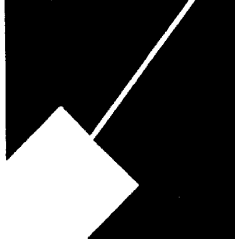


M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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December 8, 2005

MEMORANDUM – MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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

FROM: Sue Edwards, I-270 Corridor Team Leader *sue*
Community-Based Planning Division (301-495-4518)

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. 05304-MCPS-1: Monopole at Capt. James E. Daly Elementary School - 20301 Brandermill Drive, R-90 Zone, Germantown Master Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL to transmit comments to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

1. MCPS should conduct a public meeting concerning the proposed telecommunications facility to include input from the school Principal, school Parent Teachers Association, adjacent property owners and residents, and Chatswood Civic Association leaders.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Montgomery County Public Schools submitted, under the Mandatory Referral process, an application by T-Mobile Communications to construct an approximately 100-foot tall telecommunications facility at the Capt. James E. Daly Elementary School within the Chatswood subdivision in Germantown.

The telecommunications facility will replace an existing light pole behind the school building. Lights will be reattached to the new telecommunications facility at the same height as the existing light pole. Three of T-Mobile's antennae will be attached at the top of the telecommunications facility. Three related equipment cabinets will be located at the base of the structure and will be screened from view by a six-foot high board-on-board wood fence.

T-Mobile notes that this site is intended to off-load telecommunications traffic from a telecommunications facility at Montgomery College which is approximately 1 mile away from the subject site. The proposed telecommunications facility at Daly Elementary School will be able to accommodate two additional antennae in a similar low-profile attachment.

Subject Site and Vicinity

Capt. James E. Daly Elementary School opened in 1989 on a 14-acre property dedicated as a park/school site within the Seneca Park North subdivision. The school is part of the Watkins Mill high school cluster which also includes four other elementary schools (South Lakes Elementary School, Stedwick Elementary School, Watkins Mill Elementary School, and Whetstone Elementary School which are all within Montgomery Village).

School enrollment is presently 636 students according to the *FY 2006 Educational Facilities Master Plan and the Amended FY 2006-2010 Capital Improvements Program*. The school offers all-day kindergarten that is reflected in calculating enrollment and capacity of the school facilities.

Adjoining the school property is the 28-acre Clearspring Local Park. The park spans both sides of Scenery Drive where it intersects with Brandermill Drive at the school site. Park facilities include a soccer field, softball field and parking on the east side of Scenery Drive. The west side of Scenery Drive contains a pond used for stormwater management, a picnic shelter, basketball courts, a playground and parking.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Master Plan

Daly Elementary School is located within the Germantown Master Plan adopted and approved in 1989. The school is shown on Figure 40 on page 132 of the Master Plan. The school property is within analysis area MI-3 which proposes garden apartments in Brandermill (west), town houses in Quail Ridge (north) and future single-family houses in the proposed Seneca Park North Subdivision (south).

Development Standards

The telecommunications monopole meets the requirements of Sec. 59G-2.43 of the Montgomery County 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 300 feet from Brandermill Drive residences to the north and 250 feet from residences on Valley Bend Drive to the east. The screening requirement for the equipment compound is met by creating an enclosure consisting of a six-foot tall board-on-board wooden fence.

Environment

T-Mobile, on behalf of MCPS, has applied for an exemption from Forest Conservation requirements. The school property is an existing public use where no forest will be removed by the proposed action.

Transportation

The proposed telecommunications facility will not require a separate access and will have no adverse effect on the existing bus, passenger car, bicycle, or pedestrian circulation.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

MCPS Telecommunications Policy

The Montgomery County Board of Education adopted by resolution (No. 653-97) on November 11, 1997 a Telecommunications Transmission Facilities Policy shown in Attachment 4. The position of the Board of Education is to "...support federal and County legislation relating to the infrastructure of modern telecommunications systems and wishes to implement these laws without contravening the primary mission of the organization which is to provide a safe and supportive environment for the academic success of every student" (page 1).

The policy establishes a sequence of actions for approval of telecommunications transmission facilities beginning with the Telecommunications Transmission Tower Facility Coordinating Group (known as the Tower Committee) which approved the T-Mobile application at Daly Elementary School on March 9, 2005.

In the second stage for actions for which approval from the M-NCPPC is required, the Superintendent will transmit the Tower Committee recommendations to the M-NCPPC for review by the Planning Board. On March 21, 2005 the Superintendent requested review by the M-NCPPC under the Commission's Mandatory Referral responsibilities.

Final steps of the MCPS Telecommunications Policy are for the Superintendent to notify the site managers and school PTAs of the proposed installation and then for the Superintendent to review all relevant information before making a decision concerning the application.

Staff from the M-NCPPC and MCPS discussed community notification and outreach responsibly under the MCPS Telecommunications Policy and M-NCPPC's Mandatory Referral requirements. T-Mobile convened a community meeting on October 25, 2005 held at the Capt. James E. Daly Elementary School. One person attended this meeting.

The M-NCPPC staff sent a site plan for the proposed telecommunications facility and notification of the Planning Board hearing date to approximately 75 residents adjoining the school. Several residents have contacted staff with concerns as discussed in the following section of the staff report.

Community Concerns

Residents along Brandermill Drive have expressed concerns that include:

- Lack of homeowner notification for the October 25 meeting
- Land disturbance
- Visibility and lighting of the telecommunications facility
- Alternative locations considered for the telecommunications facility
- Locating the telecommunications facility close to the school learning cottages and whether additional learning cottages could be included on the site
- Possible health effects

Issues Raised

T-Mobile relied upon a notice to the Chatswood Civic Association to invite residents to a public briefing on October 25, 2005. This form of notification resulted in one person attending.

The applicant states that ground disturbance will not exceed 1,000 square feet consisting of a 20 x 35 foot fenced compound with surrounding landscaping which houses a standard 10 x 20 foot concrete slab. There will be no new access road; construction workers will use the existing school access and parking.

In addressing visibility, the Tower Committee concluded that "...this monopole will be prominent on the horizon as viewed from many of the residential properties surrounding this school. However, as the school property is quite large and there is a section of parkland adjacent to the school, the monopole is situated far from the homes that will be able to view the monopole. This distance should somewhat minimize the visual impact of the structure for those residents. Nevertheless, since the monopole is planned to be 100 feet tall, it will be imposing and some nearby residents may object to the monopole".

The applicant did not consider alternative locations for the monopole either on the Daly school property or elsewhere. Telecommunications providers must show evidence of pursuit of co-location with other vendors or existing facilities (Policy, page 2), but does not require vendors to look at alternative sites or locations.

The location of the proposed telecommunications facility has been selected with knowledge of the location of any school expansion in the future (beyond FY 2012).

T-Mobile will respond to any questions on potential health effects of telecommunications facilities.

CONCLUSION

The proposed monopole meets the development standards contained in the Zoning Ordinance. The setback of 250-300 feet and the low-profile attachment of the antennae provide compatibility with adjacent residences.

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Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Monopole Site Plan, Elevation and Specifications
3. Visual Simulations (3a, 3b, 3c)
4. MCPS Telecommunications Transmission Facilities Policy