

MEMORANDUM TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Dennis Enslinger, Acting City Manager

DATE: 6-19-2020

SUBJECT: Updated Response to Request for Additional Information in Regard to Proposed Cell Tower off of Great Seneca Highway

At the February 3, 2020 Public Discussion (following the public comments), the Mayor and Council indicated that they still had concerns regarding the proposed location of the AT&T cell tower off of Great Seneca Highway. As such, they asked that AT&T provide additional information, specifically in regard to the items noted below. These items were addressed in a PowerPoint provided by AT&T on 5-18-2020. The PowerPoint slide numbers were provided for each bullet below to facilitate the review process.

- A business case – map showing aggregate data in areas where tickets (for problems/complaints) are generated [slides 2, 6-8, 39-41]
- Distance to closest home (now on western boundary) [slide 15]
- Rendering showing tree loss to accommodate access road [slide 16]
- Number of trees blocking tower that are evergreens as compared to those that are deciduous [“all trees are deciduous” slide 16]
- Other alternatives, such as Nike Missile site [slides 12, 13, 17]
- Photo of facility showing scale [slides 19–23]

After review of the PowerPoint, subsequent questions arose. Following are those questions and the responses from AT&T representatives.

- *Requesting more data on why the County police campus is too far away. What is the service range of a tower in miles?*  
The police station is much too far outside the center of the ring (roughly .7 miles) to provide coverage to the areas that need to be covered for FirstNet. Essentially, building a tower on the police station property would be a waste because it doesn't add coverage where it's needed, and it overlaps with existing coverage. Contrary to public perception, these towers must be constructed within the relative center of the areas that need to be covered. A tower is unable to be built a mile or even a half mile away from the center of the target area, and “shoot” RF coverage into that needed area. In addition, and even if AT&T could place a tower at the police station (which it can't), this location would likely raise concerns about visual impact and aesthetics because the available land is out in the open without much tree cover and also nearby many residences.
- *Requesting more information on the SBA tower. Who owns it? How many colocations are there? Who are the providers collocated on the tower? Have you had discussions with the owner in regard to expanding the tower to permit use by AT&T?*

SBA Communications (tower company) owns the tower, which is located roughly .4 miles from the center of our ring (which is the area that needs coverage). There are currently two carriers on the tower, Verizon and T-Mobile and the only available antenna space is at approximately 80' above ground elevation, which is far too low to help AT&T provide FirstNet and coverage to the needed areas. We did not discuss the possibility of expanding the tower because it would need to be almost doubled in size (i.e. height increased by 70' – 80') given how far it is outside of the center of the ring. Based on our knowledge of expanding towers this is an impossibility from a structural standpoint. In addition to that, given how high of an expansion that we would need here, this would likely exacerbate perceived concerns about visual impact and aesthetics.

- *Why couldn't AT&T meet its demand with DAS along Seneca and Muddy Branch?*  
We are only able to meet our FirstNet commitment and coverage objectives by constructing a macro site at this location.
- *If the SBA site is unavailable, what about the WSSC site on Muddy Branch?*  
Building a tower at the WSSC pumping station off of Conservation Lane will not bring the coverage that is required for FirstNet services to the areas that require it. After an evaluation from AT&T, this location would miss covering a large portion of the neighborhoods to the south (Muddy Branch), and a portion of neighborhoods to the west (Lakelands). This property is also surrounded by residential properties, which would likely raise visual impact concerns, particularly given the much taller tower that would be needed at this location.

Staff will be presenting the information detailed in this memo at the July 6, 2020 Mayor and City Council meeting (under "Staff Guidance") to determine if the Mayor and City Council would like to move forward with the AT&T proposal. Should the Mayor and City Council decide to move forward with the AT&T proposal, a draft Resolution to negotiate and execute an agreement with AT&T will be provided at the July 6 meeting. If the Council would like to review the agreement prior to execution, they could modify the Resolution to provide for only the negotiation of the agreement. Staff would then bring back the final agreement for authorization to execute at a later date.