

CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

APPLICATION OF CELLCO PARTNERSHIP)
d/b/a VERIZON WIRELESS TO THE) DOCKET NO. 448
CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL FOR A)
CERTIFICATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL)
COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC NEED)
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION MAINTENANCE)
AND OPERATION OF A TELE-)
COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY LOCATED)
AT ORANGE TAX ASSESSOR MAP 77,) SEPTEMBER 12, 2014
BLOCK 3, LOT 1, 831 DERBY MILFORD)
ROAD, ORANGE, CT)

PRE-FILED TESTIMONY OF JACQUELINE BARBARA, ESQ.

Q1. Please state your name and address.

A1. Jacqueline Barbara, 908 Rainbow Trail, Orange, Connecticut.

Q2. How close do you live to the subject farm property at 831 Derby Milford Road?

A2. My property is uphill and across the street from the subject property.

Q3. Have you fully reviewed the Application (Docket No. 448) filed by Celco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless?

A3. Yes.

Q4. After reviewing the Application, do you have any concerns about Celco's proposal?

A4. Yes. I have many very serious concerns about the Application.

Q5. Can you describe each concern that you have about the Application?

A5. I am concerned about many issues, including but not limited to:

1. The lack of public need to construct a telecommunications facility on the subject property, which is classified as farm land and is exempt from taxation pursuant to C.G.S. § 12-107c;
2. Environmental impact on the surrounding wetlands;
3. Environmental impact on indigenous wild life, including, without limitation, avian wildlife, avian flight paths, and box turtles and other amphibious wildlife;
4. Environmental impact of increased sound caused by the structure, including, without limitation, its diesel-fueled back-up generator;
5. Imbalanced cost to benefit ratio between the claimed potential benefit of the radio frequency coverage that will allegedly be realized by the proposed tower versus the potential negative environmental impacts;
6. Availability of other, more suitable “open space” areas;
7. Negative aesthetics in a residential neighborhood;
8. Clear violation of property rights;
9. Limited to none viability for co-location;
10. Impact of a tower in a residential neighborhood;
11. Desecration of a significant historic area of Connecticut;
12. Negative impact on my property value and that of my neighbors;
13. Availability of alternative technologies; and
14. Inconclusive health risk.

Q6. What information or evidence have you discovered which supports any of the concerns that you have about the subject application?

A6. Environmental impact on wildlife: I have learned that the “optimal time” to conduct field surveys for vernal pool amphibians and box turtles, which would have been in April to June time-frame, had already past as of the time Cellco’s wildlife biologist, Eric Davison, visited the site on 7/28. Mr. Davison’s report, therefore, and his conclusions made therein, do not have the benefit of a field survey conducted at the optimal time.

I believe that Mr. Davison’s findings may have been different had he been able to conduct a field survey in the optimal time-frame of April-June.

I also learned of the presence of at least two vernal pool amphibians and box turtles at the site and that box turtles are a state-listed species of special concern.

I have learned that there is a large forested wetland that lies north-northwest of the proposed tower site, and that this wetland drains from northeast to southwest across the site. Further, this wetland contains an embedded intermittent watercourse that drains to a pond on the site.

There are vernal pools on the site, which provide breeding habitat for forest dwelling amphibians, principally frogs and salamanders. Mr. Davison’s field inspection, however, was conducted at a time (7/28) when most vernal pools are in the hydrologic drawdown phase, meaning that they are dry. I believe that Mr. Davison may have found evidence of and/or additional vernal pools had he visited the site in the spring.

I learned that one of the vernal pools identified by Mr. Davison is suitable for wood frog breeding.

I am concerned that Mr. Davison does not have an opinion on what secondary impacts might be associated with the tower such as noise would have with respect to protection of terrestrial vernal pool habitats, and that this issue has not been further explored by Cellco.

Further, Mr. Davidson’s report does not take into account such things as possible blasting of ledge or mechanical chipping of ledge, as well as noise arising from generators operating at the site, or air conditioning systems. The site, however, has a lot of rock and possible rock ledge.

I learned that the proposed site is suitable for box turtles. In fact, according to Mr. Davidson’s report, **“the currently proposed tower site is part of a toposequence that includes wetlands, upland forest and old field habitat that can provide the full range of habitats utilized by**

box turtle throughout the year. This gives me particular concern given that box turtle is a species of special concern.

I also learned and am concerned because construction of the proposed facility would also result in “habitat fragmentation” According to Mr. Davison’s report, **“The impacts of habitat fragmentation are well documented ... and are considered one of the greatest threats to Connecticut’s wildlife.”**

I learned that Dean **Gustafson** testified at the hearing on 7/17/14 (p. 74) that there **“is considerable connectivity of wildlife”** at the site as it exists now. He also conceded (at p. 79) that the proposed facility **“is located close to a ridgeline”** with “wetlands” on both sides. He conceded that **“there’s the potential for wildlife connectivity over that ridge line.”** (p. 79) I am concerned of the proposed project’s impact on this wildlife connectivity, particularly in light of the fact that, according to Mr. Davison’s own report, **“without site specific wildlife usage data, we cannot adequately assess the potential impacts to wildlife resulting from habitat fragmentation.**

I am concerned because there appears to be a material risk to wildlife, of which Cellco and this Council do not know, if this project is allowed to proceed. Mr. Davison’s report appears to state that he can’t rule out that risk. I ask, therefore, how can this Council rule out this risk? This risk includes unknown risk to box turtles, a species of special concern.

I ask how can this Council sign off on a project without knowing the impact of fragmentation on wildlife, including box turtles, resulting from that project.

In addition, I am concerned because it does not appear that Mr. Gustafson, who apparently authored or helped prepare the **Avian Resource Evaluation dated 8/4/14** submitted to the Council on Cellco’s behalf as **“Attachment 3”** to Cellco’s Additional Information, did not actually visit the site in connection with that report. It appears from the report as if Mr. Gustafson’s company (All-Points Technology Corp, P.C.) merely reviewed **“publicly-available sources of avian data.** In fact, the report itself refers to the evaluation as a **“desktop analysis,”** **which I must assume means** no actual field work was performed.

It appears that the entire report is premised upon Mr. Gustafson’s company’s review of other studies and no personal or direct observations.

Nonetheless, according to the report, Bald Eagle sites are only 1,735 feet from the project site. Likewise, according to the report, there is a “flyway” also only 1,735 feet from the project site.

The report states **“siting of tower structures within flyways can be a concern.”** Although the report discounts that concern here because of the 103-foot height of the tower and that it will be unguyed, I am concerned because that conclusion of “potential impacts” is not based upon any first hand field observations or study.

Similarly, according to the report, there is a “water fowl focus area” only 1,122 feet from the project site.

I am also concerned because the report notes that the **“proposed Facility and access drive will be in proximity to wetland resources: the proposed entrance of the access road is approximately 40 feet east of the wetlands bordering a stream across Derby Milford Road; and, the proposed Facility’s compound area is located approximately 100 feet southeast of a forested wetland systems.”**

The report concludes that the proposed facility will not result in **“significant”** adverse impact to the wild life habitat function (including avian habitat) being supported by these nearby wetland areas **“provided appropriate erosion controls are installed and maintained during construction.** So, according to the express language stated in the report, even with **“appropriate erosion controls”** there will still be an adverse impact to the wild life habitat function (including avian habitat) being supported by these nearby wetland areas.

Further, if **appropriate erosion controls are NOT maintained during construction,”** then, according to the report, there WILL BE **“significant”** adverse impact to the wild life habitat function (including avian habitat) being supported by the nearby wetland areas. This is of substantial concern to me.

In addition, at page 9 of the report, it is concluded that **“grass land bird species may periodically be present within the general development areas,”** which means that Celco really doesn’t know.

In fact, in the report it is recommend that **“ a grass land bird nest survey ... be conducted to determine if breeding birds are present and would be disturbed by the proposed development activities.**

Further, the conclusions are contingent, stating that **“if the avian survey concludes that breeding birds could be disturbed, construction activities would be restricted to avoid the April 15 through July 15 peak nesting period.”**

I believe, therefore, that further study is needed.

Environmental impact on the wetlands: The subject property has wetlands, including vernal pools, which need to be preserved and I am concerned that Cellco's use of the property will impair the wetlands and vernal pools on the property both during construction and when the tower is serviced in the future.

Environmental impact of increased sound caused by the structure: The facility will be required to have a generator, and an air conditioning unit. I presume the generator will run during power outages lasting longer than the battery back-up. I also assume the air conditioner will run for several months due to extended warm weather. Both will cause undesirable and varying degrees of added mechanical sound to what is and has always been a quiet, residential neighborhood. The added sound will likely disturb surrounding residential properties and wildlife.

Imbalanced cost to benefit ratio of this site: As I have learned that the primary reason for the proposed facility is capacity relief and not to address coverage gaps, and that since the date of the pending application, Cellco has significantly backtracked from its initial position regarding both the need for capacity relief and the capacity relief that the proposed facility will purportedly accomplish, I do not believe that the environmental and aesthetics impacts of the proposed facility is outweighed by the claimed benefits from the project.

Availability of other, more suitable "open space" areas: I have learned that Cellco did not consider St. Peter's Cemetery as an alternative location, even though St. Peter's Cemetery has asked in writing to be considered as a possible alternative location. I do not believe that Cellco took reasonable steps to consider other viable alternative locations, including, without limitation, the Housatonic Overlook and Tucker's Ridge properties, or any locations outside of the so-called "Orange North search ring." Cellco should consider other "open space" areas in the vicinity, including outside the Orange North search ring that would provide as equally favorable characteristics as those claimed to be provided by the subject farm land.

Negative aesthetics in a residential neighborhood: The tower, which will be at least 100 feet high with the option of adding an additional ten feet, and which will have up to 15 panel-type antennas, will be an absolute eyesore and substantially conflict with the otherwise serene residential and bucolic nature of the surrounding area. The large tower and antenna facility will impair views from the surrounding residences.

Impact of a tower in a residential neighborhood: The tower will have a direct impact on the aesthetics of multiple surrounding residential properties. It will be an absolute eyesore. The proposed facility and its operation, if allowed, will be out of character for a residential neighborhood and with the natural beauty of the area. I find this objectionable and the CSC should as well.

Desecration of a significant historic area of Connecticut: The subject property consists of historic farm land—a precious and ever diminishing resource in this state--which should not be desecrated with an unsightly, noisy and commercial operation such as the proposed telecommunications facility.

Negative impact on my property value and that of my neighbors: There would be very few buyers who would consider purchasing a home with an active Cell Tower hundreds of feet away. For the petitioner to state that it is a “concealed” cell tower certainly does not hide a potential buyer’s fear of having a cell tower immediately across the street. Cellco has not provided any evidence that the cell tower facility and operations will not negatively impact the fair market value of my and neighboring properties.

Inconclusive health risk: While this is my final concern, it by no means makes it less important. In fact, as a mother of 2 children, this was my first concern. I recognize that the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 “preempts state and local jurisdictions - including this agency - with respect to the finding of need and the effects of radio-frequency (RF) emissions.” However, as a mother, that doesn’t make me any less concerned of the potential health risk to my family.

Q7. Have any other residents expressed to you any concern about Cellco’s Application

A7. Yes.

Q8. Based upon the information, evidence and testimony that you have observed so far, do you think that the Connecticut Siting Council should approve or deny this application?

A8. Based on what I have observed so far, I think that the CSC needs to deny this application.

Q9. If the Connecticut Siting Council were to approve Cellco’s application, do you think that the approval should require any changes to what Cellco has proposed so far?

A9. Yes.

Q10. What changes do you suggest?

A10. If this tower is approved, I think the CSC should require the following conditions of approval:

- a) Any generator used by Cellco, or any future telecommunications company cannot use any liquid fuel source;
- b) The equipment shed must be sound-proof;
- c) The air conditioning unit that will likely run 24/7 during the late spring and summer months should be state-of-the-art “low sound”;
- d) Cellco is required to construct a special dry well to absorb the rain-water run-off that will be increased due to the added surface area;
- e) The cell tower should be stat-of-the art camouflaged; and
- f) Cellco is required to plant trees of at least forty (40) feet in height to be placed around the perimeter of the facility.

I, JACQUELINE BARBARA, duly sworn, hereby verify that this statement was prepared by me or under my direct supervision and is believed to be true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.




Jacqueline Barbara

Date

9/12/2014


The above signed, JACQUELINE BARBARA, personally appeared before me and verified that the above pre-file testimony for the Connecticut Siting Council is true and accurate and that he adopted it by his free act and deed on this ____ day of September, 2014.



Mario F. Coppola
Commissioner of Superior Court
Notary Public
My Commission expires

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:
ALBERT SUBBLOIE, JACQUELINE BARBARA, GLENN
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

This is to certify that on the above date a true copy of the foregoing has been sent by U.S.

Mail, first-class, postage pre-paid, to the following parties of record:

Melanie Bachman, Esq., Executive Director, Connecticut Siting Council, 10 Franklin Sq., New Britain, CT 06051 (1 original, 15 copies, plus 1 electronic)

Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless, Kenneth Baldwin, Esq.; Robinson & Cole, 280 Trumbull Street, Hartford, CT 06103

State Senator Gayle Slossberg, Legislative Office Building Room 2000, Hartford, CT 06106

State Representative Paul Davis, Legislative Office Building, Room 4045, Hartford, CT 06106

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