

M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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April 13, 2005

MEMORANDUM – MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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

William R. Barron, Team Leader
Eastern County Team



FROM: Calvin Nelson, Jr., Planner Coordinator (301-495-4619)
Eastern County Team

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SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. 04603-MCPS-1: James H. Blake High School,
Telecommunications Monopole with Lights, 300 Norwood Road, RE-2C
Zone, Cloverly Master Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

PROJECT SUMMARY

Montgomery County Public Schools submitted, under the Mandatory Referral process, an application by Omnipoint Communications CAP Operations LLC, to replace an existing athletic track light pole at James H. Blake High School with a telecommunications monopole that would hold lights for the track as well as telecommunications antennas belonging to Omnipoint's parent, T-Mobile Wireless. The existing 81-foot light pole would be replaced by a 122-foot telecommunications monopole with lights remounted at the existing 81-foot level.

THE SITE

Blake High School is situated on a 91-acre site on Norwood Road, about 800 feet south of Norbeck Road in the Cloverly Master Plan area. The school site surrounds the historic 6.5-acre Pleasant View Farm property, zoned RE-2C, on three sides. Across Norwood Road to the east is the Norwood Estates subdivision of single-family homes located in the RE-2 Zone. The Holly Grove and Norwood Manor neighborhoods, both in the RE-2C Zone, are located south of the site. Located west of the site is the Northwest Park Golf Course. The site includes forested areas along the southwest and northeast corners of the site, and typically a buffer of trees around other boundaries of the school.

In addition to the school structure, the site includes a lighted stadium, a lighted soccer field and track, lighted softball and baseball fields, eight tennis courts, four basketball courts, and practice fields.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Blake High School's athletic track is currently illuminated by four towers 81 feet in height. The MCPS proposes to remove one of the light poles located near the concrete ramp that leads to the track and replace it with a 122-foot telecommunications monopole with lights. The lights would be reinstalled on the proposed telecommunications monopole at their current height. At the top of the pole, T-Mobile would install an antenna array. T-Mobile would also install electronic equipment within a 14-foot by 50-foot gravel compound enclosed by a chain link fence that includes privacy slatting.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The Mandatory Referral application originally submitted proposed a 143-foot telecommunications monopole with lights that would replace the stadium lights on the northeast side of stadium adjacent to the bleachers. On December 6, 2004, staff was contacted by Ms. Jacqueline Russell of 410 Norwood Road, whose historic property, the Pleasant View Farm, is located adjacent to Blake High School. Ms. Russell indicated to staff that she objected to the planned location of the telecommunications monopole that would be in full view from her residence (approximately 420 feet away). Historic Preservation staff also had concerns with the location of the telecommunications monopole. On January 14, 2005, a site visit was conducted with representatives from T-Mobile, MCPS, Blake High School and staff to look at possible alternative locations for the telecommunications monopole. Replacing one of the lightpoles at the athletic track with a telecommunications monopole with lights was seen as a viable alternative, and on March 9, 2005, the Telecommunications Transmission Facility Coordinating Group (TTFCG), approved the alternate location for the telecommunications monopole (Attachment 4).

Master Plan

The James H. Blake High School is located within the Northeast Consortium and opened in the fall of 1998, a year after the Cloverly Master Plan was approved and adopted. The Master Plan discussed Johnson Road which is located near the southern boundary of the school site. Approximately 300 feet of the eastern end of Johnson Road is used as one of the two access points to the school. The Plan recommended that the remainder of the road should be designated as a rustic road.

Development Standards

The telecommunications monopole meets the requirements of Sec. 59G-2.43 of the Zoning Ordinance for telecommunications facilities, including the setback requirement of one foot from the property line for every foot of height of the telecommunications monopole. The telecommunications monopole is set back approximately 750 feet to the nearest residence. The screening requirement for the equipment compound is met by adding privacy slatting to the chain link fence enclosure.

Environment

This Mandatory Referral has a Forest Conservation Plan exemption (#4-05015E) for modification to an existing developed property. Environmental issues are not significantly affected by the proposed modification. The proposed development will be limited to the replacement of an existing athletic track lightpole with equipment cabinets at the base. There will be no impact to existing wooded areas or to stream systems.

Transportation

Transportation Planning staff supports approval of this application as it meets the adequate public facilities test for transportation requirements. The proposed telecommunications facility will not require a separate access and will have no adverse effect on existing bus, passenger car, bicycle, or pedestrian circulation, as the applicant has indicated in their traffic statement.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The proposed telecommunications facility was discussed in a meeting of Blake High School's Parent-Teacher Association on November 16, 2004. Representatives of T-Mobile discussed the proposal and addressed questions from the audience. Postcard notices were sent out to civic organizations and homeowners in the area on the proposed Mandatory Referral.

CONCLUSION

Now that the telecommunications monopole will be relocated to the athletic track, there is no significant visual impact to the historic Pleasant View Farm or other surrounding residential properties. The proposed telecommunications monopole meets the development standards of the Zoning Ordinance. Staff recommends approval of this Mandatory Referral.

CN:ha: j:\2005 staff reports\team 6\m.ref.BlakeH.S.report

Attachments

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Plan
3. Monopole/Lightpole Elevation, Compound Detail
4. TTFCG memo dated March 15, 2005
5. Coverage Map Without Telecommunications Monopole
6. Coverage Map With Telecommunications Monopole