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| **DOCKET NO. 425** – Message Center Management application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a replacement telecommunications facility located at 4 Dittmar Road, Redding, Connecticut. | }  }  } | Connecticut  Siting  Council  June 21, 2012 |

**Opinion**

On January 9, 2012, Message Center Management, Inc. (MCM) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a telecommunications facility, which would replace an existing 110-foot tall guyed lattice tower with a 120-foot tall monopine telecommunications tower, at 4 Dittmar Road in the Town of Redding*.* There are two wireless carriers on the existing tower: AT&T and Sprint/Nextel. T-Mobile Northeast LLC (T-Mobile) seeks to install its antennas at this location. However, the existing tower has reached the end of its useful life and lacks the structural capacity to accommodate additional antennas of the existing carriers or any new carriers. T-Mobile’s objective in locating on the replacement tower would be to provide service in the vicinity of Route 107, Route 58 (Black Rock Turnpike) and other local roads. T-Mobile participated in this proceeding as an intervenor; the Town of Redding (Town) was a party.

Theexisting tower and facility are located on a 5.6-acre residential property owned by Robert Paradise.In addition to the owner’s residence, the property includes a small Christmas tree farm. MCM would locate the replacement tower approximately four feet from the location of the existing tower. MCM chose to design its replacement tower as a monopine in response to concerns about visibility expressed by the nearest neighbors and the town. The Council feels that a monopine tower would be suitable for this location because of the prevalence of mature trees in the area. Because of the new tower’s proximity to the location of the existing tower, MCM would have to dismantle the existing tower in order to make room for the new tower. During the time between when the existing tower has been dismantled and before the new tower is in service, MCM would use a temporary mounting facility, such as a cell-on-wheels or a ballasted monopole structure, to maintain the existing carriers’ service. In order to accommodate T-Mobile’s ground equipment, MCM would expand the existing, 1,126 square foot compound by an additional 2,360 square feet to an overall dimension of 87 feet by 42 feet. The expanded compound would be enclosed by a wooden stockade fence, similar in appearance to the existing fence.

The landscaping of the expanded compound was an issue of considerable interest to the Town and the nearest neighbors to the facility. MCM proposes to plant arborvitae around the perimeter of the compound and to install deer fencing around the arborvitae to prevent deer from browsing on the plants. MCM would also plant arborvitae, with deer fencing, at a location to the north of the compound to help screen the compound from the nearest neighbor to the north. The Town’s tree warden expressed a preference for more deer-resistant plantings such as Colorado Spruce. The tree warden also advised abutting property owners on ways to reduce the visual impact of the facility by planting large evergreen trees and installing fences. The Council shall order MCM to consult with the Town about the vegetative screening for the facility as it prepares its Development and Management Plan.

The tower’s setback radius was another issue during this proceeding. The nearest property line to the location of the replacement tower is 122 feet to the southeast. The height of the replacement tower would be 120 feet, but with its tree branches in place, the overall height of the monopine tower would be 127 feet.

During the public hearing on this docket, a number of nearby residents expressed concerns about the noise generated by the carriers’ backup generators and air conditioners. MCM conducted a noise study and determined that existing noise levels complied with State of Connecticut noise regulations. In order to ensure that its facility would comply with these regulations once the replacement tower was in place and a new carrier has been added, MCM stated that it would conduct a post-construction noise study. The Council agrees that such a study would be useful and will include a noise study as a condition of its Decision and Order.

MCM’s replacement monopine tower would be visible above the tree canopy, which averages approximately 65 feet, from approximately 17 acres in the surrounding area on a year-round basis. The majority of this acreage occurs on or in the immediate vicinity of the Paradise property. Other areas of year-round visibility occur on hilltops to the south, southwest and southeast of the proposed replacement tower. It would be seasonally visible from approximately 34 acres. Approximately five residential properties would have at least partial year-round views of the replacement tower, and approximately 10 additional residential properties would have at least partial seasonal views of the replacement tower. Limited portions of Putnam Memorial State Park and the Plishner Wildlife Preserve would have seasonal views of the replacement tower.

No wetlands were identified on the Paradise property, and no extant populations of Federal or State Endangered, Threatened or Special Concern Species would be impacted by the replacement of the existing tower. The State Historic Preservation Office concluded that the replacement tower would have no adverse effects on historic resources.

According to a methodology prescribed by the FCC Office of Engineering and Technology Bulletin No. 65E, Edition 97-01 (August 1997), the worst-case combined radio frequency power density levels of the antennas proposed to be installed on the tower have been calculated by Council staff to amount to 36.98% of the FCC’s Maximum Permissible Exposure, as measured at the base of the tower. This percentage is well below federal and state standards established for the frequencies used by wireless companies. If federal or state standards change, the Council will require that the tower be brought into compliance with such standards. The Council will require that the power densities be recalculated in the event other carriers add antennas to the tower. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 prohibits any state or local agency from regulating telecommunications towers on the basis of the environmental effects of radio frequency emissions to the extent that such towers and equipment comply with FCC’s regulations concerning such emissions.

In this proceeding, T-Mobile demonstrated a need for coverage in the area of the existing facility. Extending the existing tower by ten feet to allow for the installation of T-Mobile’s antennas is preferable, in the Council’s opinion, to the erection of another tower in this section of Redding. Replacing the existing guyed lattice tower that is at its maximum structural capacity with a stronger tower would also enable the two existing carriers, AT&T and Sprint/Nextel, to upgrade their equipment to keep pace with technological advances in the wireless communications industry.

Based on the record in this proceeding, the Council finds that the effects associated with the construction, maintenance and operation of the telecommunications facility with a 120-foot monopine tower to replace the existing 110-foot guyed lattice tower, including effects on the natural environment; ecological integrity and balance; public health and safety; scenic, historic, and recreational values; forests and parks; air and water purity; and fish and wildlife are not disproportionate either alone or cumulatively with other effects when compared to need, are not in conflict with policies of the State concerning such effects, and are not sufficient reason to deny this application. Therefore, the Council will issue a Certificate for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a 120-foot monopine telecommunications facility at 4 Dittmar Road.