

MEMO

To: Honorable Mayor Price and Members of the City Council
City Manager Brenda Fischer

From: Dana Burkhardt, Interim Zoning Administrator

Through: Brent Billingsley, Director of Development Services

Date: September 18, 2012

RE: CUP12-02; Verizon Wireless / Pacana Park

INTRODUCTION

On August 7, 2012, the Mayor and City Council acted to Table CUP 12-02, a request from Verizon Wireless to locate a cellular antenna on an existing City owned ball field light tower at Pacana Park. Members of the Council asked Staff to further analyze alternate locations for the antennae at Pacana Park to gain a clear understanding of the site selection process. The primary concern expressed by Members of the Council is the adjacency of the proposed antenna location to existing homes.

The applicant explained that Pacana Park was selected for a wireless antenna site in 2006. The attached search ring was provided by the applicant (Exhibit – 1) and demonstrates the need for an antenna in the area of Pacana Park. It should be noted this search location pre-dates the Bowlin Road site, which has since eliminated the viability of most the southern and southwestern portion of the search ring. The School District pole identified on Exhibit - 1 is unavailable to the applicant due to outdated technology and the equipment is presently over utilized.

Please also note that Staff has reviewed an analysis of other Municipal Codes as they pertain to this application and found that a 300' separation from antenna to homes is conservative (please refer to the “Code Comparison Table” in the Staff presentation). Additionally, the applicant has proposed to reduce the width of the antenna array from eight feet to six feet, which reduces the overall mass of the antenna by 25%.

ANALYSIS

Staff met with the applicant to review the suitability of each of the sixteen (16) existing light towers located in Pacana Park. We considered both Verizon’s needs associated with a cellular antenna and the City’s needs for an appropriate location within the park. The guiding factor for selecting a site is the need to

locate a minimum 20' x 40' enclosed equipment yard, within 50' distance of the pole. The primary determining factors for selecting the most suitable site (light pole) considers:

- Distance to nearest homes and home sites and total number of home sites within 300'
- Suitable access and staging for vehicle and equipment to service the antennae and equipment building
- Utility Access and Site Preparation/Infrastructure, or Construction Costs
- Impacts to the Parks & Recreation Facilities
- Impacts to Park Operations and Use
- Aesthetics

Exhibit – 2 attached, shows the location of all light poles over 50 feet at Pacana Park. The applicant, in consultation with Staff, quickly identified the poles that are unsuitable for an antenna and should not be considered at this time due to logistical constraints. These poles were eliminated because they are either located within a retention basin, they are not located near a stable surface for heavy equipment access or staging, or they do not have a dry location for a 40'x 20' ground equipment yard within 50' of the pole. Most of the poles eliminated have a combination of these concerns and are identified by a red dot. The pole locations demarked by a yellow dot are logistically feasible locations and were investigated further.

Porter Road & Other Undesirable Pole Locations

Staff has discussed with the applicant the potential to locate an antenna on the poles along the east side of the park, adjacent to Porter Road. The installation, operation, and maintenance of the antenna and equipment facilities are expected through the life of the antenna. This requires heavy duty work trucks, a crane, and includes routine updates and inspections of the system. The initial finding is that these poles are difficult to access. The existing decorative iron fence along the Porter Road frontage and along the south parking lot, in conjunction with the berming and steep grade transition, limits access to the poles. The most feasible location to access these light poles is from the central pedestrian sidewalk entrance to the play fields from the south parking lot. This access point requires the vehicles and heavy equipment to cross the play field turf which will damage the turf and grade each time the facility is accessed.

All of the turf areas of the park are watered via subgrade irrigation lines and are virtually irrigated daily. During the monsoon season the turf can become saturated and unstable for vehicles larger than the park maintenance Gators. The Park facilities are designed in a way to minimize the disruption to facilities, and limit the number of equipment accessing the play fields for routine maintenance. This is very important criteria to control the ongoing costs of operation and maintenance of park facilities.

For this reason, it is also important to consider the placement of the equipment building. To serve the Porter Road light poles, the building should maintain a setback from the street to minimize the visual impact to the Porter Road streetscape. The equipment yard would likely be located in the retention area directly abutting the ball field which may pose an obstruction to athletic events on this portion of the field. Please note that only three permanent buildings (excluding shade structures for patrons) exist in the park. Limiting the number of structures at the park helps reduce the visual clutter to maintain open view corridors throughout the park to create a vast unobstructed open space experience for park patrons, while allowing visual policing by park staff and public safety.

North Park Locations

The poles located on the north side of the baseball diamonds identified with a yellow dot (locations 1&2) could accommodate a wireless antennae and equipment building. Access and staging is available via the north parking area. However, the equipment building location will conflict with Park events and use. The equipment yard could be installed in the lawn area south of the playground and west of the concession building (see Exhibit 3). The space available for the ground equipment would be imposing to park events and activities adjacent to the concession stand and would eliminate the ability to have additional event activities and spectator space in the turf area. This location would also become congested with buildings and limit the visual corridors and pedestrian access between activities, specifically cutting off the view corridor to the playground from the baseball diamonds. This area is undesirable due to the impacts to park functions, and is not recommended by staff at this time.

Alternate Locations at Southwest

There are light pole locations in the southwest area of the Park that could meet the needs for a wireless antenna and equipment yard. Pole location three (3), located on the south side of the park along the central pedestrian corridor bisecting the playfields, poses similar circumstances to locations 1 & 2. The location is accessible and construction staging is available in the parking and picnic areas to the south. However, locating the antenna equipment yard would impose on the playfield and limit the park use (see Exhibit - 4). This location is at the entrance of the playfields from the parking lot, which is the primary location for park event staging, vendor display, spectator area, and tournament sign in and concession. The location would also obstruct the visual corridor from the parking and picnic areas to the playfields, and vice versa.

Pole location four (4), at the southwest corner of the park, cannot accommodate the mechanical yard without significant infrastructure costs. Ideally, the equipment building should be located to abut the south side of the existing restrooms, in the graded area (See Exhibit – 5). This area is encumbered by underground electrical transmission lines, sewer, and water lines serving the existing restroom and office facilities. A wireless mechanical equipment yard to service location four would likely be located approximately forty feet south of the

restrooms over the existing retention and wash corridor, abutting the home sites to the west. Improving the wash corridor for a suitable building location will require substantial design and infrastructure to create a pad site suitable for the equipment yard.

More importantly, pole location 4 is located approximately 115 feet from the nearest home site and there are approximately 6 home sites within 300' of this pole location. Pole location 4 is visible from the livable areas of Mr. Meyers home and rear yard, but has less of a visual impact from Mr. Story's rear yard.

Proposed Pole Location

Given the site selection criteria, Pole location five (5) provides the most suitable site for Verizon and the functions of the park (See Exhibit – 6). The area planned for the equipment yard is graded and not encumbered by retention, drainage, or existing utilities. Improved all weather access has been installed to provide a stable surface to access the equipment yard and pole from the parking lot on the south. A staging area is provided for construction and maintenance of the facility and is located to minimize disruptions to park operations, particularly during events.

This is the only location in the park that offers the ability to integrate the proposed equipment yard with an existing building. All other locations in the park require a new 40' x 20' freestanding structure, which impedes on the existing pedestrian flows, sports activities, and the visual corridors of the park.

Pole five (5) is located approximately 300 feet to Craig Story's residence (nearest existing home) and one other vacant residential lot. The existing park maintenance yard wall is located approximately 245 feet from Mr. Meyer's property line. The proposed block equipment enclosure is located approximately 275 feet to Mr. Rocky Meyer's 6 foot perimeter block wall on the side of his property.

PAST APPROVALS

Staff also considered past Council actions regarding wireless antenna requests. One comparable decision was made on September 20, 2011 by the City Council regarding wireless towers adjacent to residential homes. The City Council approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP11-01) for Verizon Wireless cellular tower adjacent to Cobblestone Farms residential homes. In summary, the City Council considered alternative locations for the new wireless antenna tower, however, approved the original site located approximately 200 feet to the nearest residential home.

CONCLUSION

Considering the feasibility of each pole location in Pacana Park, pole location five (5) presents the greatest viability for a wireless antenna location to meet the needs of Verizon and park operations. Through discussions with Staff, the applicant has revised the proposed antenna design to reduce the width of the

antenna array from 8' to 6', to lessen the visual impact to the neighboring homes. This reduces the total visual mass of the antenna by 25%. In addition, the proposed location poses significant benefits to the city. Not only the direct economic impacts, but indirect impacts to City operations as well:

Fiscal Benefits:

-New 8' block storage enclosure (1,800sf) with 12' gate to match existing facility (\$16,000)

-Allows staff to free up needed space by moving P&R storage container from the Public Works yard to the park site

-Data hardline connection for on-site Parks and Recreation Office- (\$6,000)

-Enables Wifi access on south portion of park

-Enables data connection to Parks and Recreation offices at Pacana Park.

At present the facility communicates with City Hall on an aircard and has limited data speed and intermittent access at times. The on-site offices will become permanent offices for Parks and Recreation Staff when the new City Hall is opened.

-Lease with Verizon Wireless (\$18,000 annually)

Should the Mayor and Council approve the proposed location, the total realized fiscal impact in the first year of the installation would equal approximately \$40,000. The Planning and Zoning Commission unanimously recommend the Mayor and Council approve this wireless antenna request with the stipulations provided in the Staff Analysis.