

Thurs. Mar. 30, 2023
TO Senate Finance Committee
RE Section 248a

Good morning Senate Finance Committee Members,

I am a resident of Granville where, since November 2020, AT&T has been seeking DPS/PUC approval to erect a cell tower on a parcel of land off the west side of North Hollow Road. I live on North Hollow Road practically abutting this parcel and, along with others (adjoining property owners included) have been actively opposing this project. I filed a Motion to Intervene that was granted in April 2021. Five other Granville residents also filed such motions and were granted party status. Although we filed on the basis of economic, orderly development, wireless coverage, and aesthetic concerns, the party status as granted was limited to aesthetic concerns. As coverage and coverage predictions are the most fundamental issues in all cell tower construction proposals, all parties should be allowed to submit testimony and ask questions about coverage.

AT&T conducted balloon tests to assess visibility, continuous wave coverage evaluation drive tests, and DPS held public hearings. We succeeded in getting the Town of Granville to exercise its right to request that DPS contract independent expert evaluation of coverage projections. That assessment revealed inaccuracy in AT&T's coverage predictions. Moreover, despite the limitation of our party status, we secured the help of another independent RF expert who participated in the public hearing and further challenged the patently false coverage claims made by AT&T at that public hearing.

In October 2021, AT&T filed a Motion to Dismiss Petition Without Prejudice which was granted. However, AT&T filed a new Advance Notice for a different site on the same property in January 2022. AT&T again conducted balloon tests to assess visibility, continuous wave coverage evaluation drive tests, and DPS held public hearings. The Petition for this new site was filed in mid-July 2022. A cell tower on this new site would not be visible to most of us who live on this stretch of North Hollow Road, and therefore only one resident was able to intervene on aesthetic grounds.

However, this currently targeted site is even worse for the environment than the first one. Both proposed sites are in a Priority Forest Block and would involve destruction of nearly pristine woods and wildlife habitat. In fact, while the VT Agency of Natural Resources judged that the original site would have an "adverse impact" on the environment, they have concluded that this new site would have an "*undue* adverse impact" on this Priority Forest Block.

It has also been confirmed that if this second site is successfully opposed by ANR, AT&T will revert to seeking PUC approval for the original site. We who oppose both proposals are between a rock and a hard place. While we treasure undisturbed forest land, we do not want the huge industrial-scale structure that is a cell tower looming over our homes.

Of course, there is also the matter of EMR health threats. As Connie Colman of Warren so aptly put it, “While we know there is no definitive agreement on health questions, there is significant peer reviewed research that raises serious concerns. ...I would add that we are the first generation to be exposed to this increased level of radio frequency and there has not been time yet for long-term studies. In the meantime, even our own National Institute of Health has raised questions regarding carcinogenic effects of RF based on extensive animal studies. As town and state representatives whose job it is to safeguard our communities, health consequences should not be ignored, even though they do not provide legal standing.” There is a striking parallel here to the fact that it took *decades* of research and advocacy for the harm of tobacco smoking to be officially acknowledged.

The entire ongoing process of AT&T’s pursuit of a DPS/PUC Certificate of Public Good has been extremely complicated and stressful for us. Ordinary citizens confronted by a mega-corporation are at an undeniable disadvantage. Therefore, I fully support *all* the changes to 248a that have been recommended by VCE’s Annette Smith.

Sincerely,
Judy Wood
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