

Petition No. 1117
Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless
Durham, Connecticut
Staff Report
October 9, 2014

On August 5, 2014, Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless (Cellco) submitted a petition (Petition) to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a declaratory ruling that no Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need is required for the proposed construction, maintenance, and operation of a small cell telecommunications facility at the Durham Fairgrounds at 24 Town House Road, Durham, Connecticut. A field review of the proposed project was conducted on September 23, 2014. Council member Phil Ashton, Michael Perrone of the Council staff, and Attorney Kenneth Baldwin (representing Cellco) attended the field review.

Cellco currently maintains two cell sites in the Town of Durham and three cell sites in the adjacent Towns of Middlefield and Wallingford which currently provide service in significant portions of Durham. However, reliable service remains problematic in and around the Durham Fairgrounds, particularly during the annual Durham Fair and other events due to the high demand for capacity. To address these issues in the past, Cellco has installed temporary cell sites, i.e. cell on wheels (COW), during the Durham Fair. In this Petition, Cellco seeks to install a permanent solution to its wireless service issues at the Durham Fairgrounds.

Specifically, Cellco seeks to remove an existing approximately 25-foot tall wood pole, currently used to support loudspeakers and lighting, and replace it with a new 30-foot steel pole in the same location. The existing wood pole is not capable of supporting the proposed loading. Cellco would install two flush-mounted two-foot high by one-foot wide “small cell” antennas at the 29-foot centerline height of the tower. The tops of the antennas would be flush with the top of the tower. Two remote radio heads would be installed directly below the antennas. The loudspeakers and lighting would be re-installed on the new pole below Cellco’s equipment.

No fenced compound would be necessary. Cellco would attach its equipment cabinet to the outside of an existing building next to the tower. The equipment would include battery backup with at least four hours of full-load run time.

The maximum worst-case power density would be 1.46 percent of the applicable limit. If approved, staff recommends including a condition that a set of final structural design drawings of the tower and foundation stamped by a Professional Engineer duly licensed in the State of Connecticut be submitted to the Council prior to construction.

The site is located in FEMA Zone X, an area outside of the 100-year and 500-year flood zones. No aviation hazard marking or lighting is required. No wetlands are located in the vicinity of the site. Existing gravel access would be utilized. No trees would be removed.

The visual impact is not expected to be significant because the facility would replace an existing pole of comparable height. The nearest home is approximately 538 feet to the east-northeast. Furthermore, this home is roughly 55 feet higher in elevation (i.e. higher than the tower itself) and has existing trees on the property.

In order to improve aesthetics, since the existing pole is wood, if approved, staff recommends including a condition that Cellco consult with the Durham Fairgrounds and, if mutually agreeable, use weathering steel (such as Corten steel) for the pole rather than standard gray galvanized steel (as

proposed). This would allow the pole to weather to a brown or rust color which is closer in appearance to the wood pole to be removed.

Notice was provided to the property owner, abutting property owners, and the Town of Durham. While Cellco received one inquiry from an abutting property owner, no objections to the project were received. No other comments were received.

Cellco contends that this proposal will not have a substantial adverse environmental effect; thus, staff recommends approval.

Proposed light pole to be replaced

