

Thomas Drzazgowski

From: dchesner . [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, May 8, 2015 6:51 PM
To: Thomas Drzazgowski
Subject: cell tower

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Mr. Drzazgowski-

I am writing in support of the position of my Neighborhood Association, GPANA, which is in opposition to Verizon's choice of a cell tower design in the westside Tucson Mountain foothills area.

Verizon is submitting a brown water tower design. Almost all residents of this area have voiced their desire for the palm tree design.

Please support the residents choice. We will have to live with a hideous phony water tower if it is approved by the County, which is out of character and will cheapen an area in which the County has given solid support to the creation of parks (Feliz Paseos) and ecologically sound long term planning (Painted Hills).

Thank you for your consideration.

Donna Chesner

Thomas Drzazgowski

From: Diana Videtti [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, May 10, 2015 10:02 AM
To: Thomas Drzazgowski
Subject: Proposed cell tower at Northwest Fire Station on De Oeste

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Hello,

I am unable to attend the 5/13 meeting on this matter, however, I would like to voice my concern about the proposed water tower that's being considered to mount it. An alternative of a palm tree was also proposed and I find this much more acceptable. While neither looks natural, the "tree" won't be as obtrusive.

I sincerely hope you will include my concern in the evaluation process.

Respectfully,

Diana Videtti
1941 No Calle del Suerte
Tucson, AZ 85745

Thomas Drzazgowski

From: fran stach [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2015 7:46 PM
To: Thomas Drzazgowski
Subject: TUC Fire House Water Tower

Mr. Drzazgowski,

We own the property (3261 N. Cmo. de Oeste) west and slightly north of the Northwest Fire House and proposed cell tower structure.

We think the design should blend in with existing buildings and vegetation, which a huge water tower does **not**.

Our view to the east would be dominated by this monstrous design. There must be a less obtrusive cell tower design to be considered. We ask you to consider how this ugly design of huge proportions would negatively affect our and our neighbors' scenic views to the east of our house.

Sincerely,
Fran and Peter Stach
[REDACTED]

To: Tom Drzazgowski
Deputy Chief Zoning Inspector, Pima County Development Services
April 30, 2015

Memorandum in opposition to the proposed Verizon cell tower's old water tower design for North West Fire Station #35 at 3220 N. Camino de Oeste.

Dear Tom:

Please note, we are not objecting to the necessity of another cell tower on the far west side of Tucson. The North West Fire District needs additional cell coverage and we support that. Rather, we are extremely concerned about the visual impact of the proposed fake water tower design on that site and how that particular design came to be the one selected.

We are requesting, instead, that existing Pima County Land Use Plans be strictly adhered to and guide the approval of an alternative, more appropriate final design that, first and foremost, meets the basic aesthetic criteria set forth in Pima County zoning codes and regulations.

Affected Area

The proposed 50-foot cell tower works on a "line-of-sight" basis. It is intended to provide cell coverage to a 2-mile-wide gap in current service-quality. The tower, therefore, must be visible for a mile in all directions, and as a consequence will dominate the view of hundreds of County residents, not just the few adjacent neighbors.

Camino de Oeste, the road from which the tower will most readily be seen, is a Pima County designated Major Scenic Route. As such, we believe **additional scrutiny and oversight should be given to the installation of new structures that could severely impact the area's regional beauty and scenic vistas** along that corridor and specifically *from* the Scenic roadway.

Proposed Cell Tower Setting

For miles in all directions residential streets and roads extend through strictly residential suburban ranch zoning. Most of the closest homes are custom constructions, some architect-designed. As far as the eye can see from the Fire Station, there are houses on 3-plus-acre lots with landscaping of native and other desert vegetation, and there are no ranches in sight. The entire region is completely suburbanized.

Standing at the Fire Station, not only are there no ranches, but **there are no water towers to be seen. There are, in fact, a great many palm trees and saguaros** and a few flagpoles visible as some of the tallest objects in sight the entire length of the eastern flank of the Tucson Mountains. However, **the tallest object within 500 feet is a big, beautiful, pine tree** to the west.

Community Input

Verizon and their consultants held the first community meeting after notifying residents within 300 feet of the proposed tower site. Not only did that fail to meet what we understood as the 1000-foot minimum distance required in SR zoning, but was woefully inadequate for notifying **those who would be most impacted, the property owners living within the one-mile visible radius.**

Before the first community meeting was even held, Verizon's consultants contacted the adjacent property owners and made arrangements to buy or lease portions of their properties for an easement for the tower. The consultants showed them two tower designs to choose from. Those two or three residents preferred the design in the shape of an old-time western wooden-barreled water tower on four support poles. At the end of the first community meeting, that sole design was unveiled as Verizon's only proposal.

Subsequently, the Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association Board met and voted to urge a different design that was not such an eyesore, not such a completely aberrant image in today's Westside residential community—something along the lines of a palm tree of which there are hundreds of nearby examples, or a clock tower or bell tower which are also common Verizon cell tower designs elsewhere. We emailed Verizon's consultants and NWF District requesting the presentation of additional designs.¹

Verizon and their consultants continued to defer to the wishes of the property owners whose land they wish to use for access. At the second community meeting in January, the vote against the water tower design by the GPANA Board was announced and evidently not duly noted, according to the misinformation in the Conditional Use Permit application.

After that second meeting, GPANA and Tucson Mountains Association undertook straw polls of their member households. Each was emailed a request to vote on their preferred design from two photo-mockups as near to scale as possible.² The GPANA polls closed April 30 and the results were 2 to 1 in favor of the palm tree (50 to 25). **When all votes are combined, the palm tree design is preferred by the majority (64 to 48).**

Verizon and their representatives have been warned by this Hearing Board as recently as this past March about seeking, listening to, and incorporating community input into the siting and design process of their cell tower installations. While they have conducted community meetings in this case, it appears they feel they can ignore what they don't want to hear, and they have consistently ignored the members of GPANA. Let's just say that they're new to the public input process, not that they're deliberately trying to mislead anyone. The fact is, the larger community opposes the water tower.

But it's not about palm tree vs water tower; this public process is about creating consensus that all parties can agree on **by finding a compromise solution that meets the intent of established building codes.** Certainly, the adjacent landowners' input should be heard, but surely their preferences should not wholly dictate the appearance of the structure or be allowed to change the visual character of the entire neighborhood.

Proposed Cell Tower Design

Verizon's consultants told the first meeting attendees that a stealth design was being proposed for the tower, so it wouldn't be so noticeable or objectionable. The consultants made it seem as though this was a good faith concession on the part of the corporation and everyone appreciated and applauded them for it.

In truth, per County Land Use Regulations, a new communication tower "in rural and residential zones, in gateway overlays, and within 200 feet of a designated scenic route" is required to **"be of a stealth design so as to minimize or mitigate the adverse visual impact through proper design and aesthetics and to ensure compatibility with the built**

environment in which it is located.”³ The use of the word “compatibility” is to assure that cell towers blend in with their immediate environment and do not stick out like sore thumbs. The phrase “the built environment in which it is located” points to the current, existing surroundings and not some fantasized or romanticized historic landscape of a hundred years ago.

But the term “**stealth design**” actually says it all, referring to camouflage, hidden from view, and unnoticeable, and we believe the **the Code specifically applies that concept to the overall structure** itself. It does not, as the proposal states, concern itself with whether or not the cells themselves are completely concealed. We hope Verizon is simply misguided and not deliberately attempting to mislead anyone in their Application for a Conditional Use permit about what a stealth design really means.

Now, to be fair, the design being proposed is in fact a stealth design in some other locations. It is currently in use in several rural, agrarian areas of the County where water towers are typical, indeed essential, features of the landscape. One was also installed at Old Tucson Studios where it fits in perfectly. However, County Code further stipulates that “**...a communication tower that is considered to be stealth in one location may not [necessarily] be considered stealth in a different location.**”³ We feel that the proposed design is neither compatible nor harmonious with the proposed site, and is not a stealth design on Camino de Oeste.

Furthermore, the Pima County Scenic Routes Plan of the Department of Transportation has designated Camino de Oeste as a Major Scenic Route from its southern end at Tucson Mountain Park north to Sweetwater Drive on which North West Fire Station #35 and the proposed cell tower site are located. The intent of Scenic Routes designation is “**...to protect property values and the character of neighborhoods; protect and enhance unique characteristics of a community, including vegetation, architecture and geology; protect and enhance the economic value of tourism; and to protect natural resources.**”⁴ Pima County’s Roadway Design Manual makes it more specific. “Viewsheds should be taken into consideration in projects within the right-of-way on Scenic Routes...” and “...must consider the projects’s impact **from** the Scenic Roadway and take into account the setting and viewscape.”⁵ (bold emphasis ours) The most stunning aspects of the proposed site are the views of the Tucson, Tortolita, and Catalina Mountains and we feel the utmost care should be taken to preserve those views.

A County Major Scenic Route serves a much wider public interest than a few adjacent neighbors. We maintain that new communications structures on a Scenic Route must be held to the highest standards, and at the very least to the standards required of the County Department of Transportation. **Design, form, color, and materials should match as closely as possible those that dominate the area now**, so as not to detract from the scenic value of the roadway. Mitigation should be incorporated that diminishes the silhouette and magnitude of the design, **as well as minimizes the visual contrast between the structure and the existing setting.**

In their wisdom, the County Board of Supervisors did not adopt a set of building codes that calls for companies like Verizon to take it upon themselves to change the character of our neighborhoods.

Conclusion

In our opinion and the opinion of the majority of the people who cared enough to vote, an enormous old-time western wooden water barrel on four support poles does not come close to meeting these basic requirements of a new communications tower on a Major Scenic Route in Pima County.

We sympathize with the adjacent neighbors, yet nowhere does the Zoning Code or the Scenic Routes Plan state that the nearest neighbors can specify any design they like.

The old-time western wooden-barreled water tower would be unique, prominent, and monstrous in its dimensions of 50-foot height, 22-foot width, and 15-foot barrel height, a nostalgic backwards look to an age long gone, creating an overly-conspicuous, inappropriate form in the landscape that will dominate a 2-mile area, and therefore an eyesore. We strongly believe the **cell tower as currently proposed should not be permitted to be constructed.**

Most of the residents in the wider neighborhood don't want the water tower; the adjacent neighbors don't want the palm tree. **But we are not so inflexible and are proposing a compromise: Another solution needs to be found.**

We suggest that to be "compatible with the built environment," per County code, the **proposed tower should mirror the design characteristics of the building closest to the site** which is the Fire Station itself, a handsome Mediterranean-style stucco home with a terra-cotta tile roof, and match its architectural design and materials, **or to blend in with existing vegetation, it could replicate the big, beautiful Aleppo pine** growing 500 feet to the west of the site.

In short, **we want Verizon to go back to the drawing board and come up with some new designs** for this specific site that blend, mirror, or match with the existing residential visual environment.

And then we'd like another set of meetings to review those options, with a notification sent to every residence within a one-mile radius and everyone who attended prior meetings. Only then can we come to a true consensus on a design that meets the basic County aesthetic requirements for a new cell tower in that location on a Major Scenic Route in our neighborhood.

Most sincerely,

Barbara Fleming, President, Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association

State Senator Olivia Cajero Bedford, Arizona Legislature

¹ Memo attached

² Photosimulations attached

³ Pima County Land Use Regulations 18.07.030 H.2.d.

⁴ Pima County Scenic Routes Plan 18.77.040 E. 2.a

⁵ Pima County Roadway Design Manual, Chapter 4, page 31