

Opposition to Proposed Cell Tower 10/18/20

To the Board of Supervisors of Mendocino County

I am opposed to the proposed AT&T cell tower (U_2019_0011) for the following reasons (among others) that will be briefly explained after they are listed:

1. There will be no improvement in my cell service.
2. The AT&T proposal along with followup memorandum contains several mischaracterizations, data discrepancies, and inadequate objectives for the project.
3. The tower is NOT consistent with the Mendocino County Digital Infrastructure Plan 2019-2025.
4. There is no mitigation of fire safety issues although the tower will be in a “high fire danger” zone.
5. There is local opposition to the tower from immediate neighbors (who are the only recipients of improved service) as well as others. Supporters of the tower do not seem to understand that the proposed coverage area is severely limited.

Here is a brief discussion of each reason.

1. There will be no improvement in service for me and my neighbors on Chinquapin Dr.
 - The AT&T proposed coverage map shows “in building” coverage for parcels within approximately 1/2 mile.
 - Between .5 and about 1.25 miles (not necessarily in all directions) AT&T shows “outdoor” or “in transit” coverage. These areas already have outdoor and transit 4GLTE coverage from other carriers. Specific discrete dead zones may exist- but there is no guarantee that this tower will improve their coverage.
 - Topography limits the coverage (in the form of elevations and valleys) Northeast of the tower, due West and also to the East. Although the combined elevation of 2145 and 143 puts the antennas at close to 2288 feet, the coverage is severely limited in these areas. (For example, directly West the elevation of 2260 feet along with the naturally occurring forestation limits any shown coverage to less than a mile.)
 - Heavy pine, fir and oak forestation limits any cell reception for most homes on Pine Mountain because of the signal strength loss going through these as well as building materials. Many of these trees are 100 feet tall.

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2. AT&T has mischaracterized location, scope, and safety of the proposed tower which will compete with existing carriers.
 - The proposal uses the name of “Valley Oaks Park” a specific location at 2101 Valley Road instead of the name “Pine Mountain”.
 - The memorandum claims to cover 450 parcels which can be checked using a parcel map. The coverage area is approximately 200 parcels- most of which are covered by other carriers. The parcels do not all have living units- there are about 180 living units.
 - The proposal suggests that this site was chosen, not to optimize coverage, but instead because right of way access was more quickly and easily obtained. The preferred “candidate H” would require more legwork. Although AT&T refers to the larger number of living units for candidate H, they did not provide actual numbers for either this location or candidate H.
 - The proposal indicates that the project is to fill an “AT&T coverage gap”, not a cell coverage gap by all carriers.
 - The site is referenced to be .5 miles from the intersection of two roads that do not intersect.
 - Safety precautions regarding fire are not addressed (see below).
 - Discussion of “First Net” is irrelevant unless the County has funding for it.
3. The tower is not consistent with the Mendocino County Digital Infrastructure Plan
 - Pine Mountain has NOT been identified as a priority area.
 - The Plan refers to the implementation of high speed broadband; AT&T advertises 10Mbps on their website for fixed wireless.
 - AT&T is seeking to compete with existing carriers, and satellite. The existing carriers already have small business plans available. Currently, I am able to use a Tracphone inside our home near South facing windows.
 - The tower cannot be disguised because of its height limitations- making it visible to some of the neighboring parcels.
4. Safety Concerns- the tower will be in a “high fire danger” zone.
 - The building will be under the jurisdiction of the Little Lake Fire Department yet no comments were received from them for the Negative Impact Declaration.
 - ATT states that they will house electronics in a powder coat metal cabinet instead of a fire safe cement building. In a fire this will be destroyed, like the cars that have burned in recent fires, so there won't be additional emergency communication using this tower.

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- In case of fire, the only egress for most residents is a single road. How will AT&T maintenance personnel reach the tower in the event of an evacuation?
- How is the tower and diesel generator protected in the event of lightning strikes?

5. There is local opposition to the tower from adjacent parcels

- These parcels could suffer between \$160,000 to \$400,000 in combined property value loss.
- Some adjacent properties (as well as non-adjacent on Ridgewood) will see the tower.
- Although cell safety cannot be used as a legal reason, thinking forward- will the old law be revisited? Those closest to the tower have concerns about adverse health effects which have not been proven invalid and may very well (like smoking and lung cancer) prove to be legitimate causes for concern.

This particular tower makes me wonder what other commercial interests will succeed in avoiding the community requirements by placing their facilities just beyond the borders of our subdivision. The question of why the Building and Planning Department was given incomplete and erroneous data should be also be asked.

There are many details that could have been included with this letter- but my goal was to simply summarize some of the conclusions anyone can reach with a careful reading of the proposal and the memorandum as well as by doing basic internet research and physically examining the area.

Thank-you to the Board Members for your service and consideration.

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