

**Present:** Patty Chaffee - Chair; Gabe Bailey - Vice Chair; Jeremy Wood - Ex Officio; Doug Neill; Alan Putnam; Alissa Bascom; Dick Lincourt

**Alternates:** Rosie Smith-Hull; Keith Weed; Sharon Francis

**Public:** Robert Meier

**Zoom:** Will Dodge; Kevin Mason; Martin Lavin; Peter Marchant; Roxanne Nute; Roger Thibodeau

**Public:** Gary Merrill; Sandra Merrill

**Staff Present:** Liz Emerson; Sarah Davis - Secretary

Patty Chaffee called the meeting to order at 7pm.

**Minutes of the meeting of 4/20/21:**

Corrections: Patty Chaffee: p.1, para. 3, line 2 change "drive" to Drive"; p.1, 6, line 1 add "chapter" after "Historical and Cultural Resources".

Motion by Gabe Bailey to accept the minutes as amended, seconded by Alan Putnam. All in favor with the exception of Doug Neill who abstained as he was not present at the meeting, motion approved.

**Applications:**

**2021-ANFP-001: Gary and Sandra Merrill (Owners):** request final review of a .07-acre annexation from the property identified as Map 252 Lot 015 to Map 252 Lot 014 and is located at 530 Old Cheshire Tpke. and 572 Old Cheshire Tpke. in the Mixed-Use (E) Zoning District.

Liz Emerson summarized the application and stated that the property is Grandfathered in to have 2 dwellings as per 1980s regulations. Liz Emerson sees no issues with the application.

Mr and Mrs Merrill were asked if they had anything to add, there was nothing to be added.

Rosie Smith-Hull asked if all the abutters have been notified, it was confirmed that all abutters have been notified: the neighbor to the north is William Benjamin.

Dick Lincourt asked about the application and "n/a" against "Water Mains and Sewage" it was confirmed by Liz Emerson that there will be no changes to the water and sewage system.

Patty Chaffee closed the Public Hearing for the lot line adjustment and asked for a motion.

Motion by Alissa Bascom to accept the application as complete, seconded by Doug Neill. All in favor of accepting the application for completeness with the exception of Alan Putnam who abstained as he is an abutter, motion approved.

Motion by Gabe Bailey to accept the application as final, seconded by Dick Lincourt, all in favor with the exception of Alan Putnam who abstained, motion approved.

Liz Emerson confirmed to the applicants that signed paperwork will be forwarded to them in due course.

Patty Chaffee moved the meeting to the second application:

**2021-SPFP-001: New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC (Owner):** request final site plan review for reconstruction of an existing cell tower; the property identified as Map 233 Lot 053001 and is located at 264 Birch Drive in the Mixed-Use (E) Zoning District.

Will Dodge introduced everyone involved in the application and proceeded with the presentation:

First Net: Will Dodge explained the history of First Net and presented a video on this Federal Agency which was created in 2012 to address the need for first responder agencies to be able to communicate on a local, state and national level. He went on to speak about Charlestown which does not currently have great cell service from AT&T which is why the area has been made a priority in the First Net Project. A copy of the video was made available to all Board members.

Will Dodge spoke about the location at 259 Birch Drive in Charlestown which is in the Mixed-Use Zone and is serviced by 2 existing roads: what is proposed is building a 135 foot high tower and removing the 2 existing towers within the current compound, repurposing the existing shelter and utilizing the 2 existing roads during construction. Metal cable trays will be connected to the tower and everything will be within the existing compound with very little vegetative clearing. The antennas will be 131 feet high overall with commercial co locators on the top. The existing 6 foot chain link fence will remain. The site will be safe in terms of radio frequency emissions and well within required limits.

State Highways 11, 12, Acworth Road and the Town of Charlestown are the targets to benefit from this tower. Existing tower locations are too far away to reach this area and provide a good level of service which is why this tower is needed. It is predicted that 7 miles of highway 12, 2.4 miles of highway 11, 3.2 miles of Acworth Road, a total of roughly 7,000 residents in the area will benefit from the new tower. It was determined that lowering the height of the tower would have resulted in a loss of coverage and benefit to only 4,400 residents instead of the 7,000 that is predicted.

Visual impacts: other than on the property itself, visual impact will be limited to the north of the property. For most of the town where the highest density population is, simulations show that a portion of the tower will be visible looking Eastward from Main Street.

**Waiver Requests:**

Site Plan criteria: reconstructing the existing tower. The reason for the replacement tower is because the current, 101 foot tower is not tall enough and is not constructed in a way that would support the new equipment. A unipole is not being used due to the requirement for air flow.

The height above the tree line requirement: 20 feet above the height of the canopy. The current pole already exceeds this requirement by 25 feet: the total height above the canopy including the lightning rod for the new tower will be 67 feet above the tree canopy plus an additional 4 feet when the lightning rod is accounted for: any lower than this would result in a lowering of the number of residents benefitting from the new antenna.

Patty Chaffee opened the meeting to questions.

Gabe Bailey asked who initiated the project. It was confirmed that the company approached the town. He further asked who owns the tower, Liz Emerson confirmed that the equipment is and will remain owned and managed by SBA Towers.

Doug Neill asked if all abutters have been notified: Liz Emerson confirmed that notices were sent to all abutters although return receipts have not been received for all letters.

Patty Chaffee asked about the Police Department's equipment not being any higher than it is currently.

Will Dodge responded that the existing equipment will be positioned at a greater height, between 80 and 120 feet which is at least 30 feet higher than it is today. In terms of First Net, the AT&T network and First Net service is the same. Should there be an incident, First Net has a priority on the network over regular subscribers. There are currently 17 sign ups in Sullivan County for this service.

Dick Lincourt asked what is involved in signing up. Will Dodge responded that he is not the best person to answer this questions, he explained that there is a paid subscription which is subsidized.

Dick Lincourt asked about sign ups. Will Dodge confirmed that the service pushes the limits as to the definition of "First Responders" it includes Highway Departments and Schools.

Patty Chaffee asked if there is site access from Hackett Swamp Road: Keith Weed confirmed that there is access to the site from Hackett Swamp.

Roger Thibodeau asked if abutters were notified. It was confirmed that a letter was sent however no return receipt has been received. Will Dodge responded that there is no major utility upgrade required, it was confirmed by Peter Marchant from SAI that there will not be any changes to power equipment. He also confirmed that the Town Police Equipment will be at 82 feet which is 32 feet higher than current.

Patty Chaffee asked for any further questions.

Dick Lincourt asked if there is any charge to the Police Department - it was confirmed that there will be no charge. Dick Lincourt asked about the bond for the tower which is required by Zoning Regulations. Liz Emerson confirmed that she will look into this further.

Patty Chaffee asked about bonds in other communities. Will Dodge responded that their experience is that there have not been significant changes in bonds: it was agreed by the Board that confirmation should be obtained that the bond is adequate.

Patty Chaffee thanked the applicants and closed the hearing to comments.

Patty Chaffee asked for a motion on completeness.

Motion by Jeremy Wood to accept the application as complete, seconded by Alissa Bascom, all in favor, motion approved as complete.

The Board agreed to wait and consider opinions from local first responders before Final Acceptance of the application. Patty Chaffee commented that the agreement should be with the Town of Charlestown and not the Police Department as the tower already being used by other town departments.

Liz Emerson stated that she has spoken to Chief Connors and he has confirmed that the proposed tower will greatly improve the radio service particularly in South Charlestown. The proposal will also resolve the current issue with access to the generator which is located in the Olsen garage.

Patty Chaffee and Jeremy Wood both commented on the need to know specifics on the subscription costs.

Patty Chaffee confirmed that the final decision on the application is to be moved to the meeting on May 18.

Liz Emerson will obtain written confirmation from SBA that the bond for the tower is adequate.

Patty Chaffee thanked the applicants for the presentation.

**New Business:**

Liz Emerson stated that she is working on reformatting chapters, she has completed 2 so far. The next meeting for the Master Plan Sub Committee is this Thursday, May 6 at 3 pm.

Patty Chaffee stated that the meeting this Thursday should be an organizational meeting to focus the project.

**Communications:** Liz Emerson stated that there have been no new communications.

**Next meeting May 18:** Matt Blanc is expected to be present at the next meeting and there should, be a draft for the Recreation Chapter. Regional Concerns Chapter: Jeff Lessels could potentially present in June.

Patty Chaffee asked for any other business. Liz Emerson stated that the DES has confirmed that the trailer in North Charlestown with "poo water" is authorized.

Gabe Bailey asked about the letter in the "Our Town" concerning cleaning up properties in town and this being linked to the Planning Board. Liz Emerson explained that the letterhead that was used was her letterhead which has the Planning Board on it.

Patty Chaffee asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion to adjourn by Dick Lincourt, seconded by Gabe Bailey, all in favor, meeting adjourned at 8.10.

Sarah Davis  
Secretary