

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Regular Rescheduled Meeting, April 27, 2017

Call to Order, Chairman West

The Transylvania County Planning Board met in regular session on Thursday, April 27, 2017 at 7:00pm in the Community Services Building Conference Room. Members present were Chair Mike West, Kimsey Jackson, Mack McNeely, Sandy Watson, and Steve Woodsmall. Lauren Wise and Daryle Hogsed were absent (excused). A quorum was met. Staff members present were Transylvania County Planning and Community Development Planner Joy Fields and Program Assistant Kalen Lawson. Planning and Community Development Director Mark Burrows was traveling for business. Also present were representatives of TowerCom and seven (7) citizens. No media were present.

I. Welcome

II. Public Comment

- Eric Tinsley and family will have the tower adjacent to family property. Main concern is skyline and pretty view.
- Larry White lives in Sequoyah Woods Subdivision where there is no cell service. He sees cell towers and cell service as a safety issue and wants to see cell service all along 276 to the South Carolina state line.

III. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Steve Woodsmall to amend the Agenda to move the Telecommunications Tower Public Hearing before the Review of the Sign Ordinance. The motion was seconded by Kimsey Jackson and Sandy Watson, and was carried unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Sandy Watson to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2017 regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Steve Woodsmall and carried unanimously. Mike West noted that an updated Planning Board Roster was disseminated.

V. Subdivision Approvals and Updates

Joy Fields notified the Planning Board that there were twelve (12) exception plats, one (1) plat review, one (1) subdivision of two (2) lots, and one (1) subdivision of three (3) lots approved since March 17, 2017.

VI. New Business: Telecommunications Tower Application Review

- Joy Fields noted the Telecommunications Tower Ordinance is a 'permissive' ordinance, meaning that if the tower company meets all the requirements, it must be approved. She then presented the telecommunications tower application for McCrary Road by TowerCom.
- TowerCom representative Micah Retzlaff presented their application stating that Verizon asked TowerCom to find a location in Transylvania County to connect with surrounding towers and provide more service. TeleCom looks for property owner interest and the ability of the provider to meet the requirements of the county ordinance. This tower is 135' tall (with a 2' antenna). He noted that most towers are closer to 180'. They made this tower as short as possible to still meet provider needs. The structure will be available to providers other than Verizon. A photo simulation was shown. TeleCom noted they did not select a ridge in order to minimize impact. It was noted that Transylvania County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan supports increasing cell coverage in county.
- Citizen questions:
 - Where will the tower be located on the property? In a 50' x 50' space behind shed on leased land of Mr. Norton.
 - Neighbor noted it was in his and his mother's direct view. Stated that if TeleCom met requirement, it didn't matter what the neighbors or public say.
 - TeleCom shared the tower was unlit and surrounded by a 6' fence topped with barbed wire and tied into the Sheriff's Department for security.
 - Citizen asked if TeleCom would consider mono-pine or camouflage. TeleCom stated that they've found mono-pines draw your eye rather than concealing. Citizen stated he finds they blend in well. Telecom stated that once up, people don't really notice the poles as they blend in the landscape.
 - Will this help service up to the 276 subdivisions like Sequoyah Woods and Conneestee Falls? No, not right now, but this could be the beginning of a string continuing coverage.
 - Is there a chance this tower could grow taller in future? Telecom would have to come back to county and planning board and would need permission to increase fall zone onto adjoining property. TeleCom noted that cell towers don't fall end-over-end. They flex.
 - What is design criteria? There will be 4 sets of antennas and a safety factor of 50%. Wind speed design minimum meets code (around 80mph gusts) and they follow international design criteria.
 - What would ideal height have been? Depends on location. Telecom originally proposed at 140'. TeleCom clarified that the photo-simulations are of 135' tower pictures.
 - What about the helicopter pad at the nearby church and safety? The FAA does not require this tower to be lit. Pilots are notified of structures – there are safety factors built-in.
 - Have historic properties and sites been taken into consideration? The State Historical Preservation Office gave approval for this tower.
 - What about tourists that heavily use that area and their view? Can it be made to look like a tree? Telecom states that they don't believe a mono-pine there will look better and the fake branches create more surface area for ice and wind shear.
 - Joy Fields noted it is a requirement of the Telecommunications Ordinance that towers are built for co-location.

- Citizen gave positive points of mono-pines. TeleCom stated that this tower will blend in the landscape over time. The ordinance does not require a mono-pine and there is an engineering cost factor.
- Are there other infrastructure improvements that will be made in order to service the tower (like fiber)? No, not needed by TowerCom. Verizon may or may not need improvements.
- What is the length of the lease? The lease is long-term and proprietary.
- Do the terms of the lease allow for uses other than telecommunications? No.
- Is there a back-up generator? Yes, managed and owned by Verizon.
- Planning Board member, Sandy Watson asked if the tower is necessary to string service toward Cedar Mountain. Yes – this tower is part of a network. This tower is primarily addressing capacity.
- Planning Board Chair Mike West asked if this tower will address coverage gaps in the area. This tower will mostly address capacity and will add some coverage.
- West asked about the noise level of the generator. TeleCom is not a representative of Verizon who will have to get a permit from the County and meet code. A backup generator on a cell tower is mandated by law. Typically, they use batteries first, then the generator kicks on after eight hours or so. The generators are properly muffled. Verizon wants to protect investment.
- Planning Board member Mack McNeely asked Joy Fields if the tower would affect the neighbors’ abilities to build on their properties. It will not affect the neighbors’ ability to build – the tower and its fall zone are completely contained on the parcel.
- Joy Fields recommended conditional approval of the McCrary Telecommunications Tower Application. Receipt of an Environmental Protection Document will meet all application conditions. Steve Woodsmall made a motion for the conditional approval.
- Mike West asked for further public comments. A neighbor asked if it could be rendered in the photo-simulation as a mono-pine. Mike West stated the Planning Board could not require that. The neighbor expressed concern about their property value. TeleCom stated that making this tower into a mono-pine would limit the number of antennas and capacity. Citizens shared further comments on benefits of mono-pine construction.
- Mack McNeely seconded the motion for conditional approval made by Steve Woodsmall. Mike West asked if there was further discussion. Sandy Watson asked for clarification of the motion. Kimsey Jackson said he was sympathetic, but also sees need for improved cell service in county and Mike West agreed.
- Mike West called for a vote which resulted in five (5) ‘aye’ votes and none opposed. The conditional approval of the McCrary tower was passed.

VII. Old Business:

A. Updating of Sign Ordinance

- Joy Fields noted further modifications of the Sign Ordinance had been made in order to make the Ordinance more clear and understandable. It was noted that the Building and Permitting Department gave input and will provide further input at a later time to address Action Step E on page 8 of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan.
- Joy Fields reviewed purpose so the intent could be followed and be consistent throughout.

- Joy Fields asked Planning Board for suggestions of other entities and jurisdictions that should review the Ordinance after being modified. Suggestions included the City of Brevard, the Town of Rosman, the Chamber of Commerce, TDA, and sign companies.
- Joy Fields discussed how the updated Ordinance can be disseminated and suggested an education campaign. Joy Fields also explained the approval process for ordinances, including public hearings. Mike West suggested additional public hearings or announcements and suggested including the Sign Ordinance update in public meeting announcements, advertising or an article with *the Transylvania Times*. Planning Board agreed they want public input opportunities before it gets to the County Commissioners' Public Hearing.
- The modifications to the Sign Ordinance were discussed.

B. Planning & Community Development Department Director's Report

- A contract with the City of Asheville is underway for HOME Funds to rehabilitate three (3) low-income homes.
- NCDOT and the County are determining the path forward for the awarded Comprehensive Bicycle Planning Grant.
- Staff is looking at ways to best support the Community Centers in the County.
- United Way's TRAIN held a Grant Writing Seminar attended by Kalen Lawson and Joy Fields, as well as four of the Community Centers.
- Quasi-judicial Training by School of Government – Sandy Watson and Kimsey Jackson would like to go on May 23, 2017. Joy Fields will re-issue details.

C. Other

- NCDOT Tour of construction will be May 1st. Kimsey Jackson and Sandy Watson requested to attend.

VIII. Public and Board Member Comments

- None

IX. Adjourn

There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Kimsey Jackson to adjourn, seconded by Mack McNeely and carried unanimously.

MINUTES APPROVED



Mike West, Chair



Kalen Lawson, Recording Secretary