



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

June 3, 2004

**MEMORANDUM—MANDATORY REFERRAL**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** John A. Carter, Chief *JAC*  
Community-Based Planning Division

Khalid Afzal, Team Leader *KA*  
Georgia Avenue Planning Team

**FROM:** Frederick Vernon Boyd, Community Planner (301/495-4654) *FVB*  
Georgia Avenue Planning Team

**SUBJECT:** Mandatory Referral 04501-MCPS-1: Magruder High School Stadium Light Pole/Telecommunications Antenna Replacement Project - 5939 Muncaster Mill Road, Derwood; Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan

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**RECOMMENDATION:** APPROVAL

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

Montgomery County Public Schools proposes, in cooperation with Omnipoint Communications CAP Operations LLC, to replace one existing stadium light pole at Magruder High School with a replacement light pole that would hold stadium lights as well as telecommunications antennas belonging to Omnipoint's parent, T-Mobile Wireless. The existing 75-foot pole would be replaced by a 120-foot pole.

**THE SITE**

Colonel Zadok Magruder High School is located on a 30-acre site on Muncaster Mill Road, a short distance south and east of its intersection with Needwood Road. Adjacent to the property on the north, east and south is land currently farmed. This property, known as the Casey property, is recommended in the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan for residential development in the Rural Neighborhood Cluster (RNC) Zone. Figure 1 shows the site. Magruder High School opened in 1970, was expanded in 1975 and in 1995. A mandatory referral for an 18-classroom addition was approved in 1999 and subsequently completed. The school occupies about 295,500 square feet. Its enrollment in the 2003-2004 school year was 2,205.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Magruder's football/soccer fields and track facilities are located on the western side of the campus and are separated from Muncaster Mill Road by a parking facility. They are currently illuminated by four light poles, each 75 feet high. MCPS proposes to remove one of the light poles and replace it with a 120-foot-high pole. The lights and public address speakers would be replaced at the 75-foot level. At the top of the pole, T-Mobile would install nine antennas, each about six feet long. T-Mobile would install electronic equipment related to the antennas on a concrete pad under the stadium bleachers and surround that equipment with a chain link fence. The area used for the electronic equipment totals about 600 square feet. Figure 2 shows the location of the proposed monopole; Figure 3 provides a detailed drawing of the monopole; and Figure 4 depicts the location of associated electronic equipment.

T-Mobile's submission to the Montgomery County Tower Committee indicates that the proposed antennas will provide phone service along Muncaster Mill Road between Norbeck Road (MD 28) and Woodfield Road (MD 124) and to alleviate gaps in service that occur along the road, especially between Old Mill Run and Emory Lane. The proposed monopole is designed to accommodate as many as three wireless carriers. While the Tower Committee did not report interest from other carriers, T-Mobile asserts in its written submission that a second carrier has approached MCPS and expressed interest in co-location at the Magruder site.

The proposed monopole site would be unmanned. Existing driveways would be used to reach the site for maintenance visits that T-Mobile expects to occur no more than twice a month. T-Mobile is proposing no additional access roads and its site would not affect existing pedestrian or vehicular circulation systems.

The proposed location of the new monopole is more than 900 feet from the nearest residence, across Muncaster Mill Road from the high school. The location is more than 1000 feet from rooms in Casey House, a hospice located at the intersection of Muncaster Mill and Bowie Mill roads.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Master Plan**

The Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan, approved by the Montgomery County Council in February 2004, and adopted by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in April 2004, makes no recommendations for the Magruder High School property. It makes detailed recommendations for a property immediately adjacent to the school. As noted above, the Plan recommends the Rural Neighborhood Cluster zone for the 336-acre parcel, known as the Casey property, and sets a recommended density of about one dwelling unit for every three acres. The Plan also specifies a number of design guidelines for development of the property, most notably specifying that residential development should be concentrated away from stream valleys in upland areas, which means that development is likely to occur on parts of the property near Magruder's campus. In addition, the Plan recommends that the Casey property be

developed jointly with the neighboring Dungan property, with all residential development occurring on the Casey property. Such an arrangement would result in a development of about 150 houses on the Casey property. While no detailed design schemes have been submitted for the Casey property, earlier designs for the property placed house lots as close as 500 feet from the proposed monopole.

## **Environment**

Environmental Guidelines—With the adoption of the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan, the portion of the Upper Rock Creek watershed that includes Magruder High School was included in a Special Protection Area that is recommended by the Plan. Because there is no land disturbance associated with the proposed monopole, no water quality plan is necessary.

Forest Conservation—This project has an approved Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation. It qualifies for an exemption to the Forest Conservation Law because it is a modification of an existing developed property. No forest will be cleared as part of the project, and it does not require subdivision.

Stormwater Management—The project can be accommodated by the existing stormwater management systems.

## **Transportation**

T-Mobile has submitted a traffic statement for the project, which states that the proposed monopole will be unmanned, and that the company expects to make no more than two maintenance visits each month. The Transportation Planning Unit has reviewed the statement, and concurs that the proposed monopole will have no peak hour traffic impacts. No changes to existing vehicle access or circulation systems are planned, and the project will not have an impact on sidewalks around the campus or the stadium.

## **Public Consultation**

Local residents had an opportunity to review and discuss the proposed monopole project at a community meeting organized by Magruder's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in November 2003. Representatives of MCPS and T-Mobile attended the session. The PTA subsequently endorsed the proposal. The Montgomery County Tower Committee also discussed the proposal, and the Tower Coordinator recommended its approval in February 2004. Because of its proximity to the Montgomery County Airpark, T-Mobile conducted a study analyzing the relationships between a monopole at this location and airport approaches. The study indicated that the monopole would have no impact on airpark operations.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed project has no appreciable impact on the environment and so meets applicable environmental standards and guidelines. It has no peak hour traffic impacts and therefore meets applicable guidelines for adequate public facilities. The Department recommends approval of this mandatory referral.

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### **Attachments**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Plan
3. Tower Detail
4. Equipment Detail
5. Environmental Planning Unit Memo
6. Transportation Planning Unit Memo