



County of Monterey

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Board Report

File #: PC 21-012, **Version:** 1

PLN180362 - EATON, ROBERT W (AT&T MOBILITY)

Continued from November 18, 2020: Public hearing to consider construction of a 60-foot high monopole and 527 sq. ft. equipment enclosure for installation of a wireless telecommunication facility.

Project Location: 37501 Tassajara Road, Carmel Valley, Cachagua Area Plan

Proposed CEQA Action: Negative Declaration.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a Resolution to:

1. Adopt a Negative Declaration that was circulated from September 17 to October 19, 2020 pursuant to Section 15074 of CEQA Guidelines; and
2. Approve a Use Permit and Design Approval to allow construction of a wireless communication facility including:
 - a) 60-foot monopole tower coated with a muted-tone non-glare non-reflective finish installed with:
 - i. Twelve (12) panel antennas on antenna arrays,
 - ii. Four (4) surge suppressors,
 - iii. Twenty-two (22) remote radio units,
 - iv. One (1) microwave dish; and
 - b) Equipment enclosure (527 sf) installed with a walk-in cabinet, GPS unit, and diesel generator on a concrete slab.

A draft resolution includes findings and evidence for consideration (**Exhibit C**). Staff recommends approval subject to 12 conditions.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Agent: Tom Johnson, TSJ Consulting Inc. for AT&T Mobility

Property Owner: Robert W. Eaton

APN: 418-293-006-000

Parcel Size: 41.2 acres

Zoning: "RC/40-D" (Resource Conservation with a 40-acre minimum and a Design Control overlay)

Plan Area: Cachagua Area Plan

Flagged and Staked: Yes, red balloon raised

SUMMARY:

On 18 November 2020, the Planning Commission continued the project to the date certain 10 February 2021 with a request for additional information from the applicant and staff. In January 2021, the applicant requested more time for compiling the requested information and to continue hearing of the project to 10 March 2021.

The project is proposed on a ridgeline off Tassajara Road visible from Carmel Valley Road, a visually sensitive public viewing area. Based upon community feedback on the original 100-foot high proposal, the applicant revised the proposed project to 60 feet high. The proposed unmanned WCF is intended to provide coverage to approximately 123 residential units as well as enhance the area's public safety infrastructure by facilitating wireless communication for the community's police, fire fighters, and other emergency personnel.

DISCUSSION:

New information from the applicant has been provided since the November 18, 2020 Planning Commission. Additional information includes coverage maps (**Exhibit G1**) at five alternate locations along with the proposed location, for a total of six sites. Coverage for each site is shown with the tower at 32 feet and 52 feet, respectively. This exercise by the applicant was in response to the Planning Commission's request for materials to understand coverage potential from more than the one proposed site and for discussion of a request from a community member to do multiple shorter towers instead of one tall tower. Coverage maps show that two 32-foot towers (a tower at an Alternate location + a tower at the proposed location) could approximate similar coverage to one 60-foot tower at the proposed location. However, there are mitigating technical and physical circumstances that cannot be conveyed through the coverage maps. First, absence of fiber optic infrastructure throughout the area means a microwave does the work of providing data transmission which requires line of sight to another tower with a microwave. Second, the tower at the proposed location will need to do a "double hop" relaying first to a tower at Palo Escrito Peak (Elev. 4,467 ft.) which relays to the next closest tower with a microwave in Gonzalez at eleven miles northeast as the crow flies (forty-four miles by vehicle) from the proposed tower location. A third factor the applicant would like the Planning Commission to consider is the cost to the applicant of implementing and operating more than one tower, the installation of which does not abide by economies of scale.

Coverage information by other carriers, as requested by the Planning Commission, is proprietary information which may be disclosed at the discretion of the carrier. However, County planning records show permit issuance of one other tower (known locally as Buck Mountain) in the Sleepy Hollow community approximately 6.88 miles away as the crow flies along Tularcitos Ridge, upon which multiple carriers, including AT&T, are co-located. Absent fiber optic infrastructure, the Buck Mountain tower achieves line of sight to the Gonzalez tower from its location 51 feet above an elevation of 1,469.5 feet. The geographic challenge requiring signals to climb through or around hills up to and above 2,100 feet from the Sleepy Hollow community renders all communication equipment at the Buck Mountain tower incapable of serving this Cachagua community.

Design

The first Cachagua Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) meeting on May 22, 2019 resulted in a decision to continue the project for review at a later date. The feedback at the meeting from attendees primarily was that 100 feet was too high and that more information was needed.

At a second meeting on August 14, 2019, the applicant provided a visual representation of the monopole by raising a red balloon (approx. 4 ft. dia.) that exhibited potential tower heights at 100 feet, 75 feet, and 50 feet, respectively, at the proposed location and at 100 feet at an alternate location, on the subject parcel. A third meeting held on August 21, 2019, was the forum at which the August 14 balloon viewing was discussed, resulting in a decision to recommend the project with changes, specifically requesting the applicant reduce the height to 50 feet and design the tower as an elm tree. The applicant relayed experience with the mono-elm that the "leaves" drop consistently, causing deteriorated camouflage of the monopole leading to a requirement for excessive maintenance visits along the gravel and dirt road, in turn requiring excessive maintenance of the road by the Jamesburg Viewshed Association residents, responsible for upkeep of the access road. Staff suggests that the applicant could overcome this design flaw and the Planning Commission could consider an elm tree design for the proposed tower.

Public Comment

Public comment from the Jamesburg Viewshed Association expressed opposition to staff recommendation at the 18 November Planning Commission meeting to design the tower with a gray coating that is non-glare and non-reflective to integrate with the sky background rather than as an elm or pine tree.

Staff response: A silhouette of the monopine or elm tree design would begin 20 feet up the tower and have a

diameter of approximately 23 feet increasing gradually to 24 ft. dia. around the antennas at 45 feet up the tower continuing to the top at 60 feet high. As related to minimizing disruption of the public viewshed from Carmel Valley Road, a non-disguised and painted pole with antenna would maintain a smaller profile than would the design. The tree design on the ridgeline would contrast with the surrounding shorter trees and have similar or greater effects on the viewshed. Photosimulations are attached as **Exhibit G2**.

The proposed location of the tower is set back 0.66 mile distance from the closest common public viewing area on Carmel Valley Road. The implication is that the difference in profile for integrating with the natural surroundings between a 24 ft. dia. monopine and a 16 ft. dia. undisguised gray pole with antennas could be indiscernible to the naked eye from Carmel Valley Road. The Jamesburg Viewshed Association relayed to the applicant that road access (Condition No. 11) would be withheld from the applicant if the tower is approved as an undisguised coated tower. Access exists to the site and the County is not a party to that access so this would be a civil matter to be dealt with separately from the County permitting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff has prepared a resolution (**Attachment B**) to adopt the IS/ND and approve one 60-foot high undisguised tower coated a non-glare muted gray tone at the proposed location on the Eaton property. Alternatively, if the Planning Commission chooses a different option for the design, staff recommends the Commission continue the hearing and adopt a motion of intent with direction to staff to prepare a new resolution with modified findings and evidence for Commission consideration at the subsequent hearing.

CEQA:

An Initial Study/Negative Declaration (**Exhibit D**) was prepared for the project in accordance with Sections 15603(a) and 15070(b) of the CEQA Guidelines due to potential impacts identified for Aesthetics. Conditions of approval have been incorporated to assure compliance with County requirements to the extent that they reduce to less than significant the identified potential impacts. Therefore, environmental review resulted in a Negative Declaration. The IS/MND was circulated for public review September 18 to October 19, 2020.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

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

Bureau of Environmental Health
HCD-Public Works
HCD-Environmental Services
Cachagua Fire Protection District

Prepared by: Jaime Scott Guthrie, AICP, Associate Planner, ext. 6414

Reviewed by: Craig Spencer, HCD-Planning Services Manager

Approved by: Erik Lundquist, AICP, Chief of HCD-Planning

The following attachments are on file with the HCD:

Exhibit A - Project Data Sheet

Exhibit B - Draft Resolution, including:

- Conditions of Approval
- Site Plans, Elevations
- Photos of Balloon Viewing

Exhibit C - Vicinity Map

Exhibit D - Environmental Review Documents, including:

- D1 - Initial Study (IS)/Negative Declaration (ND)
- D2 - Public Comments on IS/ND

Exhibit E - Electromagnetic Energy (EME) Exposure Report

Exhibit F - Minutes - Cachagua LUAC

- F1 - Meeting of May 22, 2019
- F2 - Meeting of August 28, 2019 with discussion of August 21 balloon viewing

Exhibit G - Applicant Submittals, including:

- G1 - Coverage Maps
- G2 - Photosimulations

cc: Front Counter Copy; Erik Lundquist, Chief of HCD-Planning, Tom Johnson c/o TSJ Consulting Inc., Agent; Robert Eaton, Property Owner; Sam Varela, interested party; Tony Keppelman, interested party; Carol Kuzdenyi, interested party; Don Bonsper, interested party; Michael & Cynthia Caddell, interested party; Janis Lou Dickinson, interested party; Gay Heller, interested party; Nancy Isakson, interested party; Kathie Lane, interested party; Pamela H. Silkwood c/o Horan Lloyd, interested party; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch Executive Director; Project File PLN180362.