

February 1, 2011

The Scandia Planning Commission held their regular monthly meeting on the above date. The following were in attendance: Chair Christine Maefsky, Commissioners Tom Krinke, Susan Rodsjo, Steve Philippi and Peter Schwarz. Staff present: City Administrator Anne Hurlburt, City Planner Sherri Buss, Building Official/Maintenance Supervisor Steve Thorp, Deputy Clerk Brenda Eklund. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Commission Chair Maefsky called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA, MINUTES

Krinke, second by Schwarz, moved to delay action to the March 1, 2011 meeting on Agenda Items 5.a) Selecting a Chair and Vice Chair; and 5.b) Selecting a representative to the Capital Improvements Committee. Commissioner Krinke explained that action should be delayed until the City Council makes an appointment to the Planning Commission at their February meeting. Commissioner Philippi stated his opposition to the amendment. **The motion to amend the agenda carried 4-1, with Philippi opposed.**

Krinke, second by Rodsjo, moved to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried 5-0.

Krinke, second by Schwarz, moved to approve the January 4, 2011 minutes. Commissioner Philippi corrected the minutes to add a statement under discussion of Ordinance No. 124 about his views on placement of cell towers and a continued review of the ordinance. **The motion to approve the minutes as corrected carried 5-0.**

Rodsjo, second by Krinke, moved to approve the January 25, 2011 minutes as presented. The motion carried 5-0.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR WIRELESS COMMUNICATION TOWER AT 23877 MANNING TRAIL. AT&T/NEW CINGULAR WIRELESS, APPLICANT (CONTINUED FROM JANUARY 4, 2011 MEETING)

City Planner Sherri Buss began with summarizing AT&T's application for a Conditional Use Permit to construct a 150-foot monopole telecommunications tower and shelter at 23877 Manning Trail. The Planning Commission held a public hearing at its meeting on January 4, 2011 and determined that additional information was needed. The application was tabled. The Commission requested that neighboring property owners north of 240th Street (Chisago County) be notified of the continued discussion of the permit application, and that the property owners (Jim and Nancy Beimert) receive a copy of the proposed conditions of approval.

Planner Buss reviewed the additional requested materials which the Applicant provided. The Commission requested an alternate location plan showing the tower in a location that meets setback requirements of ¼ mile from Manning Trail, as well as other setbacks. The alternate location plan indicated that the tower could not meet the ¼ mile setback on this property, and at best the tower location could be approximately 1,000 feet from Manning Trail. This alternate site puts the tower at a higher elevation and away from the natural screening provided along the

roadway. Planner Buss concluded that the visual simulation of the alternate location indicated that the tower is as visible or more visible than in the location originally proposed.

The Applicant also submitted a requested landscape and screening plan showing additional screening along roadways and property boundaries. As the Applicant's plan met only the minimum requirements, Planner Buss modified the landscape plan to provide for additional screening to better meet the requirement that the tower be visually inconspicuous when viewed from County Road 15A (Manning Trail). This plan included the addition of over 100 trees of varying sizes and species. The Applicant indicated that they would be willing to utilize the landscape plan provided by the Planner. Commissioner Schwarz asked the Beimerts if they were in approval of the additional plantings along the boundaries. Jim Beimert stated that he would be in favor of additional trees along the property boundaries.

Planner Buss presented coverage maps submitted by the Applicant showing the existing service coverage in the area of the proposed tower, and showing potential improvement if the tower is constructed.

For informational purpose, Planner Buss developed a map showing the potential locations that remain within Scandia for new towers and antennas. The map indicated that approximately 12.5% of the City's area remains for the placement of new towers.

Commissioner Philippi questioned the rate of growth of the tree plantings. Planner Buss predicated that after the first two years of settling in, the deciduous trees could grow approximately 2 feet per year, and 1 to 1½ feet per year for the conifers. This would be dependent on weather factors.

Planner Buss provided a number of conditions that would be required for approval of the Conditional Use Permit. Commissioner Krinke suggested that a statement be added to condition #11 that requires AT&T to submit an annual inspection report to the city.

Chair Maefsky opened the floor for public comments.

Rick Lindblad, 10904 240th Street: Mr. Lindblad stated that he is the property owner directly north of the proposed site, and has no opposition to the construction of the tower. He felt that it will blend into the landscape shortly after it goes up.

Jim and Nancy Beimert, 23877 Manning Trail: Mr. Beimert stated that they have worked very closely with AT&T on a lease agreement and have no reservations about the construction of the tower on their property.

Steve Stulz, Agent for AT&T: Mr. Stulz addressed the criteria for determining placement of a new cell tower. The company tracks complaints, dropped service and numerous other factors to select the optimal placement for a new tower. Mr. Stulz stated that new tower construction is looked at as a last resort in accomplishing coverage goals. He acknowledged that the company will cooperate to best meet the requests of the city.

Commissioner Philippi questioned the methodology used in developing the visual simulation photos. Mr. Stulz replied that the engineers use existing objects to reference height and scale accordingly. Mr. Stulz commented that the alternate location is not viable and the company prefers the original proposed site as it is better screened by mature trees along the roadway.

Commission Chair Maefsky asked if the company has considered stealth towers as a way to reduce the visual impact. Mr. Stulz replied that AT&T has not considered a stealth tower for this location as the landscape is not conducive to this.

Commission Chair Maefsky closed the floor to public comments at 7:50 pm.

Commissioner Rodsjo asked for verification of the landscape plan, and commented on the mix of trees being recommended.

Commissioner Philippi pointed out that the visual simulation photo which the Applicant submitted showing the tower with the 1,000 foot setback was inaccurate because the perspective is off. His calculations determined that the tower's height and width should be 40% of the size indicated in the photo. Commissioner Philippi stated that a judgment should not be based on this inaccuracy.

Mr. Stulz replied that the intent was to show the appearance of the tower within the open space of the field.

Commissioner Rodsjo commented that she prefers the location closer to Manning Trail, as the mature trees aid in screening the tower and it will not be as noticeable as it would be out in the open field. Commissioner Rodsjo suggested that the neighboring property owner to the east be contacted about the adequacy of the screening plan on the eastern boundary.

Krinke, second by Schwarz, moved to recommend to the City Council approval of the Conditional Use Permit for AT&T/Cingular Wireless to allow construction of a monopole communications tower and a shelter for communications equipment to be located at 23877 Manning Trail, with findings and conditions as recommended by the Planner (staff report dated January 27, 2011) with an amendment to Condition #11 that the Applicant provide an annual inspection report to the city.

The Commission continued discussion on approval of the CUP. Commissioner Philippi asked about the process for amending an ordinance. Administrator Hurlburt explained the process, which includes holding a public hearing. Commissioner Philippi recommended that the Commission and City Council take up the issue of cell towers in a comprehensive way to satisfy coverage with minimal tower construction.

A vote was taken on the Krinke/Schwarz motion. The motion carried 4-1, with Philippi opposed.

Consensus of the Commission was to proceed with discussion of cell tower ordinance language at the March meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Philippi, second by Krinke, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Eklund
Deputy Clerk