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Agenda Date: 11/20/2013

Agenda Placement: 9B

Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

TO: Napa County Planning Commission
FROM: Charlene Gallina for PETER PARKINSON - Interim Director
Planning, Building and Environmental Services
REPORT BY: Terri L Abraham, PLANNER I - 299-1331
SUBJECT: Big Ranch Road AT&T Site Use Permit (P12-00419)

RECOMMENDATION

AT&T WIRELESS/BIG RANCH ROAD SITE—USE PERMIT (#P12-00419-UP)

CEQA Status: Consideration and possible adoption of a Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15303 (d) of the California Quality Act, Class 3, which exempts the construction of new small structures or conversion of small structures. This project is not on any lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5.

REQUEST: Approval to: 1) construct an 85 foot tall monopole disguised as a pine type tree; 2) install twelve (12) panel antennas: 73.4" in length, 11.9" in width and 7.1" in depth, one (1) GPS antenna on shelter, as well as, fifteen (15) small RRUs (remote radio units) behind the antennas; 3) place the monopole and associated ground-mounted equipment on a 45' by 20' lease area on the southeast corner of the property; and 4) construct a 6 foot tall wooden fence to screen the equipment building to house AT&T's equipment; 5) install a 24-hour emergency diesel-powered back-up generator within the fenced lease area; 6) trench for installation of underground power and telecommunication lines; and 7) install emergency notification signs on the site. The facility would be located on the far southeast portion of an approximately 6-acre site on the east side of Big Ranch Road, north of Trancas Road, within the Agricultural Preserve (AP) zoning district at 2046 Big Ranch Road, Napa CA, 94558. (APN 038-190-008)

Staff Recommendation: Find the project Categorically Exempt and approve the Use Permit subject to recommended conditions.

Staff Contacts: Terri Abraham, (707) 299-1333, terri.abraham@countyofnapa.org; or Jerry Haag, staff planning consultant, (510) 644-2106, jphaag@pacbell.net

Applicant Contact: Christy Beltran Roberts, (415) 806-2323

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**Proposed Actions:**

That the Planning Commission:

1. Find the project Categorically Exempt based on Finding 1 of Exhibit A; and
2. Approve Use Permit #P12-00419 based on Findings 2-5 of Exhibit A, subject to recommended conditions provided in Exhibit B.

Discussion:

The applicant is proposing to construct improvements to AT&T's wireless communication network in the southern portion of Napa County. If approved and constructed, the facility would provide enhanced coverage for AT&T customers in the northern portion of the City of Napa and residents and visitors to properties within the unincorporated County area. The site is being used for a vineyard and small farmstead activities. The proposed AT & T facility would be located on the southeastern portion of the site and would include installation of an 85-foot tall cell tower disguised as a pine tree. Ground mounted equipment, including an emergency power back-up generator, would be located east of the tower within an approximately 880 square foot leased area from the property owner. An existing 15-foot wide unpaved on-site access drive intersecting with Big Ranch Road would be used for construction and maintenance access. Underground electrical power and telephone connections would be made between overhead poles on Big Ranch Road and proposed the tower, as encouraged by the Code. As discussed further below, the proposed tower would be designed to be co-locatable, which means that future carriers could also use the tower, if approved. Staff finds the proposal consistent with the intent of the General Plan and Napa County Code to make all telecommunication facilities "effectively unnoticeable" from adjacent roads and to blend in with the natural environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Categorically Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303, Class 3-New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures. Under Section 15300.2 of the California Environmental Quality Act, a Class 3 (Section 15303) cannot be used if environmental sensitivities exist at the site or if there will be cumulative impacts. The proposed project is aimed to improve and enhanced AT&T's wireless communication coverage in the general area since there are no other facilities available. There are no environmental sensitivities, scenic resources, hazardous waste sites, nor historic resources identified on the site, as well as, cumulative impact associated with the location of this telecommunication tower. Therefore, this exemption is appropriate and this proposal meets the Categorical Exemption as discussed above.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Owner: Haberger Trust (Mark & Teresa Haberger)

Applicant: AT&T

Applicant Representative: Christy Beltran Roberts, The CBR Group, (415) 806-2323

General Plan Land Use Designation: Agricultural Resource (AR)

Zoning: Agricultural Preserve (AP)

Date Filed: December 5, 2012

Date Deemed Complete: September 12, 2013

Number of Employees: None but periodic visits by maintenance staff

Site Access: From Big Ranch Road, west of the site

Emergency Power Supply: On-site diesel-powered emergency generator (24 hour. + power supply)

Adjacent Zoning/Land Use:

North

AP - vacant (10-acre parcel)

South

AP - winery (currently closed) (11.65-acre parcel)

East

AP - agricultural building (10-acre parcel)

West

Commercial Limited (City of Napa jurisdiction)-commercial uses

Discussion Points:

Visual Impacts from Nearby Roads: The Napa County Code requires telecommunication facilities to be sited so as to blend in with the surrounding environment to be "effectively unnoticeable." Photo Simulations supplied by the applicant (see Attachment D) demonstrate the proposed faux pine tree tower would be effectively unnoticeable from both Trancas Street and Big Ranch Road due to the distance between these rights-of-way to the proposed tower. The tree tower has also been designed to blend in with existing trees on the same property and adjacent properties as seen from these roads. Tree branches would extend to nearly the ground level to assist with making the tree appear as a real tree. A condition of approval would require the applicant to develop and implement a long-term maintenance program to ensure that the tree always remains in good repair. Therefore, the County's aesthetic standard can be met.

Visual Impacts from Trancas Crossing Park: AT&T previously submitted a similar application on the property just east of the current site. The previous site was closer to Napa's Trancas Crossing Park located east of the site within and adjacent to the Napa River. Partially as a result of City of Napa concerns regarding proposed placement of the antenna, AT & T representatives abandoned the former site and entered into a lease with the property owner to the west (the Habberger Trust property), which is the location of the current application.

Photo Simulations have been submitted (Attachment D) indicating that the proposed tree pole would be minimally visible from the Trancas Crossing Park. The City of Napa has submitted a comment letter (Attachment C) regarding this application. Most of the suggested conditions of approval identified by the City representative have been incorporated into the suggested conditions for this project (Attachment B).

Potential Alternative Sites: The applicant submitted information to the County regarding other potential locations and configurations as alternatives to the current request. Six alternatives have been identified by the applicant, summarized below. (Attachment E)

- a) Queen of the Valley Hospital to the west of this site was found unsuitable due to the presence of another AT&T wireless facility, so that minimal improvement in cell coverage would occur.
- b) Bel Air Shopping Center to the south of this site was found unsuitable, since it is located adjacent to a residential neighborhood. Existing tall trees within and adjacent to the Center would block wireless signals, and there is no suitable place for ground equipment.
- c) Bank of America Office Park to the southwest of this site was found unsuitable, since it is also fully developed with no space for ground equipment, and it is located adjacent to a residential neighborhood.
- d) Rabo Bank Complex to the west of this site was found not suitable, since the proposed building-mounted antennas on the back side would not have provided sufficient coverage, and the site is located adjacent to residences.
- d) Elks Lodge to the south of the site was not suitable because it is located adjacent to Napa Scenic Riverwalk and near residences.
- e) Former Barrel Stop Winery to the south of this property is in receivership and no lease is obtainable. This site is also located immediately west of a Napa City Park and City officials have expressed concerns about the close proximity of a proposed cell tower near the park.

The applicant also indicated that a lower height for the tree pole was considered, but a lower height would not provide the desired coverage as the proposed height.

Consistency with Standards

General Plan Compliance - The proposed AT&T facility will be consistent with Economic Development Policy E-16 which supports expansion of telecommunication services. Furthermore, this project is consistent with Goal CC-1 of the Community Character Element of the General Plan, which mandates that the County should “preserve, improve and provide visual access to the beauty of Napa County,” since the project will be camouflage as a tree to blend in with the natural environment of the surrounding area. The proposed facility would also be consistent with Policy CC-14 of the Community Character Element, since it is designed to be effectively unnoticeable from nearby roadways as demonstrated by the photo simulations.

AP Zoning District Compliance - The proposed project is consistent with the AP zoning district regulations (Section 18.16.030 (I)) which conditionally permits major telecommunication facilities that do not meet one or more of the performance standards established in Section 18.119.200. In this instance, the proposed height increase of the proposed tower at 85 feet would exceed the maximum height of a telecommunication facility that could be administratively approved, which is 50 feet. All other provisions of the AP district are met, including setbacks.

Telecommunication Standards Compliance - Telecommunication facilities in the County are regulated by Chapter 18.119 of the County Code. The proposal, as conditioned will comply with all of the standards set forth in this section, including but not limited to basic tower design, setbacks, identification signs, fire protection and provision of a minimum of 24-hour emergency power supply.

Department/Division Review - The Engineering Services Division, Environmental Health Division and the Fire Department have all recommended approval of the project as conditioned. (Refer to Attachment C)

Other Agencies - As noted above, the City of Napa has been actively participated in the review of this proposal and has recommended approval of the project as conditioned. (Refer to Attachment C)

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- A . Findings
- B . Conditions of Approval
- C . Agency Comments
- D . Photo Simulations
- E . Site Analysis
- F . Application Packet
- G . Graphics

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: John McDowell