

# Selectboard denies T-Mobile

By John Garcia

## Neighb News Correspondent

The Fairhaven Selectboard voted against moving forward with a proposed cell phone tower at their meeting on Monday, September 20th.

The proposed tower would be placed on Long Road. Michael Johnson, the project's Site Acquisition Specialist, told the Board that T-Mobile had wanted a tower in that area to improve the quality of cell phone coverage.

"We have a significant gap in coverage," he said, adding that licensing the tower would generate revenue for the town.

"The town will be able to put this money toward the budget," he said.

The room was filled with abutters, who expressed their concern about the project.

Brian Monroe, who lives nearby at 5 Casey Lane, gave the Board a petition containing the signatures of over 200 people opposed to the tower. He then made a power point presentation outlining the concerns of the neighborhood.

Mr. Monroe stated that the addition of a cell tower would impact abutters negatively by both clashing with the neighborhood's aesthetics and reducing property values. To support the latter point, he cited studies saying that cell towers lowered the property values of surrounding houses.

He added that the money abutters lost through lower property values would outnumber any possible monetary gain the town would make.

"Is it fair to ask us to take the full burden of this tower," he asked.

Mr. Monroe also stated that there had not been definitive data proving that cell towers did not create a health risk.

"Would you take the chance with your children," he said.

He told Mr. Johnson that there were already seven towers within two miles of the proposed location, and proposed that T-Mobile could put their equipment on one of those instead.

Mr. Johnson responded that the existing towers did not meet T-Mobile's needs.

"We are on every tower in the area that we can be," he said. He also noted that their towers were regulated by the FCC, minimizing any

potential health risks.

He disputed the claim that the addition of a tower would have a negative impact on property values.

"Home buyers want to live in a neighborhood where coverage is reliable," he said.

Mr. Johnson offered to set up an independent appraisal to determine the exact effect a new cell tower would have on the values of the surrounding homes.

Several neighbors were concerned about possible damage to the nearby wetlands. Mr. Johnson stated that the applicants would be working with the Conservation Commission to prevent any negative impact on the area. He added that the Commission would not support the project if they determined that it would cause any damage.

"It's not something we can skirt or get around," he said.

Some of those in attendance

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[Charles Murphy]

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disagreed with Mr. Johnson's statement that the area had a coverage gap, saying that they had never had any problems. Others had the opposite experience, claiming to have had difficulties with dropped calls. One man told the Board that this could pose a safety problem if people are not able to make a call in an emergency.

Vice Chairperson Michael Silvia stated that Mr. Johnson had failed to make an effective case for the project.

"I really don't want to go forward at this point," he said.

Chairperson Charles Murphy stated that the revenue generated by the tower would not necessarily justify the potential impact on the abutters.

"Sometimes the cost of a good neighborhood is priceless," he said.

The Board voted unanimously in favor of not moving forward with the

project.

Planning Board and Appeals Board member Joseph Morra appeared to request a Change of Owner license transfer for the Car Dealer and Repair License held by his business Stylin Cycles. The recipient of the transfer would be Richard English, an employee of Mr. Morra's.

Mr. Silvia told Mr. Morra that this kind of license could not be transferred.

"You can't transfer the license," he said. "You ask for a new license."

He suggested that Mr. Morra withdraw the application.

"You may want to withdraw the application and get your ducks in a row," he said.

The Board told Mr. Morra that Mr. English would have to appear at a later date to request a license. They also suggested that he should allow Building Commissioner Wayne Fostin to inspect the business in preparation for that request. Mr. Morra replied that he would comply.

"Nobody can stop him," he said.

He withdrew the application.

In other business, the Board:

- Reconvened in executive session to discuss a personnel issue with attorney Nicholas Poser, regarding a police officer who says he suffered injuries in the line of duty.
- Voted unanimously to approve a transfer of Connolly's Liquor Mart's Liquor License to the new owner.
- Voted unanimously in favor of approving a Special One Day All Alcoholic License for a fund raiser the Fairhaven Varsity Club will host on September 25th.
- Voted unanimously in favor of approving a Statement of Interest that the School Department will send to the Massachusetts School Building Authority requesting grant money to make renovations at Hastings Middle School and Fairhaven High School.
- Read a letter of resignation from Cable Advisory Committee member John Haaland.
- Voted unanimously in favor of approving an application for a Community Block Grant.
- Listened to a presentation by the Haitian Advancement Foundation, which is a charity created to help the people of Haiti recover from the earthquake. ●●●