


FROM	NAME & TITLE	THOMAS J. STOSUR, DIRECTOR	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO 
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET, 8 TH FLOOR	
	SUBJECT	BMZA / 4001 Clifton Avenue	

TO Mr. David Tanner, Executive Director
Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals
417 East Fayette Street, 14th Floor

DATE: October 4, 2010

REQUEST

The Department of Planning has received New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC's Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA) application to construct a telecommunications facility at the Cahill Recreation Center, including a 128' tall monopole with antennas extending 8' above the top of the monopole, and an equipment cabinet and 8' high chain link fence around the base of the monopole and around the equipment cabinet. We understand that this appeal is scheduled for hearing on October 12, 2010.

SITE

4001 Clifton Avenue is located on the southwest side of the street, approximately 150' southeast of Windsor Mill Road where it passes under the Clifton Avenue bridge. This irregularly-shaped property measures approximately 266' along Clifton Avenue by approximately 250' deep and is currently improved with a one-story multi-purpose neighborhood center building measuring approximately 80' by 68'. This site is zoned R-4.

ANALYSIS

Conditional Use: In this zoning district, antenna towers, microwave relay towers, and similar installations for communications transmission or receiving, are a conditional use, requiring approval by the Board (§4-703).

Neighborhood Impact: There may be some visual impact on the surrounding area or community during the winter months, due to the height of the proposed monopole on the subject property, the size of the antennas, and the height at which they will be placed. It is noted that the proposed base of the monopole would be at the southwestern corner of the Recreation Center property, furthest away from any housing and furthest away from the southern portion of the Windsor Hills National Register Historic District which begins one block north of the subject property.

Co-location: In order to minimize the number of antenna towers and monopoles constructed throughout the City of Baltimore, the Department of Planning has adopted a policy of co-location. When our Department receives applications for antenna towers or monopoles, staff encourages the applicant to design a structure that can accommodate several other wireless technology providers. This co-location of antennas minimizes the number of antenna towers or monopoles needed throughout Baltimore City.

Historical and Architectural Preservation: The Historical and Architectural Preservation Division of the Department of Planning has reviewed the application and determined that the proposed location is not:

- On a Baltimore City Landmark property list or within a Baltimore City Historical and Architectural Preservation District
- A property, or within a district, listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties
- A property, or within a district, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

However, given the proposed height of the antenna facility and the proximity of the proposed monopole to the Windsor Hills National Register Historic District, the facility may have a visual impact on the historic district. The current visualizations provided by the applicant do not show the potential visibility of the monopole and antennas during the fall and winter months, when there is no foliage to reduce visibility. As a result, it is hard to determine definitively what effect the facility as proposed would have on the historic district. If the facility would be visible from the historic district during half the year, mitigation is required of the applicant according to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Appropriate forms of mitigation include use of “stealth” designs (such as a flag pole or light pole) or incorporating the facility into an appropriate existing feature.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Planning recommends approval of the appeal, subject to these conditions:

- The antennas and related equipment must be painted to match or be compatible with the surrounding wooded area, to minimize their visual obtrusiveness; and
- The antennas and related equipment will remain mounted as illustrated in the plans and elevations submitted to Planning; and
- The applicant will adequately mitigate any adverse effect as specified in the report of the Historical and Architectural Preservation Division of the Department of Planning in accordance with that report’s recommendations, by conducting a visual assessment during the winter months to properly determine the visibility of the facility from the nearby National Register Historic District. If there will be a visual impact, the monopole and antennas portion of the facility should be designed to reduce visibility by use of painting, “stealth” design, and a smaller cross-sectional size of the antenna array atop the pole.

The Historical and Architectural Preservation Division of the Department of Planning is prepared to work with the applicant to devise solutions to the visibility issues which would be compatible with both the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act and the technical requirements of electronic transmission and reception by the antenna facility.

TJS/wya/mf

cc: New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC, Appellant