

**UPPER MERION TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**AUGUST 9, 2017**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

**ATTENDANCE:**

Mark McKee, Vice-Chair  
Vivian Peikin, Secretary  
Jaque Camp, Member  
William Jenaway, Liaison to the Board of Supervisors  
Rob Loeper, Township Planner  
Kyle Brown, Associate Planner  
Maudy Hedlund, Recording Secretary

**ABSENT:**

Matt Popek, Chair  
Todd Brown, Member

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:**

The Minutes of July 12, 2017 were deferred until August 22, 2017.

**PLAN:**

**DP 2017-10 MONTCO Dept. of Public Safety:** 310 Hughes Rd. Construction of a 150' wireless emergency management communications tower and supporting equipment. 2.9 acres, R-1 Residential. Zoning Relief granted March 1, 2017. Plan expiration: October 10, 2017.

**PRESENT:** Michael Stokes, Montgomery County Planning Commission.  
Richard Lohwasser, Montgomery County 9-1-1 Dept. of Public Safety.  
Area residents: H. Arena, C. Arnold-Cohen, G. Cohen, M. Delowery,  
J. Dembow, T. Ginsberg, B. Ginsberg, B. Kravetz, K. Pallante, and M. Zhang.

**From Mr. Loeper's overview:**

The Zoning Hearing Board granted the applicant zoning relief on March 1, 2017. A Workshop meeting with the Board of Supervisors was held last week. The Planning Commission's and the Montgomery County's Planning Commission's review will be placed on the Agenda of the Board of Supervisors in September for the Board to take formal action on the application.

This project is for a 150-foot wireless communications tower. It involves the construction of the tower as well as the ancillary support buildings. The existing towers will be removed.

Highlights from Mr. Stokes' and Mr. Lohwasser's presentations:

**Tower:**

The proposed 150-foot tall "zero-fall" communications tower can withstand a 115-mile-per-hour wind without falling over. It's designed to fold inside itself. It will replace two existing towers that, by being under-canopy, have become obsolete and will provide much needed enhanced coverage for the entire County's emergency management services. For emergency purposes towers are designed to be close to roads. This tower will be located 40 yards away from Hughes Road.

**Antennae:**

The County and the Commonwealth will each receive six pole-type antennae and one small microwave dish.

**Cellular service:**

The tower's design guarantees that it's not built for a cellular application. Mr. Loeper noted that a condition could be applied that would not allow a cellular application.

Mr. Jenaway commented that cellular improvements will be assessed and described Extenet's agreement with Verizon Wires to improve cell service in the area from Route 202 to the Schuylkill River that doesn't need to be mounted on traditional cell towers.

**Signaling:** Signaling will be done by microwave pass.

**Concrete building:**

The existing 10'x12' brick building will be replaced by a 26'x11', six-sided, flat-roofed, concrete building that's mounted on a pad. It will have two separate storage areas, one for the State, the other for the County. The compound will measure 45'x60' and will be surrounded by a chain-link fence.

A member commented that the significantly-sized modular structure will be placed close to the road in a residential neighborhood and that no attempt has been made to make it fit into the context that it's going to be used in. The applicant's representatives were receptive to a suggestion to have the structure resemble a brick shed with a roof and to planting a vine on the chain-link fence.

**Landscaping:**

Dead trees will be removed from the site. Evergreens such as Rhododendrons, Leyland Cypress, White Pine and American Holly have been selected for planting outside the chain-link fence.

**Modular generators:**

Two rectangular concrete pads, each measuring 4x9 feet, will support modular generators that run during a power failure. They are tested on a weekly basis for 30 minutes and are inaudible at a distance of 21 feet.

**Utilities:** The current overhead electrical service will be replaced by underground utilities.

**Existing driveway:**

The existing driveway will remain in its current location. Some gravel will be placed to support vehicle parking.

**Comments from members of the audience:**

- The 150-foot tower will depreciate property values.
- The microwave cell will be in close proximity to my swimming pool.
- The “bunker” will be thirty feet from my property line.
- Make the tower unobtrusive.
- Make the fence blend in.
- How powerful are the microwaves? Mr. Lohwasser offered to provide the requested information.
- The visual displays were inadequate.  
In response, the applicant offered to bring redesigns and photos of completed antennae and of a microwave dish to the August 23<sup>rd</sup> Planning Commission meeting.
- Who will maintain the property? Mr. Lohwasser offered to look into the matter.

**Responses of the applicant’s representatives as to why this location was selected:**

- The site acquisitions study was restricted to state-owned properties.
- First responders experience a lack of communication in this area.
- This location provides the highest positioned site and reaches a very large area of the township.
- This tower marks the last of 30 installations. Keeping it as close to the existing towers allows the operation to remain under the same license and coordinates. Moving this tower to a different location would create a hole for public responders.

**Next meeting:**

The applicant’s next meeting with the Planning Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, August 23.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Sincerely yours,

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VIVIAN PEIKIN, SECRETARY