

Statement before the Petersburg Borough Assembly
by
Becky (Rebecca) Knight
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I was unable to be here today. Thank you for allowing a speaker in my place for a short statement.

I join many Petersburg residents in their valid concerns for our small community with the proliferation of proposed (and existing) cell towers and data centers on Mitkof Island. A Borough moratorium should be enacted immediately to put a hold on such expansion until the impacts can be better and fully analyzed. Just because the proposed Greensparc data center is perceived as small, does not excuse it from adverse impacts on Petersburg Borough residents.

The NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] process would force full disclosure and analysis of the impacts of these projects. The trigger for a NEPA analysis is if a proposal is likely to have “significant adverse environmental impacts.” BOTH cell tower and data center construction and operation qualify, despite any pass that the FCC may have granted for such projects.

I request that the Borough request full implementation of the NEPA process for cell tower and data center construction and operation. I believe Mayor Lynn fully understands the NEPA process as he worked with it during his career with the Forest Service.

While the Borough’s analysis is well-intended and informative, there are likely many issues that were not considered and that the authors are unaware of. That’s where the public gets involved with the NEPA process—to raise issues that were not fully considered or even addressed. For instance, interference with existing uses, bandwidth limitations, network outages, geographic limitations and accessibility are but some of the issues. The so-called “low hum” of the proposed Greensparc facility should be better disclosed. And of course the potential for catastrophic fire as Emergency Services Director Hankins raised should be thoroughly vetted.

Of course the developers paint a rosy scenario as any developer would. These projects could well be, just the “foot-in-the-door” to other unforeseen impacts and connected actions. For instance, what are the impacts of a “micro-grid” as Greensparc may be considering?

As you are likely aware, Petersburg opposition is not unique. There is nationwide opposition to this new technology in communities and on the landscape, whether they are perceived as large or small. For instance, the City of Seattle is wisely in the process of enacting a one-year moratorium on new large data centers due to concerns over high energy demand, environmental impacts, and increased utility rates for residents. The State of Maine is enacting a similar moratorium. There are plenty more in the works.

I request that the Borough consider a moratorium until these issues surrounding such development be thoroughly vetted via a NEPA process.

Sincerely,

Becky Knight