

Agawam Planning Board – July 16, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mark R. Paleologopoulos, Chairman
Charles Elfman
Frank DeStefano

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Violet E. Baldwin
Nicholas Pandolfi

ALSO PRESENT:

Pamela Kerr

Via Zoom

1. SITE PLAN – 128 Southwick Street – Verizon Wireless

Attending for Verizon Wireless were Attorney Michael Fenton, Attorney Stephen Sobey and Attorney Ellen Freeman of Shatz, Schwartz & Fentin, PC as well as Verizon Wireless Resource Engineer Greg Sykier and Radio Frequency Engineer Jay Latorre. Attorney Fenton stated that Verizon has entered into a lease with the Town on a portion of the Agawam Municipal Golf Course to site a 115' monopole. He stated that the top ten feet of the tower will be available for the Town's use (fire, safety). A letter of support was given by the Agawam Fire Chief concerning public safety and increased communications. Verizon had a hearing with the Zoning Board of Appeals this week and it was continued for two weeks. Mr. Fenton also referred to an independent 3rd party consultant's report which Verizon paid for (as required in the Agawam Zoning Bylaws). He explained that the report was very positive looking at the need for a tower from a radio frequency standpoint and determined that there was a need and goes into great detail to analyze the site location. The Engineering Department submitted a memo with no comments or concerns regarding the proposed plans. Mr. Sobey shared a site plan on screen and introduced Mr. Sykier who addressed questions regarding the topography and stabilization of the site. Mr. Sykier stated that as the Planning Board had asked about the stability of the site during and after the construction he noted that it is Verizon's protocol to perform geotechnical services including borings where the tower will be located. Each tower is designed with the site's topography and terrain in mind. There will be more details when the construction drawings are done including the excavation drawings once the location of the tower is approved. Mr. Sobey displayed on screen the letter of support from the Agawam Fire Chief and the memo from the Town's Engineering Department. Mr. Latorre, the radio frequency engineer, spent time reviewing Verizon's justification and need for this facility. He explained that the facility is designed to allow optimal Verizon Wireless performance in this section of Agawam. Verizon was required to look at existing towers in Agawam and existing facilities outside of Agawam to show that those facilities would not meet their needs. According to Mr. Fenton, the 3rd party review states that the site was an appropriate location for a new facility. Mr. Latorre stated that a balloon test was done on July 6 and another would be on July 20. He received no direct feedback from the test. The Chair asked if any work had been done on the site with Mr. Latorre saying that the one thing that was done for the purpose of the balloon float was that a stake was put in the ground to mark the center of the tower for the balloon placement.

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Ms. Kerr noted that the ZBA normally does not issue a special permit without the Planning Board's site plan approval taking place first. The chair noted that there were no conditions from the last meeting. Mr. Sykier commented that as far as site lighting there would be 2 LED lights for use by the cell technicians and there will be no lights on the tower. There are no plantings proposed but the compound will be fenced with green privacy slats in the fence. The members agreed that the fence with the green privacy slats was sufficient screening and did not require additional plantings. Ms. Kerr read from an abutter that the residents were concerned with detrimental health effects of cell towers. Mr. Paleologopoulos asked for information on the health effects of the cell tower. Mr. Latorre stated that as part of the application process that the Town's zoning bylaws require Verizon to submit evidence that the proposed facility is compliant with all FCC regulations as it relates to radio frequency emissions safety for the general public. Mr. Fenton stated that the Federal Government insures that all Verizon sites are safe and that the Telecommunications Act prohibits local boards from taking into consideration the radio frequency emissions when making their zoning decisions. Mr. Paleologopoulos asked for the height of the equipment structure and Mr. Sykier answered that is 10' 6" with an ice cover over that. That is the highest reach other than the tower. Ms. Kerr read from the same abutter asking about the effects of a tower on property values. Mr. Sykier explained that he has worked with real estate consultants on other sites and had reports produced for other locations demonstrating that towers do not have a negative impact on real estate values and can actually be an added component for purchasers in 2020. There were no further questions from the Board.

Motion was made by Mr. Elfman and seconded by Mr. DeStefano to approve the Site Plan for Verizon Wireless at 128 Southwick Street conditional upon the Board of Appeals approval.

VOTE 3 – 0

2. SITE PLAN – Take Five Restaurant – Springfield Street

Filipe Cravo of R. Levesque Associates attended to present the written request to withdraw the Site Plan for Take Five without prejudice. He explained that the owner does not wish to pursue enclosing the patio at this time and therefore has request to withdraw the plan.

Motion was made by Mr. Elfman and seconded by Mr. DeStefano accept the request to withdraw the Site Plan for Take Five Restaurant without prejudice.

VOTE 3-0

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 2, 2020

Motion was made by Mr. Destefano and seconded by Mr. Elfman to approve the minutes of July 2, 2020 as written.

VOTE 3-0

4. Correspondences – 311 Shoemaker Lane

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The developers of the 311 Shoemaker Lane site have requested changes to their approved landscaping due to availability of nursery stock and due to the dry conditions the landscaping won't be installed until the Fall. This tem will appear on the next agenda for presentation to the Board.

5. Vote to Appoint – Planning Board Representative on Housing Committee

Motion was made by Mr. DeStefano and seconded by Mr. Elfman to nominate Mark Paleologopoulos to serve as the Planning Board representative on the Agawam Housing Committee.

VOTE 3-0

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.