

DOCKET NO. 102 - AN APPLICATION OF SNET : CONNECTICUT
CELLULAR, INC., FOR A CERTIFICATE OF : SITING
ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC NEED : COUNCIL
FOR CELLULAR TELEPHONE ANTENNAS AND ASSOCIATED :
EQUIPMENT IN THE TOWN OF REDDING, CONNECTICUT. : JULY 25, 1989

O P I N I O N

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On November 22, 1989, SNET Cellular Inc., (SNET) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) to construct and operate a 150-foot cellular telephone tower and associated equipment building within the Town of Redding, Connecticut.

The public need for cellular telephone facilities has been pre-empted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Council must therefore balance the need to develop the proposed site as a cellular telephone facility with the need to protect the environment and minimize damage to the State's scenic, historic, and recreational values.

Tower visibility is always a major consideration in tower siting. The existing tower at the proposed site, known as the Redding Lookout Tower, occupies a prominent elevation on a ridgeline that is visible from, and would potentially effect, several recreation areas. The proposed site is between two town parks, is within an area identified by the Town of Redding as Proposed Open Space, the Saugatuck West Greenbelt, and is near an area proposed as a scenic area by the Town. Additionally, the proposed site is within an area designated by the State Policies Plan for the Conservation and Development of Connecticut as a Conservation Area.

Use of the proposed tower would be shared with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the Northwest Connecticut Public Safety Communications Center (NCPSCC). An existing 49-foot fire observation tower now used by the DMV and the NCPSCC would be removed under the proposal to build the new tower. The Council certainly encourages such tower sharing. The shared use of an existing tower meets the Council's long-time goal and public interest to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of additional towers. However, the proposal would involve the siting of a new tower that would have a substantially greater effect on the surrounding land uses than the existing tower. The proposed tower would replace the existing tower, but the new tower would be three times the height of the existing tower. Moreover, there is no evidence in the record that coverage from the existing tower now used by the DMV and NCPSCC is inadequate for those agencies or that these agencies were planning to construct a higher tower in any case.

In addition, the Council has concerns that the proximity of the proposed tower to the adjacent property may be inappropriate. Under Redding zoning regulations, the proposed site is zoned rural residential and only broadcast towers of 100 feet or less in height are permitted under Redding zoning regulations.

The fall zone of the proposed tower and associated antennas has a radius of 167 feet. If the tower were placed in the middle of the proposed site, which has a width of 268 feet, 33 feet of the fall zone would lie within the adjacent Real Vest property. It has been the policy of the Council to limit

the fall zone of towers to properties which are either leased or owned by the applicant. To mitigate the impacts of increased visibility and location of the proposed tower's fall zone on adjacent properties, the Council considered alternative heights of and sites for the tower to provide the necessary coverage.

In its investigation of potential tower sites in the Redding area, SNET evaluated and rejected six sites before proposing a site off of Fire Tower Road in Redding. One of the purposes of this site evaluation process was to find a site which offered continuous coverage along Route 7; indeed, two of the six potential sites were rejected by SNET due to inadequate coverage provided along Route 7. During the course of the hearing, it was established that a three-mile coverage gap exists along Route 7, within the areas covered from the existing site in Danbury. However, SNET did not consider the use of a shorter tower along Route 7 to eliminate this gap. Use of a shorter tower at the proposed site, such as 130 feet, would keep the fall zone from encroaching on adjacent properties; however, it would not adequately cover the three-mile gap, and would offer only a minimal diminution in tower visibility. Consequently, the Council is not convinced that a reduction in the height of the proposed tower is a viable option, nor is it convinced that a superior alternative site is unavailable.

In conclusion, the location of the proposed tower on a prominent ridgeline within a proposed open space area, raises questions as to the suitability of this site to provide the necessary coverage from a 150-foot tower. Moreover, the

Council is concerned that the sharing of the tower is not a sufficient reason to triple the height of an existing tower which would result in substantially increased visibility and the shadowing of adjacent properties with the fall zone of the tower.

Further questions remain as to the need for the DMV and the NCPSCC antennas to be raised, and as to why SNET did not consider additional alternative sites along Route 7 to cover the gap in that area. If these questions were to be satisfactorily answered in a subsequent proceeding, the Council may find the site justified and a Certificate could be issued. However, based on the record of this proceeding and for the above reasons, the Council will now deny the proposed Redding tower site without prejudice.

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