



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 11/20/2013

Agenda Placement: 9C

Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

TO: Napa County Planning Commission

FROM: Charlene Gallina for Pete Parkinson - Interim Director
Planning, Building and Environmental Services

REPORT BY: Charlene Gallina, SUPERVISING PLANNER - 299-1355

SUBJECT: Verizon Wireless/Capell Valley Site Use Permit P13-00186-UP

RECOMMENDATION

VERIZON WIRELESS/CAPELL VALLEY SITE—USE PERMIT (#P13-00186-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 a 120-foot tall lattice telecommunication tower; 2) install twelve (12) panel antennas: 71.1" in length, 23.9" in width and 7.9" in depth; 2) GPS antennas and two (2) four-foot diameter microwave mesh dish antennas; 3) place the tower and associated ground-mounted equipment on a 30' by 30' lease area on the southern portion of the property; 4) construct a 6' tall wooden fence to screen the equipment building to house ground-mounted equipment; 5) install a 24-hour emergency diesel-powered back-up generator and associated ground-mounted equipment within the fenced lease area; 6) trenching 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 41.26-acre site on the west side of Capell Valley Road, south of the intersection of Capell Valley Road and Lake Berryessa-Knoxville Road, within the Agricultural Watershed (AW) zoning district at 1998 Capell Valley Road, Napa CA, 94559. (APN 025-330-019)

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: Pamela Nobel, (707) 486-7252

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 #P13-00186 based on Findings 2-5 of Exhibit A, subject to recommended conditions of approval provided in Exhibit B.

Discussion:

Verizon Wireless requests approval to construct a 120-foot tall lattice telecommunication tower in the largely undeveloped portion of Eastern Napa County, south of Lake Berryessa. Representatives from Verizon note that the carrier has inadequate coverage in this portion of the County, especially for recreational users, for motorists using area roads and for emergency service. The project site is a level, graded site on a small knoll overlooking valleys to the north and east. It was formerly used as a contractor storage yard and no trees, watercourses or other natural features are present on the site, although the residence of the property owner is located north of the proposed cell facility lease area at a lower topographic elevation.

The proposed Verizon facility would be located on the southern portion of the site and would include installation of an 120-foot tall lattice cell tower. Ground mounted equipment, including an emergency power back-up generator, would be located east of the tower within an approximately 900 square foot leased area. An existing 12-foot wide on-site access drive intersecting with Capell Valley Road would be used for construction and maintenance access. Underground electrical power and telephone connections would be made between overhead poles and the proposed the tower, as encouraged by the Code. The applicant has submitted technical information to support the need for this project at the requested 120-foot height, specifically that this height is needed to provide adequate cell coverage for the area. The applicant notes that a lattice-type design has been proposed to be consistent with a number of existing PG&E transmission towers on area hillsides and the tops of distant hills. This approach is used to meet the intent of the General Plan and Napa County Code to make all telecommunication facilities "effectively unnoticeable" from adjacent roads. The County Code also requires telecommunication facilities to blend in with the natural environment. In this instance, the site contains minimal natural features so that a lattice tower design would be consistent with the man-made environment. This is 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.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Categorically Exempt 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 Verizon'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: Richard and Julie Bissett

Applicant: Verizon Wireless

Applicant Representative: Pamela Nobel, NSA Wireless, Inc. (707) 486-7252

Date Filed: June 4, 2013

Date Deemed Complete: September 23, 2013

General Plan Land Use Designation: Agriculture, Watershed & Open Space (AWOS)

Zoning: AW (Agricultural Watershed)

Number of Employees: None, with periodic visits by maintenance staff

Site Access: From Capell Valley Road (State Route 128)

Emergency Power Supply: On-site diesel-powered emergency generator

Adjacent Zoning/Land Use:

North

AW—residence (21-acre parcel)

South

AW-vacant (360-acre parcel)

East

AW-Vacant (10-acre parcel)

West

AW-residence (80-acre parcel)

Discussion Points

Visual Impacts and Alternative Facility Designs: The Napa County Code requires telecommunication facilities to be sited and designed so as to blend in with the surrounding environment to be “effectively unnoticeable.” Photo Simulations supplied by the applicant (see Attachment D) show that the proposed lattice tower would be visible to motorists from certain segments of Capell Valley Road in the project vicinity where not blocked by vegetation or topography. Other photos submitted by the applicant show a number of PG&E main transmission towers in the general area and that the proposed lattice tower would be similar to this design. The nature of the site is such that a camouflage tree design, appropriate in other locations, would not be suitable for this site since there are no other

trees in which a camouflaged tree could blend in with. Staff and the applicant also explored a “slimline” tower for the site, which would have presented a smaller silhouette against the sky; however, this design would not allow future co-location of other carriers that has been a goal of the County.

Based on the technical evidence, staff therefore believes that the proposed lattice tower is consistent with the intent of the Napa County Code.

Potential Alternative Sites: The applicant submitted information regarding other potential locations and configurations as alternatives to the current request. These are summarized below with technical information included in Attachment E.

- a) Monticello PG&E substation (1525 Berryessa-Knoxville Road) - this site was found unsuitable due to the lack of coverage of the area.
- b) 50 Capell Valley Crest - this site (southeast of the proposed site) was found unsuitable due to a low topographic elevation with blockage of signals by surrounding hills.
- c) Nearby PG&E Transmission Towers - possible location of Verizon antennas were examined but none provided full coverage of the area as would the proposed site.
- d) 1965 Capell Valley Road to the southwest was also deemed to be low topographically to provide full cell coverage.
- e) BLM and Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District - land locked - accessible only by boat and no utilities available.

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

Consistency with Standards

General Plan Compliance - The proposed project is in compliance with Land Use Element Policy Ag/LU 85 which acknowledges telecommunication infrastructure as a critical way to connect lake communities to the rest of Napa County, and 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 painted 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 attached Photo Simulations.

AP Zoning District Compliance - The proposed project is consistent with the AW zoning district regulations (Section 18.20.030 K) 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 120 feet would exceed the maximum height of a telecommunication facility that could be administratively approved, which is 50 feet. All other provisions of the AW 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.

An exception is needed to Section 18.119.120 A of the Code. This section requires access roads to telecommunication facilities be limited to eight feet in width and shall have a gravel or non-paved surface. The Napa County Engineering and Conservation Division is requiring that the access road be surfaced with an all-weather (paved) surface.

Departments/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)

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

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

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: John McDowell