

DOCKET NO. 467 - Homeland Towers, LLC and Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a telecommunications facility located at Brookfield Tax Assessor Map E10, Lot 014, 100 Pocono Road, Brookfield, Connecticut. } Connecticut
} Siting
} Council

October 13, 2016

Opinion

On June 6, 2016 Homeland Towers, LLC and Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless (Cellco), (collectively the Applicant), applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) for a 150-foot monopole wireless telecommunications facility at 100 Pocono Road in Brookfield, Connecticut. Homeland Towers, LLC (HT) would be the Certificate Holder of the proposed facility.

The purpose of the proposed facility is to provide reliable wireless service to Cellco's existing service gaps in the northeastern portion of Danbury and the central area of Brookfield. Additionally, the Town would install emergency communication equipment at the facility to facilitate the Town's transition from an analog to a digital communication network.

Cellco currently operates five telecommunications facilities in the Danbury, Brookfield and Bethel area; however, Cellco, through radio frequency propagation modeling, demonstrated a need to provide wireless service to several existing service gaps in the area as well as the need to increase wireless network capacity by offloading customer data traffic from two of these adjacent sites onto the proposed site. Existing areas of deficient service occur along portions of Route 7, Route 202, Route 25 and Route 133. To alleviate these service deficiencies and to provide capacity relief to its adjacent Brookfield and Bethel North facilities, Cellco would install antennas at the 146-foot level of the tower. The Town would install emergency service and town communication antennas at the top of the tower and at the 75-foot and 65-foot levels of the tower.

HT approached the Town in 2011 in regards to locating a telecommunications facility in the Pocono Road area. The Town and HT worked together to find a suitable location on the Town's 100 Pocono Road property to host a tower.

The proposed tower site is located on a 43.2-acre parcel that hosts a municipal complex consisting of four buildings housing town offices, a senior center, the police department, and the fire department. The property also includes a public works storage and processing yard and recreational fields. The proposed facility is located in the public works storage yard in the southwest portion of the property. The site is located behind the fire station and is accessed from an existing gravel driveway that extends west from Pocono Road between the fire station and an athletic field.

HT would establish a 55-foot by 70-foot equipment compound within a 75-foot by 75-foot lease area at the site. Within the compound, Cellco would install three equipment cabinets on a 445 square foot elevated steel platform that is covered with a canopy. The Town would install a 10-foot by 12-foot equipment shelter within the compound to serve its communication equipment. The compound is sized to accommodate four other carriers. If additional space is required to accommodate future equipment within the compound, the compound area could be expanded up to the lease area boundary. The tower would be designed to support a 20-foot extension for potential future tower sharing.

Cellco would install a 10-kilowatt propane-fueled generator and an emergency power battery to provide power to its equipment in the event of a power outage. No emergency power source was specified for the Town's equipment. During the proceeding, Town expressed interest in having an emergency power supply for its equipment. In furtherance of the Council's policy of shared emergency power sources, HT, Cellco and the Town would discuss options to provide emergency power to both Cellco and the Town from a shared source. No other telecommunication providers are locating on the facility at this time, and thus, there is no demonstrated need for a single emergency power source that can provide power to three or four other users.

Development of the site would have no significant adverse environmental effect as it is located in an open area used for materials storage and would be accessed using an existing driveway extending from Pocono Road. A 12-foot wide, 310-foot long gravel drive would be constructed through the storage yard to create a defined, established access way. Utility connections would be routed underground from a utility pole on Pocono Road.

During construction HT would comply with the *2002 Connecticut Guidelines for Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control*. HT would closely examine the placement of silt fencing in the southwest corner of the development area to avoid cutting into a slope, potentially creating erosion issues.

The site is not within a Federal Emergency Management Agency designated flood zone and is not proximate to any wetlands. The site would have no effect on historic, architectural, or archaeological resources listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The site is in proximity to known records of the eastern box turtle and the wood turtle, both State-listed Species of Special Concern. Although the Applicant intended to implement a turtle protection program for both species, such a program would not be necessary given the lack of nearby suitable habitat that could be utilized by these species. The Route 7 expressway and the athletic fields on the parcel serve as effective barriers to turtle movement into the site development area. Additionally, the bog turtle and the northern long-eared bat, both federally-listed Threatened Species and State-listed Endangered Species, have been historically documented in the vicinity of the proposed site but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acknowledged that suitable habitat for these species is no longer present in the area.

Visibility of the tower would be primarily from the area immediately surrounding the site including year-round views from the open athletic fields and parking areas of the municipal complex. Several residences along the east side of Pocono Road would also have partial year-round views as these properties face the open areas of the municipal complex and intervening vegetation is minimal. Other areas with year-round views of the upper portion of the tower occur along commercially developed portions of Federal Road, Junction Road and Silvermine Road.

According to a methodology prescribed by the FCC Office of Engineering and Technology Bulletin No. 65E, Edition 97-01 (August 1997), the radio frequency power density levels of the Town's and Cellco's antennas would be 39.5 percent of the FCC's General Public/Uncontrolled Maximum Permissible Exposure, as measured at the base of the tower. This percentage is below federal standards established for the frequencies used by wireless companies. If federal 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. Regarding potential harm to wildlife from radio emissions; this, like the matter of potential hazard to human health, is a matter of federal jurisdiction. The Council's role is to ensure that the tower meets federal permissible exposure limits.

Based on the record in this proceeding, the Council finds that the effects associated with the construction, maintenance and operation of the proposed telecommunications facility, 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 to Homeland Towers, LLC for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a 150-foot monopole telecommunications facility at 100 Pocono Road, Brookfield, Connecticut.