



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

Promoting the wise use of land - Helping to build great communities

DATE: October 2, 2015
TO: Planning Department Hearing Officer
FROM: Airlin M. Singewald, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: DRC2015-00011 Verizon (Dorset Ave.) MUP for a Wireless Facility

This item was continued from the September 4, 2015 Planning Department Hearing (PDH) due to an agenda error. This item was incorrectly listed on the September 4, 2015 PDH agenda as a consent item, when it should have been described as a hearing item.

The hearing request (Attachment 1), which was submitted by Claudia Harmon Worthen on August 24, 2015, lists the following concerns:

1. Verizon's proposed coverage maps and information about dropped calls were insufficient to show a need for the facility.
2. Verizon did not provide a master plan for wireless coverage in Cambria.
3. The homeowners near the project have strong safety and well-being concerns about the project.
4. The North Coast Advisory Council (NCAC) recommended the proposed project be moved out of the right-of-way and vehicle sight line.
5. The neighbors suggested moving the project to Hastings and Whitehall.

In response to the first and second issues, Verizon submitted the attached document (Attachment 2) entitled Verizon Wireless Coverage Plan (Cambria Master Plan). This document includes maps showing existing and planned future (3 – 5 years) wireless communications facilities in Cambria, as well as existing and proposed levels of coverage. There are currently three Verizon facilities in Cambria. Once the planned future facilities (including the proposed project) are constructed, most of Cambria will have sufficient Verizon coverage.

As for the third issue, regarding safety and well-being of neighbors, federal law (Telecommunications Act of 1996) prohibits local government from considering the health effects of radio frequency emissions when acting on an application for a wireless communications facility. The applicant has submitted a radio frequency analysis demonstrating that the project would comply with applicable federal emission limits.

Issue four correctly notes that NCAC recommended approval of the project with a condition that the location be reviewed by Public Works to verify adequate sight distance (NCAC referral response, Attachment 3).

The proposed facility is located in the County right-of-way and therefore is subject to encroachment permit approval (see condition #4). The Public Works Department reviewed the proposed project

and did not have sight distance concerns at the Whitehall and Dorset intersection, but noted that the proposed ground equipment would have to be relocated further downslope (westward), at least 10 feet from the edge of pavement.

Relocating the ground equipment 10 feet from the edge of pavement, as required by Public Works, would have removed some of the adjacent landowner's landscaping. To avoid this and address NCAC's sight distance concerns, Verizon submitted a revised site plan dated September 1, 2015 (Attachment 4), which shows the proposed ground equipment located approximately 60 feet north of the PG&E pole at the Whitehall and Dorset intersection. Public Works reviewed the revised site plan and approved the new location for the ground equipment (Wendell Wilkes email, Attachment 5). Based on this determination, the conditions have been revised (Attachment 8) to eliminate the requirement that the equipment be located 10 feet from the edge of pavement.

As for the final issue, the NCAC land use committee discussed the possibility of moving the facility a block up to Hastings and Whitehall. Verizon evaluated this alternative (Attachment 6, Alternative 1) and determined that, while it is feasible, it would have greater visual impacts because it would require adding a 6-foot tall "bayonet" extension to the top of the existing PG&E pole.

Verizon also considered locating the facility in front of a vacant lot on Hastings approximately 200 feet east of Whitehall (Attachment 6, Alternative 2). Verizon determined that this alternative is also feasible from a construction and coverage standpoint, but locating the facility in front of a vacant lot could interfere with the future development of the lot, such as limiting where a driveway could be sited. Verizon submitted photo-simulations (Attachment 7) showing what the facility would look like in this location.

In summary, Verizon addressed the community's key concern (sight distance) by relocating the proposed ground equipment further away from the Dorset and Whitehall intersection. While Verizon is amenable to relocating the facility to Hastings, such an alternative would have equal or greater visual impacts and could restrict development options on an adjacent vacant lot. Therefore, staff is recommending approval of the project in the originally proposed location at Whitehall and Dorset with the revised site plan showing the equipment moved further north.

If the Hearing Officer determines that the facility should be relocated to one of the alternative sites on Hastings, the project will have to be re-noticed and continued to a future hearing date.

Refer to the September 4, 2015 Planning Department Hearing staff report and attachments (Attachment 9) for project analysis.

Attachments

1. Harmon Worthen Hearing Request dated August 24, 2015
2. Verizon Wireless Coverage Plan (Cambria Master Plan)
3. NCAC Referral Response
4. Revised Site Plan dated September 1, 2015
5. Wendell Wilkes email dated September 3, 2015
6. Hastings Alternatives
7. Photo-simulation of Hastings Alternative
8. Revised Conditions of Approval
9. September 4, 2015 PDH Staff Report and Attachments