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Agenda Date: 2/6/2019

Agenda Placement: 7A

Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

TO: Napa County Planning Commission
FROM: Charlene Gallina for David Morrison - Director
Planning, Building and Environmental Services
REPORT BY: John McDowell, Principal Planner - 299-1354
SUBJECT: Sage Canyon Telecommunication Facility P18-00397-UP

RECOMMENDATION

SAGE CANYON TELECOMMUNICATION FACILITY – USE PERMIT #P18-00397-UP

CEQA STATUS: Consideration and possible adoption of Categorical Exemptions Class 3: It has been determined that this type of project does not have a significant effect on the environment and is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act. [See Section 15303(d), Class 3 which may be found in the guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act at 14 CCR §15303; see also Napa County's Local Procedures for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 504, Categorical Exemptions]. This project is not on any lists of hazardous waste sites enumerated under Government Code Section 65962.5.

REQUEST: Approval of a request for a Use Permit to: 1) Construct a 127 ft. tall telecommunication facility designed to look like a pine tree (commonly referred to as a "monopine"); 2) install up to nine (9) antennas with associated equipment; 3) place the tower and associated equipment within an approximately 28 ft. by 38 ft. lease area; 4) construct two concrete pads totaling approximately 150 square feet containing a backup diesel generator and ancillary ground mounted equipment; and 5) install an approximately 100 ft. long by 12 ft. wide all weather access road connecting to the existing vineyard access road.

The project is located in the southwest quadrant of an approximately 300.1 acre property within the AW (Agricultural Watershed) zoning district, and will be placed on a ridgeline approximately 630 ft. above, and 940 ft. north of Sage Canyon Road (State Route 128) at its nearest point. Access to the site will be via an existing approximately 1.0 mile long private access road and approximately 0.9 mile long vineyard access road with a site address of 2470 Sage Canyon Road; APN: 032-010-097.

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

Staff Contact: John McDowell, Planner, 707-299-1354, john.mcdowell@countyofnapa.org.

Applicant Contact: Tom Johnson, TSJ Consulting Inc., 925-785-3727, tom@TSJconsulting.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Actions:

That the Planning Commission:

1. Find the project Categorical Exempt based on Finding 1 in Attachment A; and
2. Approve Use Permit P18-00397-UP based on Findings 2-5 in Attachment A and subject to the Conditions of Approval in Attachment B.

Discussion:

The applicant is proposing to construct a new unmanned telecommunication "monopine" facility for AT&T on a partially treed ridgeline knoll located approximately 630 ft. above, and 940 ft. from Sage Canyon Road at its nearest point. Surrounding terrain is mountainous presenting challenges for cellular coverage on public roadways generally located within canyon areas. This facility is located approximately 2 miles east of Lake Hennessey and will fill in cellular coverage gaps from the lake to Lower Chiles Valley to the east. The project is located in the southwestern quadrant of the approximately 300 acre subject property. The majority of this property is undeveloped hillside. However there are hilltop vineyards located in the vicinity of the proposed tower such that the 1.9 miles of existing private driveway and vineyard access roads will be utilized as access to the facility. New road development will be limited to an approximately 100 ft. long by 12 ft. wide gravel access road extending from the existing vineyard access road to the knoll where the tower will be located. Proposed height of the monopine is 127 feet.

It is recommended that the Planning Commission find the project Categorical Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and approve the Use Permit. The facility is subject to a Planning Commission level Use Permit due to the proposed ridgeline location. The applicant has provided documentation demonstrating the challenges to providing cellular coverage within the surrounding mountainous area, justifying the ridgeline location. Zoning Ordinance requirements for telecommunication facilities require placement and screening of structures such that they are "effectively unnoticeable" from adjacent roads and public gathering places. There are no public gathering places within the vicinity, and as demonstrated in the application materials and visual simulations, view angles of the facility from public roads are distant and limited such that the proposed design complies with the screening criteria.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This project is Categorical Exempt from CEQA under Section 15303 (d) of the CEQA Guidelines as a Class 3 Exemption, construction of new small structures or conversion of small structures.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Owner: Capra Company

Applicant: AT&T Mobility

Applicant Representative: Tom Johnson, TSJ Consulting Inc., (925) 785-3727, tom@TSJconsulting.com

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

Zoning: Agricultural Watershed (AW)

Date Filed: October 24, 2018

Date Deemed Complete: November 22, 2018

Number of Employees: None, periodic visits by maintenance staff

Lease Equipment Area: Approximately 28 ft. x 38 ft., or 1,000 square feet leased area

Site Access: 1.9 miles of existing private drive and vineyard access road, 100 ft. long by 12 ft. wide new gravel road to project site

Emergency Power Supply: On-site generator (24 hour + power supply)

Adjacent Zoning/Land Use:

North: AW - 3 parcels ranging in size from 73 acres to 320 acres with one parcel containing some vineyards

South: AW- 1 vacant 970 acre parcel located across Sage Canyon Road

East: AW- 1 vacant 67 acre parcel

West: AW - 4 vacant 10 acres parcels with larger vacant parcels further west

Discussion Points:

1) Visual Analysis: 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”. Photosimulations supplied by the applicant (see Attachment F) provide an example of the limited and distant view angles into the site from public roads. Sage Canyon Road in the vicinity of the project sits in a canyon such that the project can only be seen from a few intermittent segments along the roadway. The project is also located over 600 vertical feet above the roadway such that travelers along the roadway would need to look to the ridgeline to see the facility that is often obscured by intervening hillsides, road cuts and tree canopy. From the west, the greatest degree of visibility would be from Sage Canyon Road at eastern end of Lake Hennessey, approximately 1.7 miles from the project. From the east, the site is only visible along Sage Canyon Road for two brief segments between 0.5 to 0.75 miles from the site, where the road is descending westward through a series of sharp curves. To the degree the facility can be seen from public roads, it will appear as a lone ridgeline tree.

2) Potential Alternative Sites: Included with submittal materials (see Attachment E) is a prediction of cellular coverage resulting from the project. The coverage map indicates that cellular service to the overall area is limited, even with the inclusion of this facility. The facility will bring coverage to approximately a 4 mile segment of Sage Canyon Road and the vicinity, but as indicated on the coverage map, additional facilities are needed to bring

coverage to the entire region. In this type of mountainous terrain, towers need to be located on or near primary ridgelines in order to provide the greatest degree of coverage. The applicant indicates that in lieu of locating the facility on the ridgeline, multiple new facilities would be required to achieve the same level of area-wide coverage. There are no existing facilities in a four (4) mile radius of this project.

Alternative project designs and concepts were addressed with the applicant. The applicant revised the branch layout from the original proposal to reduce overall massing and to more closely resemble grey pines which are numerous in the area, and often appear freestanding as lone trees like this facility. An uncamouflaged option was considered because facility mass would be reduced, and thus may have been less noticeable, but the property owner expressed concerns about the view from the subject property (see Photo Simulation View 1, Attachment F). Given the significant distance from which the project would be visible from public roadways, and recognizing the property owner's wishes, the proposed monopine design appears to be the best option.

3) Compliance with Standards: The proposed project complies with all telecommunication facility requirements prescribed in Napa County Code. The site is accessed primarily from existing private roads that do not require any improvements. Construction and earth disturbing activities will occur only on the knoll where the tower will be located, which is not near any streams or watercourses, and does not contain sensitive biotic resources. Earth disturbance, primarily resulting from construction of the 100 ft. long access road, will be on slopes ranging from 5% to 20% which is permitted under the Conservation Regulations and is subject to both County and State erosion control protections standards and thus do not have a significant potential to result in erosion impacts.

4) Environmental Analysis: Staff is recommending adoption of a Class 3 Categorical Exemption to address CEQA requirements, which is intended to cover small scale structures where no adverse impacts could occur. In this instance, the project site lies is not located in the vicinity of any sensitive biotic resources, watercourses, or known historic or prehistoric resources. There are no dwellings within 1 mile of the project. The project has no potential to cause significant noise, air quality, traffic or land use impacts, and thus qualifies for the exemption.

5) Public Comments: As of the printing of this report, no comments have been received on the proposal. Application materials have been posted on the department's current projects webpage, and notice was sent to all property owners within 1,000 ft. of the subject property and published in the newspaper.

Decision Making Options:

As noted in the Executive Summary Section above, Staff is recommending approval of the project as proposed with conditions of approval as described in Option 1 below. Decision making options including the following:

Option 1 – Approve Applicant's Proposal

Discussion - This option would result in construction of the 127 ft. tall monopine tower at the proposed ridgeline location. The Planning Commission will determine that the proposed design complies with the "effectively unnoticeable" ordinance requirement.

Action Required – Follow proposed action listed in Executive Summary. If conditions of approval are amended, specify conditions to be amended at time motion is made.

Option 2 – Revised Project Alternative

Discussion - As noted in the main body of the report, an uncamouflaged tower would have less overall massing than the faux tree, and thus may be less noticeable than the proposed monopine. However, this option does impact the property owner because the facility is highly visible on site, and therefore is not recommended.

Action Required – Follow proposed action listed in Executive Summary and amend scope and project specific conditions of approval to require an uncamouflaged facility. If major revisions of the conditions of approval are required, item will need to be continued to a future date.

Option 3 – Project Denial Option

Discussion - In the event the Commission determines that the project does not, or cannot, comply with one or several telecommunication facility requirements prescribed by Napa County Code, Commissioners should articulate what aspect(s) of the project is in conflict with required findings, and either deny the request or continue the item to allow the applicant an opportunity to redesign the project.

Action Required – Commission would take tentative motion to deny project and remand the matter to staff for preparation of required finding to return to the Commission on specified date.

Option 4 - Continuance Option

Discussion - The Commission may continue an item to a future hearing date at its own discretion.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- A . Recommended Findings
- B . Recommended Conditions of Approval and Agency Memos
- C . CEQA Memo
- D . Application Materials
- E . Cellular Coverage Map and NIER Analysis
- F . Visual Simulations
- G . Graphics

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: Charlene Gallina