

Joseph and Marisa Barbagallo

59 Talias Trail, Middletown CT

December 8, 2021

My family and I moved into our home approximately two years ago after I retired from serving over 20 years in the Marine Corps. We chose this neighborhood because of the beautiful homes, scenic views, and peacefulness. The first day we moved in I remember noting how quiet it was and that you could hear the cows from the farm up the street. After doing some research and listening to the Council ask the applicant questions, I am firmer in my belief that in fact the tower can go somewhere else. I am asking to make them prove that the applicant's end goals cannot be achieved by sharing a tower already up or placing it in the industrial zone down the street. The entirety of this letter is my statement and I appreciate if it would be entered into the record concerning the matter of the cell tower at 499 Mile Lane, Middletown, Ct.

Building the tower in our residential neighborhood will create an extended period of nuisance and lack of privacy. AT&T testified that the work would require 120 days of construction to complete the new tower and complimenting support structure. We can assume that if the plan changes to include the decommissioning of the old tower that the timeline will only be extended. The work is being completed directly behind and at an elevation that is above the second story of the homes abutting the compound. The plan also calls for removal of vegetation since the center of the tower is planned to be built in what is now the tree line. This situation allows for workers, inspectors, and visitors to have a clear line of sight into the homes of all the residents on the eastern side of Talias Trail. Not only does this make an uncomfortable situation for the residents by always having to worry who's looking in, but it may create a security issue since now there is a much greater volume of traffic having access to what was normally a restricted area. As shown in photos of the applicant's submission (Figure 1), you can see that not only will a considerable number of trees and brush need to be removed, causing much greater exposure of the tower to the abutting residents, but wetlands are also present in the area. Although there was a change to move the tower off the wetlands, the close proximity and extensive change to the landscape would still greatly affect the wildlife that inhabits the surrounding forest. This will also be compounded and further extend the timeline by the fact that three additional carriers, equipment, and construction will be necessary once the tenant subleases the tower.

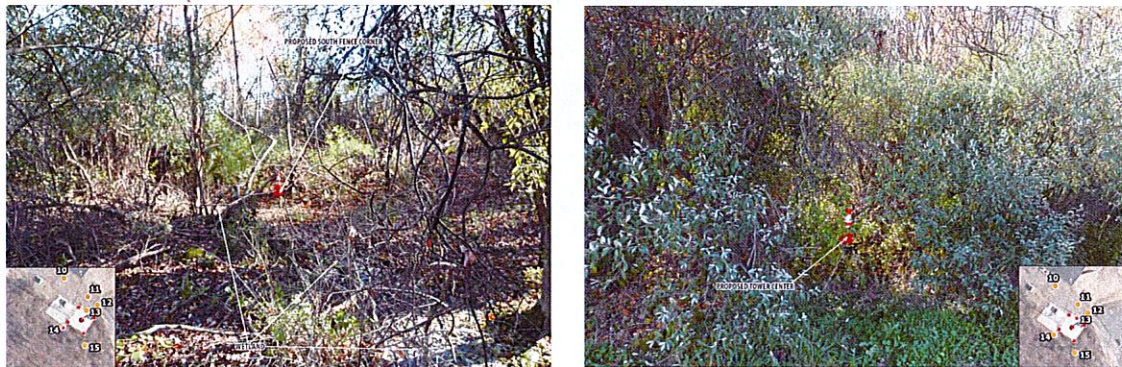


Figure 1

Currently there are steady burning lights in the compound to illuminate the current tower and compound. In the recent past, many residences have complained to the city that at night these flood lights shined excessively into the bedroom windows. Residents have stated that it has affected their sleep and detracted from their quality of life forcing them to spend their own funds to mitigate the amount of light coming through. The city did eventually act and shift the lights to reduce the stray light. A major concern is that approval of this tower, as written in the lease, will now give the tenet authorization to place additional illumination to the new tower and compound. Although this may be a requirement supported by OSHA and FCC regulations, this will create a circumstance to further aggravate a remedied condition.

The proximity of the construction being conducted on the compound will certainly generate dust and debris. Although this is out of the applicant's control, it will inevitably make its way into the homes and backyards of the abutting residents. Many of them have pools and would cause additional maintenance and cost not associated with normal operating conditions. This burden will only compound the frustration of having this tower built and put the onus on the residents to clean up after the applicant's mess. The pitch and runoff of the hill is also in an unnerving state. The builder of this subdivision improperly graded the hill which caused severe water pooling and damage in the backyards of the abutting residences. After years of complaining to the town about the lack of action, they reshaped the hill to help channel the water through the middle of the homes into the street. Although this did help, it remains a problem today. One resident had to completely empty, clean and refill their pool due to the mud that made its way down the hill during the few heavy rains we've had. Now, I completely understand that this is not the applicant's fault, but further changing the land above and creating additional hardscape will only increase the runoff. I can only predict that if this all comes to fruition, that the town will say it's the applicant's responsibility and the applicant will say it's the town leaving the residents holding the bag. Again, I understand this may not be a consideration in the council's view, but it is a documented and ongoing event that will only expand the scope of potential repairs. This past year, this has also caused the bridge at the bottom of the access road to collapse twice from the excessive water runoff (Figure 2) which all ends up in the wetlands on the western side of the street. You can see in the pictures the mud I previously mentioned. This again, is documented and known by city officials.



Figure 2

In addition to the nuisance of having the tower built, the increased presence of people and equipment will undoubtedly drive the wildlife out from the wooded area on top of the hill. This area is known for the extensive wildlife and a reason many of us chose to build our homes here. Aside from the disappearance of these animals, there is a risk involved. The coyote, fox, bobcat, and occasional bear population have a considerable presence here. I can only imagine that this will cause them to now enter areas they normally avoid putting kids and pets at risk. It has been widely reported this past summer that bears have been roaming into towns, homes, and businesses. Although our bear sightings are limited, the others are prevalent, and I cannot see any reason why they would not end up closer to the residential areas surrounding the wooded compounded. Also, the lower areas just beneath 499 Mile Lane have State and Federal listed species as shown in Figure 3. This area is known for hawks and beetles, in which both have several species listed as threatened in Connecticut.

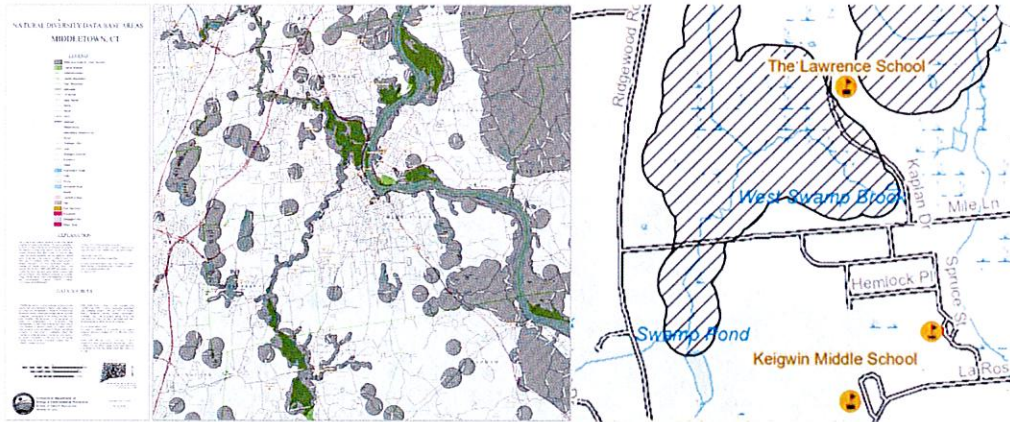


Figure 3

The additional tower or consolidation of the towers will create increased blight on this beautiful landscape and neighborhood. The argument that a tower already exists so why not, is like saying I have a broken finger so go ahead and break my leg. The two towers look nothing alike as demonstrated in Figure 4.



Figure 4

The images show the current tower as taken up close from the access road leading to the compound and an example of monopole cell tower. This tower seems to support three carriers, ours will be built to support four. You can easily see that it is incredibly more obvious and obtrusive to the landscape. The applicant's submission of pictures, diagrams, measurements, and even the viewshed analysis are all geared towards one set of antennas. The council has asked, and the applicant answered, that in fact there will eventually be additional sets with Verizon already set to sublease. This eyesore cannot be hidden from view and even at one set of antennas, the viewshed analysis shows that in some areas it can be viewed up to two miles away. This is all based on the applicant's request for a 150' tower which law allows them to increase by an additional 10% or 20ft without permission. Not to mention that it was discussed during the hearing, the benefits of increasing the monopole to 180'. AT&T data has suggested that this will increase their coverage by X fold, but it did not state what the minimum increase to achieve its objectives were. They also did not show if alternate locations closer to the industrial area will provide the increased coverage since it is a quarter mile away in a wide-open area and not behind homes. As seen in Figure 5, AT&T shows a reduction in the Mile lane area, but the same benefit can be achieved by moving the tower east to the industrial area on Newfield.

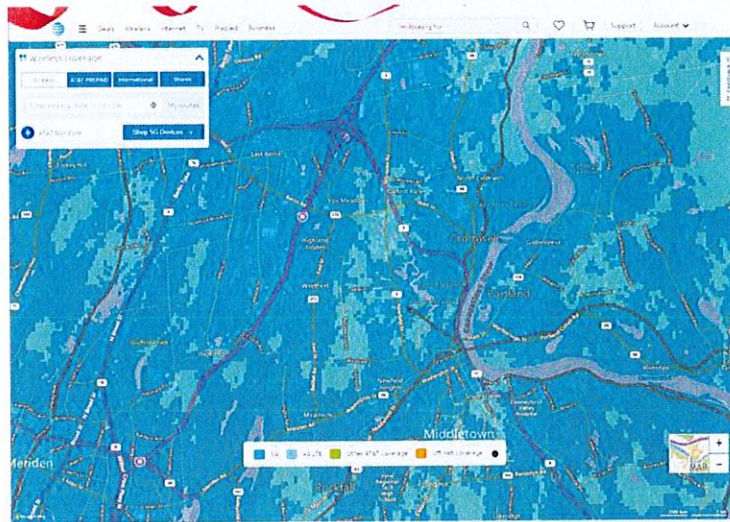


Figure 5

As shown in Figure 6 below, there are several open lots and parcels with easy access to the site and utilities that could provide a much more viable and uncontested tower location. This area being so close to the original proposed location, offers the same benefits with a small decrease in elevation. The current tower is proposed to be built in an R-15 zone which is residential. The alternate locations are all zoned as industrial which would naturally have less homes being built and future issues with residents. These locations are not only closer to the area businesses, but on a major roadway with heavy traffic. Since the concern with the signal seems to be a small channel that runs North and South, moving the tower a quarter mile East can't have such a detrimental effect on the signal to warrant putting the tower in our neighborhood. I ask to have the end state of the applicant clearly defined and prove that these alternate locations, or any other area in fact, does not meet those goals. The increased signal coverage alone cannot be the determining factor since its common sense another antenna equals more coverage regardless of all other factors. The small benefit they seek will cause a large area of overlap that when looked at in terms of the target area, the true increased benefit is much less. Since most of these tests

can be done on computer models, this request is not an excessive ask. Statistics of dropped calls and data latency in this area should also be shown to justify an additional tower anywhere.



Figure 6

I understand that the readings on the applicant’s website are not the same as a field test, but it can still provide a general idea of the current signal strength. As seen in Figure 7, T-Mobile shows considerable 5G coverage in this area. As a test, most iPhone and Androids have a setting called Field Test Mode that can show you useful information about your phone, including the signal strength in decibels. Decibels are a logarithmic unit of measuring signal strength and are very precise making them ideal for performing a signal test of just how strong of a signal is that you’re currently receiving. We conducted this check at several points and found that in fact a good 5G signal was available. This corroborates the advertised coverage map on T-Mobile’s site.

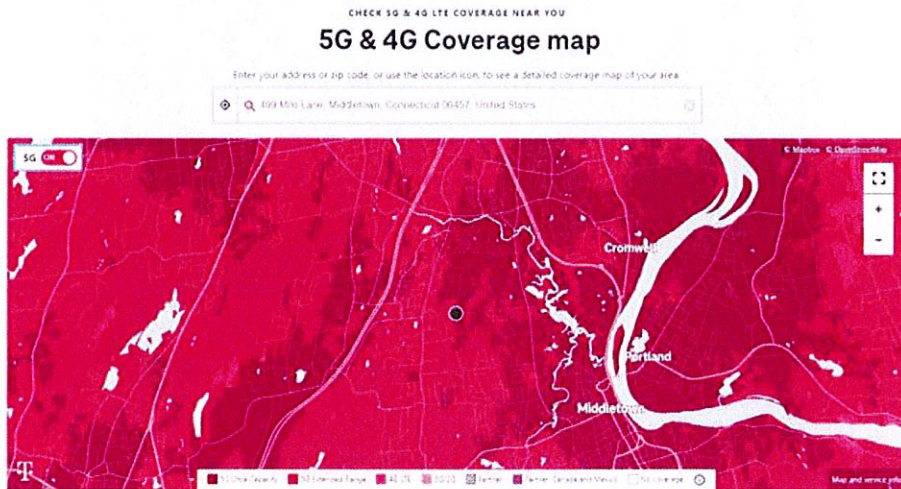


Figure 7

If it stands true that T-Mobile has 5G coverage in this area, then the same could be said about AT&T and Verizon if they add their antennas to or near the tower providing T-Mobile with their excellent service. The law says to allow for competitive service offers, this doesn't mean add towers everywhere, it means that they can share the ones that already exist. Figure 8 shows the towers within a four-mile radius.

Existing Adjacent Towers within Four Miles

Proposed Wireless Telecommunications Facility
 Middletown_Mile Lane
 499 Mile Lane
 Middletown, Connecticut

Data Source: CG Tower Database, Updated March 2020
 FCC ASR-GIS Database, Updated 8/2017

Town	Address	Alternate Address	Latitude	Longitude	Owner	Type	Tower Height (Feet AGL)	Ground Elevation (Feet AMSL)
Middlefield	484 Meriden Road		41.53553333	-72.73211389	Land Management Inc	monopole	45	427
Middlefield	238 Meriden Road	238 Meridan Road	41.54583333	-72.71491667	Sprint	monopole	120	n/a
Middletown	169 Cross Street		41.55137170	-72.66213530	City of Middletown	self-support lattice	180	n/a
Middletown	290 Preston Avenue		41.55735278	-72.74326389	AT&T	monopole	150	370
Middletown	213 Court Street	200 Court Street	41.55972222	-72.65194444	Middlesex Mutual Ass. Co.	rooftop	207	67
Portland	97 High Street		41.58083333	-72.62388889	SNET/SCLP	self-support lattice	80	340
Portland	95 High Street		41.58111111	-72.62222222	Town of Portland	monopole	120	n/a
Cromwell	201 Main Street		41.58336111	-72.64983333	Sprint	monopole	125	n/a
Middletown	90 Industrial Park Road		41.58564722	-72.71397778	Crown Castle	monopole	185	n/a
Berlin	222 New Park Drive		41.59777778	-72.74916667	TCI Cable	n/a	n/a	192
Cromwell	207 West Street		41.60222222	-72.68000000	Tahir Choudhry	monopole	54	23
Cromwell	100 Berlin Road	Christian Hill Road	41.60569444	-72.70136944	Shaner Hotel Group	self-support lattice	83	n/a
Cromwell	160 West Street		41.60599167	-72.67038056	SBA	monopole	76	132
Cromwell	179 Shunpike Road		41.62323056	-72.67902778	Cromwell Fire District	self-support lattice	170	272
Berlin	1657 Berlin Turnpike	1657 Wilbur Cross Highway	41.60621667	-72.74968611	Berlin Fire Dept	monopole	180	n/a
Portland	Intersection of River Road & Silvermine Road		41.5575000	-72.6195000	Crossroads Communications of Old Saybrook, Inc. DBA= WMRD-AM(11,CBA 17, FAA MOD	Guyed	221	n/a

Figure 8

Specifically, the tower at 290 Preston Ave, Middletown which is owned by AT&T, is a great example. The applicant stated that the reason no other place was suitable was due to access and utilities. As you can see in Figure 9, the only way into the tower site is a path that is only 10ft wide at the smallest point. You can also see in Figure 10 that the area the tower was built on was originally dirt in the woods. You can also see in Figure 11 that it is well hidden from view. So, if an unpaved 10ft wide path into the woods where a tower sits hidden atop a concrete pad they poured will work for AT&T here, I fail to see why 499 Mile Lane is the only suitable location for a new tower.



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

Another factor in this case is that the applicant is asking to install low band 5G. Low-band 5G uses a similar frequency range to 4G cellphones (600–900 MHz) giving download speeds a little higher than 4G: 30–250 megabits per second (Mbit/s). Low-band cell towers have a range and coverage area similar to 4G towers and the ability to not be incumbered by obstacles as in high band 5G. Transmitting on the 600MHz frequency, once used for analog TV broadcasts, can allow one low band 5G tower to serve customers within hundreds of square miles. Thus, enabling coverage in even far-flung and rural locations. So, it stands to reason that if low band 5G has similar coverage characteristics as 4G, then upgrading a 4G tower location will provide 5G coverage. Not only that, but the flexibility of low band 5G should give the applicant the ability to choose locations other than behind our homes.

Another point of contention is the lack of communication to the residents affected by this proposal. Although the applicant was within the letter of the law, the limited notification of what was being proposed kept many of us in the dark. Building on this parcel of city land is a target of opportunity that both the applicant and the city thought they could get approved without any pushback from the residents, again, sending minimum notifications. I am fully aware that the actions of the City of Middletown may be out of the Council's scope, but it speaks to the intent to mislead in order to achieve their desired outcome. Even after we've become aware, many residents still have no idea this is happening. Many of the homeowners are older and do not have the knowledge or resources to attend zoom calls since the pandemic has halted in person meetings. This was clearly evident by the lack of attendance to any of the city or state hearings because it did not match the high level of disapproval for the tower proposal. Even the Mayor's office has dodged our requests to discuss this matter. Again, I understand this is not within the Council's purview, but when looked at wholistically it shows true intent. The City of Middletown Resolution dated August 13, 2021, states that "the intent of such agreements is to offset the costs incurred by the City to lease towers for it's public Safety Radio System..." The Council has listed case precedence concerning the loss of property value and the lack of empirical evidence in regard to cell towers. Any reduction whatsoever in property values, even at the lowest recently reported percentage, will completely negate the additional revenue of \$30,000 per year for the town. On Talias Trail alone, there are 12 homes with a combined value of \$5.3 million.

Although I have heard the council say that property values will not be considered in their decision, I mention them so the council can understand that this neighborhood has established a quality of life that this proposed tower directly detracts from and is detrimental to the standard of living we have become accustomed to. Figure 12 below is the perfect example.



Figure 12

If no evidence shows that RF radiation from a cell tower is harmful, then why post this sign? The perception alone of living next to a cellular tower will have a damaging effect regardless if a study proves otherwise. No one will see this sign and decide to live next to it. Especially in today's risk averse society, perception is the reality which cannot be ignored in a case like this. This ultimately affects real families that a large corporation like AT&T will not think twice about once the tower goes up. On behalf of everyone in the community, we thank you for your consideration in this matter and hope you deny the applicant's request to place a cell tower or combine the two towers at 499 Mile Lane, Middletown.