

In our personal experience we have found the Section 248a process to be not user friendly.

Late last February we received a letter from an attorney in Burlington informing us that a private company was planning to apply for a Certificate of Public good to build a 160 foot (plus 13 foot antennas) radio tower less than 500 feet from our home.

We had three serious concerns: health issues, loss of property value, and aesthetics.

The State of New Hampshire commissioned a study on the effects of radio waves and their report recommended that communication towers be sited no closer than 500 meters (1640 feet) from homes, schools and businesses. The Public Utility Commission says we cannot discuss health effects.

We are in our eighties. Should one of us need long term care we might likely need to sell our property to pay for it. If this industrial structure goes up in our back yard we might have difficulty finding a buyer and we doubt we would get for it what it is worth today. The Public Utility commission says we cannot discuss property values.

This would be an ugly installation, not just in our neighborhood but in the beautiful and treasured Tinmouth valley. The Public Utility commission says we may discuss aesthetics. But when? The applicant has provided reams of information to the Public Utility Commission. (The copy of the application and supporting documentation that we were sent weighs over three pounds). Here we are, more than a year later, and we are just now being afforded an opportunity to provide testimony.

In the fall the Hearing Officer recommended that the Commission deny the application and therefor also deny our request to be an intervener. The applicant filed a long complaint. In a subsequent filing the Hearing Officer requested that the town of Tinmouth and the applicant provide a suggested schedule for further action, and by the way the requests to be interveners are granted. We never received any notification that our request had been granted.

If your committee is going to recommend rolling over this Section 248a again, we hope that it will be with some direction to replace or vastly improve the current procedures. If Vermont is going forward with the same procedures that are now in place, we believe the Commission should hire a person to provide guidance to citizens who wish to participate in the process. They should address such issues as how to file public comment, who qualifies to be an intervener, how to apply for intervener status, how to access filings on the case, what issues may be addressed, etc. At the least there should be a handbook for citizen participation in Public Utility Commission cases.

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