

Radio Technical Committee

Meeting Notes for April 10, 2008 7:30 pm

Present: John Caswell, John LeGates and Paul Svetz

Also present at the table: Asst. Town Administrator Anita Scheipers

Discussion Points:

- 1) John Caswell noted that due to two of the members having been out of town for the last few weeks, the members of the committee had several discussions over past few days to get each other up to speed as to current status of information received, etc. He stated all discussion items would be discussed again at this meeting. Any decisions needing to be made would be made at this or future meetings.
- 2) John Caswell provided a brief summary of the issues and actions addressed to date. Paul Svetz reported that he has contacted public safety staff and both police and fire staff agree that the radio problems associated with radio signal distribution have been solved.
- 3) The committee reviewed facts regarding the existing tower and antennae. The current base is at 386' 2.5" AMSL. The top of the tower is 60' above that. The top of the antenna whips is at 467' 4.5" AMSL. The base of the new tower is 5 feet 1 inch lower than the base of the old telephone pole towers. It was explained we are not sure if the height as measured by the FAA includes the antennae height, or if it just involves the tower itself. This will be confirmed before the next meeting. It was explained there is no definitive data available regarding the exact height of the old tower.
- 4) The committee briefly reviewed radio system options that will be analyzed within a "decision matrix". This matrix will itemize all options to consider and all criteria by which to judge the options. The matrix will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- 5) The ability to reduce the overall height of the tower antennas by use of smaller antennae was discussed as an option to keep the existing structure within the FAA restrictions and also to reduce the visual impacts to abutters. Paul Svetz agreed to continue research relative to antenna options.
- 6) Paul Svetz reported he had contacted Broadcast Signal Labs (BSL) to discuss the best actions to take during the intended radio signal study. He stated BSL is able to test the fire and police antenna (which are two different types of antennas) at same time to allow study information to provide feedback as to the best antenna type to use at the tower. He stated they indicated that it is not feasible to conduct a third antennae study at the same time, as it is difficult to electronically switch between the three antennae for each location to be tested. He stated BSL will need to meet with the public safety staff in advance of the test to work out the technical issues of testing while the system is in operation. It is intended the scope of the study will be finalized within the next few weeks and it will be completed in the late May early June timeframe when trees have fully leaved out.

The best time for a study is on a rainy day/. The review of study results will take aprox. 2 weeks.

- 7) Other visual impacts were discussed and those present agreed that visual screening options must also be addressed. John LeGates reaffirmed that the best options for reducing the visual impact of the tower is to a) paint the tower base either dark brown or black, b) screen the tower base with vegetation, or c) to clad the tower base with wood. The committee expressed concern that they are not best suited to make such aesthetic decisions, and directed Anita Scheipers to notify the Selectmen that they recommend additional assistance be sought to address the following: a) have certified arborist evaluate the health of the existing trees to determine that treatments, if any, should be constructed annually to maintain these trees. b) review options of screening materials or plantings, c) discuss such options with affected abutters to determine what action to take relative to vegetative screening, and d) determine cost of such actions. It was mentioned that abutter Paul Shelman had agreed to attempt PhotoShop modification of digital photos to effect a visual estimation of how effective various modifications might be. The committee has not heard back from Mr. Shelman at this time.
- 8) It was mentioned that the ground holes from the two original phone poles are still open at the site. A resident asked Anita Scheipers to see that this potential safety issue is addressed.
- 9) A resident asked if the committee still intended to review new technical options as an alternative to the existing tower. The committee briefly explained they had reviewed such options and found them to be very “leading edge” technology which they considered to be uncertain options for the town to consider at this time.
- 10) A “working session” has been scheduled for Wed., May 14, 2008 at 2pm for the purpose of the committee reviewing any technical data obtained for the various options. This meeting is an open meeting, but the entire agenda of the meeting is intended to allow the committee focus solely on data review.
- 11) It was asked if the Planning Board could be contacted to determine if the current or future cell tower applicants have or could be asked to agree to host town radio system equipment if it is determined in the town’s best interest to do so. The committee agreed to contact the Planning Board on this issue.
- 12) All residents present at the end of the meeting agreed that the current process being taken to review the radio system options was very open and inclusive, and they appreciated the depth of review the committee was conducting.
- 13) Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

