

Planning Commission Meeting
October 6, 2010
Verbatim Excerpt

2232-S10-13 – T-MOBILE, IN CONJUNCTION WITH MILESTONE COMMUNICATIONS
(Washington Irving Middle School)

After the Close of the Public Hearing

Vice Chairman Alcorn: Close the public hearing; recognize Commissioner Murphy.

Commissioner Murphy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I bet everyone here who testified, no matter what side of the issue you are on for the monopole or against the monopole, has a cell phone or a pager or an iPod or an iPad or something that gets its power from a monopole or a tower or an antenna on top of a building because that's the direction - - not only this County, but this country - - is going in. The rise of telecommunications companies, the products they sell is overwhelming, overwhelming. And if you're in Orange Hunt and you get service, well let's object to the tower on Old Keene Mill Road because well, it's near a school. Or if you get service on Old Keene Mill Road, you know maybe we should put something in Orange Hunt. What I'm saying is we have this problem, as Ms. Webster said, it's a quandary. We know these things are not attractive. They're a public - - like a public facility, public use just like the telephone wires that go down Old Keene Mill Road that hold up our traffic lights. They're there. They provide us cable television. That's what the tower is behind the Government Center. They're there because they provide us power for our landlines, but now this new dimension has come in, a cellular phone, and people need to be served by that process, whether they're T-Mobile or AT&T or Sprint, whatever. It's nice to have a phone that works in this area, but if you don't have the service that's provided by the provider of your manufactured product then it is frustrating as one of our speakers said this evening. One speaker can call Israel from his basement. Another person can't call 911 from his living room. That's where we are today. I was walking through Fair Oaks Mall one day and I saw this huge line. I thought it's a huge line in Fair Oaks Mall, they're going to Starbucks. No. They were going into the Apple store because the iPhone came out. I was driving down Wisconsin Avenue - - or M Street the other day, and I saw this huge line at 7:30 in the morning going up Wisconsin Avenue. I thought it was St. Patrick's Day and they were going for kegs and beer, whatever they do on St. Patrick's Day. They were buying the new phone up on Wisconsin Avenue. Thousands, literally thousands of people. That's where we're going. And we have an obligation under the Telecommunications Act to do the best job we can in siting these towers. We try to put them on top of buildings. We try to put antennas on top of hospitals or places that we don't see them as readily as we do when they come up out of the ground. And sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. And that's why we're charged to do this under the 2232 process, which is dictated by the State. It's not a County process. It's a State process. And we have to judge that by character, location, and extent, and health issue does not enter into that because the Telecommunications Act said it shouldn't. It can't. It's against the law if we do it. I would enter into the record a September 20th memorandum from Dean Tistadt, who is the Chief Operating Officer of the School Board, and it's - - it outlines precisely what the Fairfax County Public Schools System does to monitor the process as far as RF emissions are concerned. I can't believe, as a citizen of Fairfax County with one of the best public school systems in the United States of America, that our school

system would put something on a school campus, be it high school or intermediate school that puts our children in danger that creates a health hazard. I can't buy that. I don't care what they say in Sweden or Russia or some scientist from the University of Utah. We have to go by what they said - - what our Government says and what our School Department says. You heard from the Vice Principal of the school. You heard from former students. Those students are the new generation. We call them the "Plugged-In-Generation" because they walk down the street with earphones on and with something in their back pocket. I don't agree with that, but that's where we're going. We provide services through these towers for our ambulances, for EKG machines, for our Police calls, for 911. Before that tower went up in the West Springfield Government Center that serves cellular needs, our Police Department was dropping 911 calls in the Springfield District. And that's why we have to look at these things and base it on the three criteria of character, location, extent, not the financial split between school and applicant, and whatever. Let the School Board worry about that. We have to worry about the land use. And that's why I want to take a look at the written testimony I received and go over the verbal testimony and some of the other stuff that I received regarding this application, and that's why I'm going to defer decision. So, Mr. Chairman, I would **MOVE THE PLANNING COMMISSION DEFER DECISION ONLY ON APPLICATION 2232-S10-13 TO A DATE CERTAIN OF NOVEMBER 18TH, WITH THE RECORD REMAINING OPEN FOR COMMENT.** And the reason I'm deferring it that long of a period of time is because our schedules and my travel schedule cannot get it any closer to a date where we can all come to the public - - to the decision only.

Commissioners Flanagan and Lawrence: Second.

Vice Chairman Alcorn: Seconded by Commissioners Flanagan and Lawrence. Any discussion on that motion?

Commissioner Hart: Mr. Chairman?

Vice Chairman Alcorn: Mr. Hart.

Commissioner Hart: Thank you. I'd just - - I wanted to make sure that the length of the deferral is consistent with Mr. Stearns - -

Commissioner Murphy: I already put that on the record and he has written a letter - -

Commissioner Hart: November 18th is okay?

Commissioner Murphy: Yes, it is.

Commissioner Hart: Okay.

Commissioner Murphy: Yes. Thank you.

Vice Chairman Alcorn: Any additional discussion? All those in favor of the motion to defer decision only on 2232-S10-13 to a date certain of November 18, 2010, please say aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Vice Chairman Alcorn: All opposed? That motion carries. Chair is yours.

Chairman Murphy: Thank you very much. I want to thank David Marshall too. He's done an outstanding job as he always does with these applications. And again, thank you all for coming. Please drive carefully. I hope you don't have any problem getting home.

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(The motion carried unanimously with Commissioner Hall absent from the meeting.)

KAD