



Monterey County Zoning Administrator

Agenda Item No. 7

Legistar File Number: ZA 18-077

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PLN180314 - RAMIREZ & CASTILLO (AT&T WIRELESS)

Public hearing to consider increasing of the height of an existing steel lattice tower from 117 feet to 129 feet for the co-location of a wireless communications facility. The project also consists of a new equipment enclosure and a diesel-powered backup generator.

Proposed Location: 17121 Tarpey Road, Royal Oaks, Coastal Zone

Proposed CEQA Action: Categorically Exempt per section 15301(b) of the CEQA Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Zoning Administrator:

- a. Find the project is a minor alteration of an existing facility, which qualifies for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption per Section 15301 of the CEQA Guidelines and does not meet any of the exceptions under Section 15300.2;
- b. Approve a Use Permit to allow an increase of the height of an existing steel lattice tower from 117 feet to 129 feet to allow co-location of a wireless communication facility, the installation of 12 panel antennas, 18 remote radio units, three (3) surge suppressors, a new equipment shelter, back-up diesel powered backup generator, and 16 x 16 perimeter screening fence at the foot of the existing electrical transmission line support tower.

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

Staff recommends approval subject to **13** conditions.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Owner: Alejandro Ramirez, property owner, Pacific Gas & Electric, tower owner

APN: 181-181-006-000

Agent: TSL Consulting, Tom Johnson, d/b/a AT&T

Zoning: Rural Density Residential [RDR/B-6 (CZ)]

Plan Area: North County Coastal Area Plan

Flagged and Staked: Photo-simulations Provided

SUMMARY:

The applicant requests approval of a Coastal Development Permit to allow an increase in the height of an existing steel lattice electrical powerline tower from 117 feet to 129 feet and the installation of a co-located wireless communication facility (WCF) including: 12 panel antennas, 18 remote radio units, three (3) surge suppressors. The project also consists of a new equipment shelter at the foot of the tower. The existing lattice tower is visible from Tarpey Road, located in a semi-rural part of the County that is characterized by rural residential development and agricultural operations including row crops, greenhouses, and hoop houses. The antenna panels would be co-located on the existing PG&E tower and would be appropriate with the agricultural uses of the surrounding area.

DISCUSSION:

Setting

The proposed site is in a rural area in northern Monterey County in an area commonly known as Royal Oaks. The project site, located between San Miguel Canyon Road/Maher Road and San Juan Road, is a 10 acre parcel characterized by agricultural activities and developed with a residential mobile home, various agricultural-related buildings, and two PG&E towers that support a powerline (**Exhibit F**). The project site and surrounding parcels are zoned Rural Density Residential. The surrounding parcels include agricultural uses with supporting agricultural structures and residential homes, and residential development predominately on the rolling highlands west of the project site. Access to the leased WCF would be through an existing 12-foot wide private dirt road leading to a proposed 12-foot wide dirt road following the perimeter of the parcel, leading to the existing PG&E tower. This access easement is currently being processed between PG&E and the property owner.

Visual Resources and Design

The subject site is not in a designated Visually Sensitive area. From Tarpey Road, the existing view is of agricultural operations and buildings, residential dwellings, and the PG&E towers. There is a cluster of oak trees in the vicinity of the existing tower, however, the tower height far exceeds the height of the trees. The antenna panels would be installed on the top of the tower. Although they do not screen the existing tower, the cluster of trees offer moderate screening of the back-up generator and equipment cabinet at the base.

The applicant submitted photo simulations (**Exhibit E**) of the increased tower height and antenna panels arrayed on the upper reaches of the tower. The minimal increase does not create a significant adverse visual impact.

Location, Alternative Site Analysis, & Co-Location

AT&T provides service in the area, but there are gaps in the service that affect coverage and reliability (**Exhibit C**). Specifically, coverage is substandard in this immediate area and the installation of this WCF would enhance and provide service for AT&T customers in the surrounding location. Additionally, AT&T is deploying newer technological systems, 4G LTE, in the area and throughout the AT&T network. This WCF installation will be built in a manner that it will be able to transition to this technology without any additional work or impacts after initial installation.

This WCF is a co-location development as the antenna array would be located on an existing PG&E tower located on private property, approximately 680 feet north of Tarpey Road. The proposed site location will help provide coverage in this pocket of Royal Oaks, particularly in an area broadly defined as portions of Maher Road and San Miguel Canyon Road in the western reaches, and Carpenteria Road in the eastern reaches.

Alternative sites were evaluated during the course of selecting this particular site. The primary alternative location explored was a site along Ramadero Way. However, this site was determined infeasible because of property constraints. A secondary site was studied, along another segment of Ramadero Way but was not chosen as it too, had property constraints. And a third location, at the end of Tierra Way, was also considered but eliminated due to property constraints. Constraints for the three alternatives include difficult access issues to the specific WCF location and/or lack of interest from the property owner in accommodating a WCF.

Radio Frequency

The applicant has provided information supporting that the facility will comply with prevailing Federal Communications Commission (FCC) standards for limiting public exposure to radio frequency energy **(Exhibit G)**. The highest calculated radio frequency energy level in the publicly accessible areas is much less than the FCC standards allow for exposures of unlimited duration.

CEQA:

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15301, categorically exempts the minor alteration of an existing facility. The project involves extending the height of an existing 117-foot tower to 129 feet and installing 12 panel antennas, 18 remote radio units, three (3) surge suppressors, and support equipment, including a back-up electrical generator, associated transmission cables, and a 16 x 16 foot wood-slat fencing perimeter. No adverse environmental effects were identified during staff review of the development application during a site visit on June 20, 2018. None of the exceptions under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to this project. The proposed project will not result in cumulative impacts of successive projects of the same type in the same place, is not located within or near a scenic highway, road, or corridor, is not located on a hazardous waste site, and does not involve any change to a historical resource.

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
Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District
California Coastal Commission

LUAC:

The project was referred to the North County Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) for review **(Exhibit D)**. The LUAC reviewed the project at a duly-noticed public meeting on July 18, 2018, at which all persons had the opportunity to be heard, and voted 5 - 0 (5 ayes) to support the project as proposed. There was no public comment or concerns expressed at the LUAC presentation.

Prepared by: R. Craig Smith, Associate Planner, x6408
Reviewed by: Brandon Swanson, RMA Planning Services Manager
Approved by: John M. Dugan, FAICP, RMA Deputy Director of Land Use and Community Development

The following attachments are on file with the RMA:

Exhibit A Project Data Sheet

Exhibit B Draft Resolution, including:

- Recommended Conditions of Approval
- Site Plan and Elevations

Exhibit C Coverage Maps
Exhibit D North County LUAC Minutes
Exhibit E Photo Simulations
Exhibit F Vicinity Map
Exhibit G Radio Frequency Report

cc: Front Counter Copy; Brandon Swanson, RMA Planning Services Manager; Alejandro Ramirez, Property Owner, TSL Consultants, Tom Johnson d/b/a AT&T (Applicant/Agent); The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); John H. Farrow; Janet Brennan; Project File PLN180314.