MINUTES OF
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
OCTOBER 1, 1996

PRESENT: John R. Byers, Mount Vernon District
Carl A. S. Coan, Jr., Providence District
Judith W. Downer, Dranesville District
Janet R. Hall, Mason District
John W. Hunter, Commissioner At-Large
John B. Kelso, Lee District
Ronald W. Koch, Sully District
Peter F. Murphy, Jr., Springfield District
John M. Palatiello, Hunter Mill District
Alvin L. Thomas, Commissioner At-Large

ABSENT: Suzanne F. Harsel, Braddock District
Robert v. L. Hartwell, Commissioner At-Large

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Chairman Peter F. Murphy, Jr., convened the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

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COMMISSION MATTERS

Chairman Murphy announced that the Planning Commission's public hearing on two (2) proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments, and S96-CW-3CP, Out-of-Turn Plan Amendment, all of which concern the new regulations for telecommunications facilities would be held on Wednesday, October 23, 1996. He also noted that the Board of Supervisors would hold their public hearing on those items on Monday, November 11, 1996.

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Commissioner Downer announced that the Planning Commission's Housing Committee would meet at 7:15 p.m., Thursday, October 3, 1996, in the Board Conference Room; and the public was invited.

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ORDER OF THE AGENDA

Chairman Murphy, in the absence of Secretary Harsel, stated that the Telecommunications Facilities Workshop was the only item on the evening's Agenda. WITHOUT OBJECTION, it was so ordered.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES WORKSHOP – With staff from the Office of Comprehensive Planning & the Office of General Services, as well as speakers from the Federal Communications Commission & other related experts in the field. THIS IS NOT A PUBLIC HEARING; while the session is open to the public, no public testimony will be allowed at this time.

The Planning Commission held a workshop and discussions on Telecommunications Facilities in Fairfax County. Chairman Murphy gave opening remarks and furnished a brief history of telecommunications facilities in Fairfax County. He stated that at the direction of the Board of Supervisors, a Telecommunications Task Force comprised of members of industry, citizens, School Board, Park Authority, Water Authority, Virginia Power, and the Gas Company, had been instituted to find solutions regarding monopoles and communications towers on how to best address the issue. Chairman Murphy stated that following many meetings, the Task Force had endorsed on June 11, 1996, a proposed Plan Amendment and a Zoning Ordinance Amendment which he presented to the Board of Supervisors on July 8, 1996 and the Board then authorized a public hearing on the proposals. He then introduced the following individuals and turned the workshop over to the staff coordinator.

Mr. David B. Marshall, Assistant Director, Planning Division (PD), Office of Comprehensive Planning (OCP), coordinated the workshop. He introduced the following individuals who presented their views to assist the Planning Commission in making the public more aware of the new Federal Law and other pertinent issues concerning this subject.

1. Ms. Rosalind Allen, Deputy Bureau Chief, Wireless Division, Federal Communications Commission (FCC), furnished an overview of the Telecommunications and Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996. She stated that the Telecommunications Act of 1996 contained important provisions which concerned the placement of towers and other facilities for use in providing personal wireless service. She also noted that State and local communities had worked closely with cellular and other wireless service providers on such placement plans, but the new law established new responsibilities for the FCC. Ms. Allen referred to Fact Sheet Number 1 which explained the new provisions and included the names of contacts for additional information. Ms. Allen also stated that the Telecommunications Act of 1996 contained important provisions concerning the placement of antenna structures and other facilities for use in the provision of personal wireless services. She noted that State and local governments had already begun working closely with wireless service providers to place such facilities within their localities. Ms. Allen then referred to Fact Sheet Number 2 which contained a new compilation of frequently asked questions and answers and she summarized the radio frequency (RF) emission rules governing personal wireless services. (Copies of the two (2) fact sheets may be found in the date file.)

There was a discussion between Ms. Allen and Commissioners Byers, Murphy and Palatiello regarding the use of Government land, particularly that owned by the Department of Defense (DOD), for telecommunications facilities. Ms. Allen stated that the FCC planned to approach DOD regarding establishment of telecommunications facilities on their forested lands

In response to a question from Commissioner Palatiello, Ms. Allen stated that she didn't believe monopoles would become obsolete even though they could use antennas on almost anything, including telephone poles.

Ms. Allen, responding to Commissioner Hunter, said that over time, some of the current providers would consolidate. She said that currently, there were two (2) PCS providers who were active in Fairfax County and a third would be included within the next three (3) months. Ms. Allen also noted that FCC was licensing three (3) more channel blocks.

2. Dr. Robert Cleveland, Scientist, Office of Engineering and Technology, FCC, showed slides and described the newly-revised Federal guidelines for radio frequency radiation exposure. He emphasized that the FCC was not a health and safety agency but deferred to other expert and Federal agencies for guidance on environmental and health issues. He noted that the National Environmental and Policy Act, passed by Congress in 1969 required all Federal Agencies to evaluate and/or assess the impact of their actions on the environment. Because of that Act, Dr. Cleveland stated that the FCC had established a radio frequency safety program to look at radio frequency exposure as one (1) of the environmental factors. He referred to the terms "non-ionizing" and "ionizing" energy. Dr. Cleveland stated that "non-ionizing" energy or radiation was the type of energy found when dealing with emissions from micro-wave towers, radio towers and the like. He noted that "ionizing" radiation energy was characterized by nuclear radiation and x-rays. He said that there were large differences in the affects of these two (2) types of energy and it was very important to make sure that the distinction between the two (2) was made. He referred to the terms, power density, electric field strength and magnetic field strength which one would see whenever they encountered anything written which characterized exposure near a cellular facility. He stated that many studies had been done on the biological effects of radio frequency radiation exposure.

   Commissioner Kelso asked if the radiation would have any cumulative effect with regard to high tension electrical lines and a telecommunications tower running through the center of those lines. Dr. Cleveland responded that there were no standards and no Federal guidelines that covered exposures in those areas and he could not say what would be a safe level for exposure at those frequencies.

3. Mr. Jules Cohen, Consulting Engineer, also showed slides and explained the amount of radiation exposure that would occur from various radio-frequency (RF) devices. He said his role as a professional engineer was to evaluate the amount of exposure that would occur from the installation of various radio frequency devices. He said that RF devices could be on any structure and it did not make any difference what structure held the antenna. He noted that

the ground level exposures would be the same and the maximum per minute exposure for the

general population, known technically as the uncontrolled environment, would be the same. He further noted that the cellular systems differed from the PCS systems in that the cellular would have approximately eighteen (18) discrete transmitters. He noted that the PCS had a different arrangement with a single wide band transmitter which handled all of their communications.

4. Dr. Michael C. Trahos, Family Practitioner from Alexandria, VA, showed slides and further discussed the affect of "ionizing" and "non-ionizing" radiation on the human body. He said that one (1) of the greatest concerns of the general population was: "What will the radiation do to me, my body and my children?" He noted that "ionizing" radiation was an electro-magnetic radiation energy which had a sufficient quantity to cause ionization or the stripping of electrons from atoms and molecules. Dr. Trahos said that "non-ionizing" radiation was electromagnetic radiation energy that was of insufficient quantity to cause the ionizing effect of atoms and molecules.

   In response to a question from Chairman Murphy, Dr. Trahos stated that he did not foresee any adverse or negative impact to living and playing in close proximity to a cellular or PCS device. He also noted that the radiation was less than one (1) percent and consistent with their calculations and measurements.

5. Mr. David Mullet, Director, Network Services Division, Fairfax County Department of Information Technology, showed slides and discussed telecommunications facilities, both current and planned within Fairfax County. He said that since 1992, Fairfax County had received approximately fifty (50) applications per year for telecommunications facilities. He noted that the national average for telecommunications facilities was expected to increase by twenty-five (25) percent and the trend would continue over the next few years. He stated that we currently had two (2) cellular companies operating in Fairfax County and he estimated that each company would require about forty (40) sites to provide service in Fairfax County for a total of eighty (80) sites. Mr. Mullett said that there would be approximately four (4) PCS type companies operating in Fairfax County which would require approximately seventy (70) sites. Mr. Mullett said that approximately seventy (70) percent of those sites would be met by existing structures such as the existing monopoles and buildings.

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The Planning Commission recessed at 9:50 p.m. and reconvened at 10:05 p.m.

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Mr. David Marshall, Assistant Director, PD, OCP, presented the proposed Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Amendment for Mobile and Land Based Telecommunications facilities. He said the amendments to both the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance resulted from the deliberations of the County's Telecommunications Task Force and constituted the initial recommendations of the Task Force for addressing the placement of telecommunications

facilities in Fairfax County. He said that the Plan and Zoning Amendments were based on the

recommendations termed "quick fixes" or actions which could be quickly undertaken to facilitate the location of antennas on certain existing structures. He noted that the Plan Amendment also provided a new set of policies for evaluating the visual impact of new monopoles and towers. Mr. Marshall said that in July 1996, the Task Force had recommended to the Board of Supervisors that the Policy Plan element of the Comprehensive Plan be amended to provide additional guidance for determining "features shown" locations and reducing the visual impact of telecommunications facilities and equipment. He also noted that the Planning Commission would hold public hearings on Wednesday, October 23, 1996, regarding these items.

Mr. Michael Congleton, Deputy Zoning Administrator, Zoning Administration Division, OCP, commented on the proposed revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance Amendment for Mobile and Land Based Telecommunications facilities. He noted that the proposed amendments were in accordance with the recommendations of the Telecommunications Task Force and were necessary to implement the proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed amendment would allow building-mounted antennas to be located on multiple family dwellings thirty-five (35) feet or greater in height, in lieu of the current limitation of sixty-five (65) feet, provided that any equipment structure larger than seventy (70) cubic feet in volume would be located on the ground. Mr. Congleton said that the proposed amendment would also allow building-mounted antennas on non-residential Group 3 and 4 special permit uses and Category 1, 2, 3, and 4 special exception buildings or structures which would be thirty-five (35) feet or greater in height, subject to the current standards of paragraph 1, Section 2514, provided that any equipment structure larger than seventy (70) cubic feet in volume would be located on the ground. He said the proposed amendment would also allow telecommunications antennas and related equipment by-right, with no standards, if they were entirely enclosed within a non-residential building. Mr. Congleton said the proposed amendment would also allow antennas on existing or replacement utility transmission poles, utility distribution poles.

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The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 p.m.
Peter F. Murphy Jr., Chairman
Suzanne F. Harsel, Secretary

For a verbatim record of this meeting, reference may be made to the audio and video recordings which may be found in the Office of the Planning Commission of Fairfax County, Virginia.

Meeting By: Dorothy E. Brittingham

Approved on: May 13, 1998

Mary A. Pascoe

Mary A. Pascoe, Clerk to the
Fairfax County Planning Commission