 Murdock Avenue: this is the proposed site.

The Murdock Avenue property actually contains two existing silos. The taller one is approximately 57 feet tall. However, to meet its coverage objectives, AT&T requires an antenna centerline height of 74 feet. Given the age and condition of the silo and required antenna height, AT&T would replace the taller silo with a new 82-foot silo. The new silo would be approximately 17 feet in (outside) diameter and made of concrete from the base to about 50 feet above ground level (AGL). The remaining 32 feet would be made of a radio frequency (RF) transparent fiberglass. AT&T would install 12 panel antennas and 21 remote radio heads at 74 feet AGL inside the silo. As proposed, the new silo could accommodate two carriers possibly seeking co-location in the future. The nearest property boundary (Faria property) is approximately 92.5 feet to the north of the center of the proposed silo. Thus, the tower setback radius would remain within the boundaries of the subject property. Existing access would be utilized.

AT&T would install its equipment inside a new 12-foot by 24-foot equipment shelter located on the east side of the new silo, where an existing overhang from the barn is currently damaged and in poor condition.

AT&T would remove the overhang and clear any brush prior to installing the shelter. AT&T is amenable to an architectural design for the equipment shelter.

The equipment shelter would have two wall-mounted heating/cooling (HVAC) units to control the temperature inside the shelter. The equipment shelter would also house a 50 kW backup diesel generator that would provide 48 hours of backup power. The shelter could accommodate a swap to a 100 kW generator in the event that another carrier co-locates at the site in the future. Even though two carriers could potentially co-locate, AT&T's suggested accommodation seems reasonable, given that both Verizon and T-Mobile have indicated no interest in the proposed Murdock Avenue facility, as they have adequate coverage from Paddock Avenue; that other carriers' future needs are highly uncertain; and that the space available for the equipment shelter at the proposed location is necessarily constrained.

The surrounding area is rural: development consists of mostly single-family homes with intermixed commercial structures and farmland. Existing year-round visibility of the taller silo is approximately 153 acres and existing seasonal visibility is approximately 57 acres. The predicted year-round visibility of the replacement silo would increase to 342 acres. The seasonal visibility would increase to 97 acres. However, primary views are contained within a 0.25 mile radius of the site and are typically partially obstructed by surrounding trees and buildings. Furthermore, the new silo would be designed to resemble the old one as closely as possible. The aesthetics on the ground would be expected to improve by removal of the overhang and associated brush-clearing in order to install the equipment shelter.

The site is not located within any shaded area of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Natural Diversity Database. No wetlands are located within 1,000 feet of the proposed silo. Approximately one tree six inches in diameter or greater would be removed. The maximum worst-case power density would be 13.2 percent of the applicable limit. A short section of fence with an acoustic screen would be used to ensure compliance with applicable noise standards for the HVAC units. No Federal Aviation Administration marking or lighting of the silo tower would be required.

Notice was provided to the abutting property owners, the City of Meriden, the Town of Wallingford (the project is located within 2,500 feet), and others as required by regulation. Abutter Lynn Faria opposes the project due to concerns about neighborhood health and safety, property values, and aesthetics, particularly visibility. She submitted a petition to the Council articulating these concerns and signed by 89 residents of the nearby neighborhood. The City of Meriden Planning Commission is concerned about its lack of control over zoning compliance and over the final details of the site plan, particularly landscaping.

If the petition is approved, staff suggests including a condition that a Development and Management Plan (D&M Plan) be submitted for Council review and approval. Such plan would include, but not be limited to, a site plan, tower and foundation structural design drawings, a landscaping plan, and further details regarding the color and texture of the tower, the noise mitigation measures, including fencing, and the backup generator. AT&T shall provide a copy of the D&M Plan to the City of Meriden (City) and consult with the City regarding the architectural and aesthetic details of the tower and equipment shelter.

Aerial Photograph



Existing conditions with the (taller) silo proposed to be replaced



Existing Overhang

