



Town of Johnstown

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION AGENDA MEMORANDUM

ITEM:	USR20-0001 FTC Fall River Monopine (Wireless Communications Facility)
DESCRIPTION:	Use by Special Review (USR) for 70-foot Monopine Alternative Tower Structure
LOCATION:	5360 Ronald Reagan Blvd. (Wingate Hotel)
APPLICANT:	Verizon Wireless
STAFF:	Kim Meyer, Planning & Development Director
HEARING DATE:	February 10, 2021

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. PZC Agenda Memo, May 13, 2020
- C. PZC Minutes, May 13, 2020
- D. Excerpt of Project Attachments from May 13, 2020 Hearing
- E. New Materials – Plans, Photo simulations, Justification

PRIOR LAND USE ACTION

This project was originally heard by the Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) on May 13, 2020. See Attachments B, C, and D for the original memorandum, excerpts of the PZC packet, and minutes. At that hearing Commissioners asked several questions related to the design, size and photo representation of the alternative tower structure, as well as general questions about engineering and needs.

The PZC voted 4-2 to deny this request for a USR based on findings that the tower is incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood, that alternative options had not been explored, that photo simulation may not accurately depict height and appearance, and that it was not adequately demonstrated the tower will accommodate co-location and co-siting.

Staff also notes the update to a full 70' height – the height of the tower *did not change*, instead we are clarifying to ensure that a final decision takes into account the full height, including the “foliage” pieces and antennae that extend beyond the technical height of the tower structure itself.

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UPDATED PROJECT INFORMATION

The applicant provided updated information in an attempt to address the concerns of the PZC voiced at the May 13th hearing, prior to proceeding to a Town Council hearing for final determination.

Attachment E of this memorandum provides updated materials submitted, including:

- Updated plans and photos. A new equipment site layout with a new weather-protective cover (canopy) over the equipment cabinets.
- A Photo-simulation illustrating the “monopine” adjacent to the Wingate Hotel, in comparison to the existing adjacent 10’4” shelter.
- Justification of need, with coverage maps

SUMMARY & ANALYSIS

Staff recommended approval in May 2020, based on the materials and analysis performed at that time, and continues that recommendation at this time. Taking into account all materials submitted to date, Staff believes the proposed project meets all requirements of the Johnstown Municipal Code, ensures a higher level of cellular service in a critical part of town, covering businesses, travelers, as well as residents, and has provided evidence that this facility is needed, and meets the standards set by the FCC based on statements made within the submittal materials by the applicant’s engineers.

Staff also recognizes the real concerns of the Planning Commissioners in ensuring a visually compatible and satisfactory product for this area of Johnstown, and the inherent complexities of having such facilities be reviewed in a Use by Special Review (USR) process. A USR process is designed to provide a higher level of scrutiny and more subjective considerations in instances where a use *may* be appropriate for an area, but may also experience or inflict notable adverse impacts that require some level of mitigation through special conditions. These wireless facilities, under 36-feet tall are administrative approvals. With a tower proposed at 70’ total height to the top of the camouflage elements, the municipal code requires an added level of review in any zoning district, as well as public hearings, to ensure compatibility and consider mitigating elements.

One issue at the May 13th hearing was the choice of a monopine as camouflage, noting the commercial nature of the area. This is a dense and intense area of the Town, largely dominated by the built environment. Staff also acknowledges that the area adjacent to this proposed location is designated as a natural, open space, with trees and shrubs and natural grasses. Staff recognizes that this “tree” does not truly disguise the use of this structure. Few WCFs, short of being built into a structure (church spire, bell tower, roof extension, etc.), are truly “camouflaged” or invisible in a build landscape. Staff and the Town view these WCFs as vital utilities, and much like an electric transformer, may be painted or minimized, but will still exist in that urban landscape. A different structure design certainly seems possible; however given the site proposed, with the significant setback along west Ronald Reagan Blvd. (vs a more prominent centralized location), the more residential nature of the extended stay hotel and adjacent apartments and open space to the east, Staff does not feel the current design is wholly contraindicated.

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Having worked with the Applicant and the 2534 Design Review Committee (DRC) on different location and design for this WCF, this emerged as the preferred location among both those groups, and a “DRC approved” design. Part of that siting consideration also includes full consent of a property owner, and acceptance of the proposed design, size, scale, and such.

The Applicant has also provided additional documentation on “justification” – showing coverage maps at the current state, with a 36-foot administratively-approvable tower, and with the proposed tower. Staff believes that with this growing area of Northern Colorado, this tower site will serve our expanding neighborhoods and commercial areas, and concurs that this area would benefit from better wireless service coverage.

Another May 13th concern was with the technical specs provided to the Commission. The submittal materials from RF engineers and other technical specs are submitted, effectively under oath of truthfulness and, without resident experts on staff, which few municipalities can engage, the Town accepts these materials as presented as is customary and typical.

The minor one design change is a canopy over the equipment cabinets to protect from hail and inclement weather. Staff believes this offers additional visual screening of these facilities, especially from upper-level rooms in the nearby hotel.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION FINDINGS AND MOTIONS

Based on the application received and the preceding analysis, the Planning & Zoning Commission finds that the proposed request for a Use by Special Review to allow a seventy foot (70') tall Wireless Communication Facility (WCF) as an Alternative Tower Structure, camouflaged to appear as a pine tree is compatible with applicable Town standards and regulations, and maintains the harmonious relationships stated in the PUD purpose, and therefore moves to recommend to the Town Council approval of the proposed Use by Special Review request as presented.

Alternate Motions

- A. Approve With Conditions: “...and therefore moves to recommend to the Town Council approval of the the proposed Use by Special Review request as submitted, and with the following conditions:”
 - 1.
- B. Deny: “I move that the Commission recommend to the Town Council denial of the proposed Use by Special Review request, with the following findings...”

Examples/options:

- 1. Is not in keeping with or furthering the town’s Comprehensive Plan;
- 2. Is incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood;
- 3. ...

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Submitted by:



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