

Tropic Town Public Meeting

Minutes of the Tropic Town Public Meeting
Held Tuesday, February 21 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in the Tropic Town Heritage Center

PRESENT: Mayor WaLon Brinkerhoff **BOARD MEMBERS:** Jason Bybee, Travis LeFevre, Dennis Pollock and Brook Wiseman. Marie Niemann – Tropic Town Clerk

OTHERS: Ron Harris, Kerry & JoNeil Alvey, Annette Chynoweth, Joe Thompson, Jerry & Carol Pollock, Marie Barton, Bob Sudweeks, Danny Chynoweth, Casey & Natasha Chynoweth, Mike Ahlstrom, Jared White, Sydney Lamas, Jennifer & Savanna Meikle, Lauren Senary, Lowell & Kathy Mecham, Mark Whitfield and Brad & Yolanda Cowan

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor WaLon Brinkerhoff

PRAYER: Kerry Alvey

PLEDGE:

Mayor Brinkerhoff welcomed all those in attendance and introduced Jared White - Verizon Wireless representative.

Mr. White explained the exiting cell tower located at the fire station is not a Verizon Wireless tower, Verizon roams through the company ComNet. Come mid-September ComNet will be disabling their service, leaving the area with no cell coverage. These sites become high priority for Verizon, because of the number of people that currently use their services; Verizon would like to install a new 80ft – 100ft tower, replacing the 40ft existing one.

Public Input/Comments

Mayor opened up the meeting for questions and comments, which expressed opposition as to its height, location and effect on neighboring property values; while other accepted the plan rather than loose cell service and/or the lack thereof for tourism and businesses.

1. Height: Jared explain the 40 foot tower has provided coverage, but not great coverage; the term “clutter” was used to describe what the signal has to move through before it reaches ones phone – every tree, branch, leave, etc. deteriorates the signal; building a higher tower allows for less “clutter” to penetrate through having better coverage and reception. As other cell networks grow, such as AT&T, T-Mobile, Sprint, etc. possibilities are they will want coverage in the area as well. The 80ft - 100ft tower would provide structure space for the additional cell networks; all networks using one tower, rather than each building a separate tower. Mr. White made note that Federal Law prohibits the allowance of one carrier to build and not the other. Verizon’s priority is not to just duplicate, but improve the current service; and fit it into the overall network – growth plan.
2. Location: Mr. White explained that he personally was assigned by the engineers to find the best location; and over the past 5 months has been addressing environmental issues, utility accessibility, and a host of other Federal and State requirements and red tape for the project. This site has the cable, power and other utilities that are needed; looking for an alternative location within Town would hinder the project 6 to 9 month; because of Federal, State and Environmental issues and study requirements. In identifying “remote” location, Jared explained that older towers used an analog signal – this technology no longer works. The same requirements are involved, delaying it further; trenching, construction, stalling power & fiber optic cable, etc. could take 2-3 years.

Notification from ComNet didn't give Verizon 2-3 years. The plan is to have everything up and going before the September, so that no service or coverage will be lost.

Why town property, why not private: Jared explained that everyone wants cell coverage, everyone has the visual impact, finding the best location for everyone is their goal; and everyone receives the revenue from the rent, not just the private property owner. . There will always be disagreement wherever you place it; "not in my backyard" opposition. JoNeil commented that towns can have ordinance that require or limit the locations and restrict height cell tower structures, etc. Federal law states that municipalities cannot prohibit or factually prohibit the building of a cell tower; they are considered utilities; it would have to be proven why it cannot be placed on a location.

Addressing better service in the surrounding communities (Cannonville), Jared stated they do not guarantee service, but it will be better than what it is. It was asked if verification was received from ComNet as to disconnecting and couldn't they leave this site up, Jared reported they were told because Verizon uses them. ComNet cannot just leave one site up, cell towers work off each other; they would not connect even if cell towers placed in Henrieville, Escalante, and other areas were along the network; this is best location to fit into the network and to provide service.

Private properties were looked into; Bryce Pioneer Village near T-Hill, were a couple; T-Hill had no utilities, not accessible to get heavy equipment/cranes on site, environmental impact, Pristine Zone, etc. At the park location, the bulk of the tower would be covered by the "clutter" that they are trying to avoid. No such thing as a perfect spot.

Talk of placing equipment on the cell tower located on the rim near Bryce Canyon National Park; Jared reported they have looked into this, but believes the tower is full. Verizon is currently designing and installing a tower within the park – for better coverage in the national park; about 18 months out.

3. Property Value: Researching the internet and speaking with realtors JoNeil Alvey provided information taken from the internet regarding the decrease in property value; showing a result of a survey in 2014 that 94% of respondents would be less likely to purchase property located near a cell tower. Comments made questioned the source, the internet is not a reliable resource; one could find information contrary, this is just opinions not evidence. Verizon has been in litigation, with realtors making their cases from both sides of the issue. Jared stated that there is already a tower in place; the height will depend on what the town foresees in future growth; does the community want additional towers or one tower?

Additional comments focused on availability of property in Tropic and the sale of property – the availability of property it's not like other larger communities with subdivisions or other residential areas to choose from, if someone is wanting to move in they will buy the property - there is not a lot of options; the price one sells their property for is at the owner's discretion; no one is forcing one to sell for less than what they are asking. Anytime one is looking at property, there is more going to factor in to the sale than just a cell tower.

Construction of the tower was discussed; use of "adding" on with growth. Yes, that is a possibility, but the cylinder, structure, additions, etc. are much larger. Doesn't change the fact you would end up with a 100ft tower in the future, just bigger than the original one piece 100ft tower. Ideas on disguising the top – would be more of an eyesore than letting it blend in. Tourist will not remember the tower; they will remember not having cell coverage.

Discussed revenue and where or what would it be used for; once the tower is complete, the town will have ownership and Verizon will pay rent to use; which, as additional providers want access, would pay to rent space. Currently nothing has been discussed or decided as to the space rental.

Conclusion

It was a consensus that cell service is wanted and needed; with few continuing to have issues with its location. Mayor Brinkerhoff and Council asked that notification be posted providing information to receive additional comments and concerns to be reviewed and discussed in Town Board Meeting March 9th.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Dennis Pollock to adjourn – Second by Brook Wiseman. Motion carried.

Approved this 9th day of March 2017
Marie H Niemann – Tropic Town Clerk