

DOCKET NO. 104 - An application of : Connecticut
SNET Cellular, Inc., for a Certificate : Siting Council
of Environmental Compatibility and Public :
Need for cellular telephone antenna and :
associated equipment in the Town of : May 15, 1989
Killingworth, Connecticut.

O P I N I O N

SNET Cellular, Inc. (SNET) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) on December 9, 1988, for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) to construct a cellular telephone tower site in the Town of Killingworth, Connecticut. The tower site would be an addition to the existing Hartford New England County Metropolitan Area (Hartford NECMA) and would provide cellular telephone coverage in the Killingworth-Clinton area.

In its application, SNET proposed a 45-foot increase in the height of an existing 140-foot tower located behind the Killingworth Town Hall. As part of its application, SNET sought approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for this increase in tower height. The FAA subsequently notified SNET that such an increase in height would be denied, as this tower is in the direct VHF Omni Range instrument approach for airplanes traveling in the vicinity of the Madison and Chester airports.

SNET investigated possible sites of towers in areas to the north and south of the proposed Killingworth site which would be acceptable to the FAA. However, such sites would not have provided acceptable cellular coverage for the SNET system.

In finding a proposed tower site, an applicant must find a site offering the desired coverage; adequate distance from homes, wetlands, and public recreation areas; and a willingness to lease or sell by a property owner. These requirements narrow the field of potential tower sites considerably.

On February 17, 1989, SNET modified its application to use the existing 140-foot tower without any increase in height and to mount its cellular antennas at the 104-foot and 121-foot levels of this tower. This would leave some gaps in SNET's expected coverage along Route 81 and Route I-95 in Clinton, and along some portions of the Clinton shoreline. As a result, SNET might need to develop a cell site in the Clinton area.

The existing lattice tower is owned by Valley Shore Emergency Communications, Inc. (Valley Shore) and stands on property owned by the Town of Killingworth. Two Valley Shore antennas now on the tower would remain in place, while the remainder would be consolidated on the top of the tower. SNET would construct an equipment building near the base of the tower. This building would include space for equipment owned by SNET, Valley Shore, and the Town of Killingworth. The only building within the fall zone of the existing tower other than the proposed equipment building would be the Killingworth Fire Department building. About three trees would have to be removed in the construction of the proposed equipment building.

No wetlands occur on the proposed site, which is mostly within a paved area. There are no existing records of federally endangered or threatened species or Connecticut species of special concern occurring in the area of the proposed site. Consequently little disruption of flora, fauna, and hydrologic systems is expected. Electromagnetic radiofrequency power densities are a concern to residents living in the vicinity of any broadcast facility. At the base of the existing tower, the power density level would be well below the Connecticut and American National Standards Institute safety standards level for the proposed frequency.

The proposed site is zoned residential. Its use as a facility by SNET is supported by the Town of Killingworth as a valuable upgrading of its emergency telecommunications capabilities.

The Siting Council strongly encourages the use of existing towers whenever possible. Such tower sharing precludes the unnecessary proliferation of towers, has minimal visual impact, and a minimal effect on the environment. Attaching antennas to this unlighted tower would not measurably add to its visibility. There is no evidence that the existing tower posed significant visual impacts on the environment.

Based on its record in this proceeding, the Council finds that the effects associated with the construction of the equipment building and the attaching of cellular antennas to the existing tower to establish a cell site at this site, 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 significant either alone or cumulative with other effects, are not in conflict with the policies of the State concerning such effects, and are not sufficient to deny the application. Therefore, the Council will issue a Certificate for the construction of the proposed Killingworth cellular site.

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