



Monterey County Zoning Administrator

Agenda Item No. 2

Legistar File Number: ZA 18-011

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PLN170843 - SAUNDERS (GTE MOBILENET OF CA)

Public hearing to consider the installation of a wireless communications facility consisting of a 64-foot high monopole with nine (9) antennas, all associated transmission cables; outdoor cabinets, and fenced perimeter.

Proposed Location: 12320 Christensen Road, Salinas

Proposed CEQA Action: Categorically Exempt per section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Zoning Administrator:

- a. Find the project is a small structure, which qualifies for a Class 3 Categorical Exemption per Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines and does not meet any of the exceptions under Section 15300.2;
- b. Approve a Use Permit to allow the installation of a 64-foot high communications monopole with nine (9) antennas, all associated transmission cables; outdoor cabinets, and a 30 by 40 square foot fencing perimeter.

A draft resolution, including findings and evidence, is attached for consideration (**Exhibit A**).

Staff recommends approval subject to nine (9) conditions.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Planning File Number: PLN170843

Owner: Saunders (GTE Mobilenet of CA)

APN: 113-092-012-000

Agent: GTE Mobilenet of California Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless

Plan Area: Greater Salinas Area Plan

Flagged and Staked: Photo-simulations Provided

SUMMARY:

The applicant requests approval of a Use Permit to allow development of a wireless communications facility (WCF) on a 1.12 acre parcel in the Light Commercial Zoning designation. A business that sells camper shells and truck accessories currently exists on the site. The proposed monopole will be visible from neighboring properties and from Highway 101. The applicant submitted visual simulations showing different designs, including mono-palm (faux palm tree) and mono-eucalyptus (faux eucalyptus); however, given the setting, the undisguised monopole design most effectively blends with the industrial nature of the surrounding area.

DISCUSSION:

Setting:

The proposed site is in a commercial area west of Highway 101, approximately half a mile north of the City of Salinas. The parcels bordering this section of the highway are zoned Light Commercial and Heavy Commercial. Beyond them to the west are Farmland zoned parcels. Businesses in this area are primarily auto-related. Surrounding uses include a trucking company, a collision auto repair shop, an automotive and tire shop, and a mobile home park. The subject 1.12 acre parcel has one existing business called “Leisure West”, which sells camper shells and truck accessories. The business is open from 8:30am to 5pm Monday through Friday and 8:30 to 3pm on Saturdays and usually has two or three employees on site at a time. The site has one permanent building on the northern side of the parcel and several temporary sheds. Some of the sheds will be removed or relocated to accommodate the monopole and associated equipment in the south-western corner of the property. Existing utility poles line the western and northern sides of the parcel. Access to the leased WCF would be through a proposed 15-foot wide access easement that will run through the center of the parcel.

Visual Resources and Design:

The subject site is not in a designated Visually Sensitive area. From the highway, the existing view is of utility poles and buildings. There are no tall trees in the immediate surrounding area; however, there are scattered palm trees approximately 900 feet south at the mobile home park.

The applicant submitted photo simulations of the standard monopole design as well as a mono-palm (faux palm tree) and mono-eucalyptus (faux eucalyptus tree). Both options are attached to the staff report. While the faux tree options would avoid the view of the plain monopole, the faux tree would have to be taller than existing trees and would be the only tree visible in the immediate vicinity. Due to this, the basic monopole design is less visually obtrusive and better blends with existing utility poles in the surrounding landscape. According to the applicant, the proposed facility has been designed at its minimal functional height and needs to be a total of 64 feet to reach its intended service area.

Although the subject parcel is not in an Urban Reserve zoning designation, staff sent the application to the City of Salinas for input due to the proximity to the city boundary. City staff did not provide an opinion on the specific design, but did respond with a list of code requirements that would apply to a similar project in the city. A requirement for the facility to be finished with non-glare grey color treatment and for fencing for support equipment to be a black chain-link fence with black vinyl slats has been added as a condition of approval (Condition No. 9).

Location and Alternative Site Analysis:

According to the applicant, the proposed facility will improve coverage for the north Salinas area along Highway 101 between Salinas and Prunedale and is needed to offload capacity from a nearby Verizon facility. The applicant submitted an Alternative Sites Analysis which studied a total of twelve sites as possible locations for the facility. Many of the potential sites were not pursued further because a lease agreement was not feasible or the site would not be as effective at achieving coverage objectives. The location was selected as the best option to minimize visual impacts while achieving Verizon’s coverage objectives for the area.

Co-Location

There are no other WCF base stations at the site or nearby. The proposed facility has been designed in a manner that will structurally accommodate additional antennas, and the applicant has submitted a statement to allow co-location in the future. Additional ground space is available within Verizon's lease area for at least one future carrier.

Noise

An Environmental Noise Analysis was conducted for the project to address the effect of the noise generating cooling system on nearby sensitive receptors. The nearest sensitive noise receptor is a mobile home park located on a Light Commercial zoned parcel 400 feet from the project site. The study found that the predicted outdoor noise level at this receptor would satisfy the County's noise level standard by a wide margin.

Radio Frequency

The applicant has submitted a statement that the proposed facility was evaluated by Hammett & Edison, Consulting Engineers. The report finds that the facility will comply with prevailing Federal Communications Commission (FCC) standards for limiting public exposure to radio frequency energy. The highest calculated level in publicly accessible areas is much less than the FCC standards allow for exposures of unlimited duration.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The following agencies have reviewed the project, have comments, and/or have recommended conditions:

- Environmental Health Bureau
- RMA-Public Works
- RMA-Environmental Services
- Water Resources Agency
- North County Fire Protection District
- North County Coastal Land Use Advisory Committee

The proposed project was not reviewed by any Land Use Advisory Committee because there is no Land Use Advisory Committee established in the Greater Salinas Area.

FINANCING:

Funding for staff time associated with this project is included in the FY17-18 Adopted Budget for RMA-Planning.

Prepared by: Cheryl Ku, Associate Planner, 796-6049
Reviewed by: Brandon Swanson, RMA Planning Services Manager
Approved by: John M. Dugan, RMA Deputy Director of Land Use and Community Development

The following attachments are on file with the RMA:

Exhibit A Draft Resolution, including:

- Recommended Conditions of Approval
- Site Plan and Elevations

Exhibit B Coverage Maps
Exhibit C Alternative Sites Analysis
Exhibit D Noise Analysis
Exhibit E Radio Frequency Study
Exhibit F Photo Simulations
Exhibit G Alternative Designs Photo Simulations
Exhibit H Vicinity Map

cc: Front Counter Copy; Brandon Swanson, RMA Planning Services Manager; Steven and Gayle Saunders, Property Owner, GTE Mobilenet of California Limited Partnership with d/b/a Verizon Wireless c/o Complete Wireless Consulting Attn: Michele Ellis (Applicant/Agent); The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); John H. Farrow; Janet Brennan; Project File PLN170843