

Team C: Permitting Process Meeting Minutes

2.27.14

Attendees: Bill Fritz, Mike Culp, Valerie Long, Sarah Baldwin, David Plunkett, and Emily Leik
Dan Meenan and Jesse (both from nTelos Wireless) via telephone.

- Submittal costs are higher in Albemarle County than in other areas. This is because nTelos feels like they need legal support on tier II and tier III projects.
- \$3,000 per survey. This doesn't include making changes to the site after the application is submitted. The potential changes are due to road relocation, etc.
- Surveying trees also adds to the cost.
- If Albemarle County reduced the distance that they have to survey that could cut down on the cost. Have to survey trees for the towers and for those trees in the proposed access roads.
- From a construction drawing standpoint, our process is not more rigid (and therefore costly) than other places.
- Bill plans to get a proposed new ordinance to attorney's office in the next couple of weeks. The purpose of the attorney is to make sure that the structure is correct and ensuring that the proposed changes fit within the Code of Virginia. The attorney's office will not necessarily weigh in on the content of the policy itself.
 - Proposed ordinance removes ridges as avoided areas.
 - Also abandons the concept of a "raise" as an avoidance area.
 - Proposal does not remove AF districts or scenic byways, for a variety of reasons.
 - Focuses more on the design, appearance, and mounting of antennas rather than limiting the number of antennas.
 - Also removes 500 ft. from a dwelling as a limit.
 - Playing around with removing the ARB as a reviewer for wireless. Don't know how this will be received at this point.
 - Once proposed ordinance goes to the attorney's office, it will be released for public comment.
- Formal policy on legacy towers to come. Currently, we are permitting these as a matter of practice.
- In terms of permitted sites, we don't have any pre-approved sites because we don't have any prohibited sites.
- One thing we may do with the Board is implement a by-right height permission. This would identify specific zoning districts and automatically approved cell towers of a specified height. Which districts and heights would be permitted are undecided at this point.
- There is some discussion in the community about implementing restrictions on some zoning districts or acreage sizes. Staff does not support this at this time, but that comment is out there.
- Zoning text amendment (steep slopes overlay district) to go before BOS next Wed, would impact slopes in the development areas only. If approved, potential changes to slopes in the rural area may be on their way.
- Discussion of having Albemarle County develop a resource to direct wireless folks to the correct application process. Decision tree/website page.

- Liz Palmer would like for this group to develop a list of sites that could at least be fast-tracked for approval.
 - Bill: The County has committed to amending some of our policies and ordinances (discussed above). In some ways, this helps “fast-track.” This issue came up in the past and was almost immediately abandoned. So instead of doing pre-approved sites, we opened the entire County as a permissible site. Though we have avoidance areas, we don’t have any prohibited sites.
 - Valerie: Another challenge about pre-approved sites: rent becomes extremely high for the company. Also, can be challenging if the company finds the pre-approved site to not work (because they’d then have to justify why the pre-approved site doesn’t work and why a non pre-approved site does work). However, it would be helpful if the County did identify areas that are preferred, just as long as it doesn’t preclude other sites.
- Bill and Mike to meet with Tom to talk about how the County will implement First Net. First Net is a first responder data network. It will be a broadband network for first responders, every state has a coordinator to implement. This system is a requirement for states. The next challenge is to determine whether the broadband access can be sold to private users when it’s not being used by public agencies. New Mexico is the first state to roll this out.