

Court Decisions

As with many statutes and rules, the Courts have been required to resolve controversies in which a locality acted badly. Here follows a discussion of those cases, detailing further requirements of the law of amateur radio antennas.

An Open Mind.

When Andy Bodony sought to erect an 86' tall antenna system in a town with a maximum height of 25', the Court found that the town had not approached the application with an open mind. In that case, the town sought out advice from counsel in advance of a hearing on just what would be necessary to deny a permit. *Bodony v. Sands Point, NY*, 681 F. Supp. 1009 (E.D. NY 1987), www.qsl.net/k3qk/bodony.html. In what was effectively a substantive due process case, it may interest local government officials that the amateur was awarded \$60,000 in damages.

No Fixed or Unvarying Height Limit.

The *Bodony* case, above, also stands for the proposition that an arbitrarily chosen height limitation, without the consideration of the applicant's need for height, is preempted. ("We base our ruling on PRB-1, in preempting the right of the Zoning Board to arbitrarily fix a limitation on the height of an antenna to 25 feet.")²

Similarly, *Izzo v. River Edge, NJ*, 843 F.2d 765 (3d Cir. 1988), upholds the preemptive effect of PRB-1 to a 35' height limitation: "The effectiveness of radio communication depends on the height of antennas." At p. 768. The Court awarded fees of \$10,000.

See also *Howard v. Burlingame, CA*, 937 F.2d 1376 (9th Cir. 1991), (a case in which the bylaw required special permit for heights over 25'): "[T]hose [ordinances] which establish absolute limitations on antenna height . . . are . . . facially inconsistent with PRB-1."

Furthermore, see *Brower v. Indian River County Code Enforcement Board, FL*, No. 91-0456 CA-25 (June 23, 1993), 1993 WL 228785 (Fla.Cir.Ct.). (This case involved an antenna support structure of 68.88 feet, plus antennas to total of 95.6 feet; 72.4 feet from neighbor's property line.) The ordinance had an absolute prohibition on towers over 70'. The ordinance was held facially void as an unvarying maximum height: "We agree with the *Evans* court's adoption of prior rulings in that case which concluded that flat

² "One factor in determining the range and effectiveness of radio communication is the height of the antenna. Measurement from the ground tells us little. A 25 foot antenna in a valley surrounded by hills might be useless, while that equipment on a mountain top might give optimum results. An antenna rising above the obstacles that interfere with radio signals obviously gives a greater range and better reception than an antenna of a lesser height."