

**Manchester Township Zoning Board of Appeals
Manchester Township Hall
275 S. Macomb St., Manchester, Michigan 48158
Meeting Minutes
May 22, 2008**

Chairman Les Kopka called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

Board members present: Les Kopka, Ron Crampton and Sybil Kolon. Alternate Doug Brooks also present.

Audience present: Ron Ellison, T. J. Southoff, Dean Lloyd, Jack Ceo, Ruth Blumenauer, Mary Fielder, Chad J. Beaudin, Craig Swenson, Bill Scully, Tony Cuevas, Ron Mann.

Purpose of hearing: To consider the request of Craig Swenson for the Washtenaw 800 MHz Radio Consortium (Consortium) and the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners (WCBC) for six variances related to the proposed construction of a 300 foot communications tower on property owned by the Manchester Community Schools.

Statement by Applicant:

Craig Swenson, with Huron Valley Ambulance and the project manager designated by the WCBC explained that Washtenaw County residents had passed a millage two years ago to construct six new communications towers in Washtenaw County to be attached to the existing 800 MHz system. Swenson explained that emergency communications in the Manchester area are not adequate, and that the selected site, in conjunction with existing and other new towers, was designed to address these problems. T. J. Southoff is the contact for Pyramid Network Services, LLC, the construction manager for the project, was available to answer questions.

Public Comment

Several officials involved with the project were present and provided additional details. The tower has been designed to allow for co-location of additional communication equipment, including Wireless Washtenaw. Several law enforcement officers who work in the area spoke of the communications problems and of the need for the tower. Ron Ellison, representing Manchester Community Schools, indicated the schools are continuing to negotiate with the Consortium and expects that an agreement will be reached. The schools will receive communications equipment that will allow them to communicate with their buses when they travel within and outside of the area. One nearby resident, Ruth Blumenauer, attended to receive information and did not oppose the tower.

ZBA discussion

The ZBA reviewed a memorandum, dated May 6, 2008, prepared by Carlisle/Wortman Associates, Inc. (CWA), the township's planning consultant. The six potential variances were discussed. CWA recommended approval of the first four variance requests.

- 1 – The proposed tower would be less than 3,000 feet from an existing tower. The ZBA agreed with CWA's recommendation.
- 2 – The setback from all property boundaries is not equal to twice the height of the proposed tower. The ZBA agreed with CWA's recommendation.
- 3 – The proposed tower will exceed 180 feet in height. The ZBA agreed with CWA's recommendation.
- 4 – The proposed tower would not be of monopole design. The ZBA agreed with CWA's recommendation.
- 5 – The proposed tower would be closer than 800 feet to a residential district in the village, but not closer than 800 feet to a residential district in the township. Upon further discussion, the ZBA agreed that the meaning and intent of the zoning ordinance applied to the township, not to the village.
- 6 – A landscape strip at least twenty feet in width is not proposed. As discussed by CWA, the planning commission has the authority to waive that provision and has already indicated their intent to waive this requirement. Therefore, the ZBA agrees this variance is not required.

T. J. Southoff indicated that the required posting of signs regarding the variance request had been done on Geiske and Parr Roads at least 21 days prior to the public hearing, as required by the zoning ordinance.

There was a consensus of the ZBA that the proposed tower is in the interests of residents of Manchester Township and the surrounding community and no opposition to the proposed tower had been expressed.

ZBA member Ron Crampton indicated that he is an employee of the Michigan State Police, an entity that can benefit from the proposed tower, and will therefore abstain from voting due to a potential conflict of interest.

Motion by Kolon to approve the four variance requests described above, to: 1) allow the tower to be located closer than 3,000 feet to an existing commercial communications tower; 2) allow a minimum setback of less than twice the height of the tower; 3) allow the tower to exceed 180 feet and 4) allow the tower to be constructed of non-monopole materials, based on a determination that the provisions of Sections 20.07 B, C and D of the Zoning Ordinance had been considered and findings made that the variance requests met the requirements of those provisions. Second by Brooks. Roll call vote: Kolon, yes; Brooks, yes, and Kopka, yes. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Prepared by Sybil Kolon
June 1, 2008

