



County of Santa Cruz 0193

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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AGENDA: 1/9/01

December 20, 2000

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

RE: COUNTY POLICY ON CELL TOWERS AND REQUEST FOR SPECIAL
CONSIDERATION FOR APPLICATION NOS. 99-0828, 00-0319,
AND 00-0352

Dear Members of the Board:

Recently, three separate applications by Sprint PCS for cell towers on the North Coast of the County were considered by the Zoning Administrator. A number of objections were raised to these applications including possible violations of County LCP scenic highway policies, segmentation issues under CEQA, the use of artificial objects to try to hide the towers, and lack of consideration of other locations and types of towers.

In addition, the California Coastal Commission staff submitted the attached letter raising a number of serious concerns with the proposals. In particular, a suggestion was made that the County "take a step back from the individual projects being proposed here and evaluate such LCP questions within a planning context to understand the appropriate parameters for cell networks on the North Coast and elsewhere within the County." The results of this evaluation should be LCP amendments "that comprehensively address cell towers in the County."

It seems to me that the Coastal Commission staff proposal is very reasonable. In order for complete cell phone coverage to be provided to County residents, a network of towers will be

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necessary. Given the County's mountainous topography, the fact that a number of companies will undoubtedly compete to provide such cell phone service, and because of the potential visual impact of the towers, a comprehensive set of policies governing cell tower locations would be very helpful. Moreover, if such policies were adopted as performance standards it may be possible to establish an expedited review process for future cell towers.

As I understand it, the Zoning Administrator approved one of the cell tower applications and continued the other two with a direction that they be sent to the Planning Commission for consideration. Because I share the concerns expressed at the Zoning Administrator's meeting and the December 14, 2000, Coastal Commission staff letter regarding Applications Nos. 99-0828, 00-0319 and 00-0352, I request that the Board of Supervisors consider these three applications as provided under County Code Section 18.10.350--Special Consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

Therefore, I recommend that the Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

1. Set Application Nos. 99-0828, 00-0319, and 00-0352, regarding cell towers on the North Coast of the County for public hearing within 30 calendar days as provided under County Code Section 18.10.350; and
2. Direct the Planning Director to return at the time of the public hearing on these three applications with a work program to develop a comprehensive County policy on cell towers along the lines identified in the December 14, 2000, letter from the Coastal Commission staff.

Sincerely,



MARDI WORMHOUDT, Supervisor
Third District

MW:lg
Attachment

cc: Planning Director
Applicants
Coastal Commission

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CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

CENTRAL COAST DISTRICT OFFICE
725 FRONT STREET, SUITE 300
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
PHONE: (831) 4276863
FAX: (831) 427-4877

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December 14, 2000

Joan Van der Hoeven
Santa Cruz County Planning Department
701 Ocean Street, Suite 400
Santa Cruz, Ca 95060-4073

Subject: *Sprint PCS Cell Towers Proposed for the North Coast of Santa Cruz County*
(Application Numbers 99-0828, 00-0319, 00-0352)

Dear Ms. Van der Hoeven:

We wanted to take this opportunity to briefly register our concerns with the proposed series of cell towers being considered currently by the County within the North Coast planning area. Specifically, after review of the application materials previously forwarded to our office, we have serious reservations about the proposed cell network being proposed and its potential inconsistencies with County of Santa Cruz Local Coastal Program (LCP) and Coastal Act policies.

As you are aware, the County's LCP is fiercely protective of coastal zone visual resources, particularly views from public roads, and especially along the shoreline. LCP visual policies require development here to be sited outside of this viewshed when it is feasible to do so, and require development to be visually compatible and integrated with the character of the surrounding area (LCP Policies 5.10 et seq, Zoning Code 13.10.313, 13.10.323, 13.10.325, and 13.20.130). The proposed project is located within the particularly critical north coast public viewshed. The view issues at this location need to be understood within the larger context of protecting views along the largely undeveloped agrarian wilderness coastline that generally exists between Half Moon Bay and the City of Santa Cruz. Further, the north coast planning area needs to be valued as a resource of both local and statewide importance.

It is not clear to us that a cell network here would be compatible with the agricultural backdrop as proposed. In fact, it is not clear that the LCP zoning code contemplates or even allows for such a use. Although the Applicant should be commended for attempting to disguise the individual components of the network (i.e., as a tree, a windsock, and a windmill), we are concerned that such efforts will be insufficient to integrate the cell network into the larger north coast aesthetic and agrarian wilderness character. This concern is heightened by the fact that this is just one company and just a portion of what may eventually be a series of such disguised cell towers along this critical stretch of coast. The cumulative impact on north coast resources should there be additional companies, additional networks, and additional individual towers could be staggering.

Accordingly, we would suggest that the County take a step back from the individual projects being proposed here and evaluate such LCP questions within a planning context to understand

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Joan Van der Hoeven

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the appropriate parameters for cell networks on the north coast and elsewhere in the County. Such an effort should strive to understand the technology (e.g., are there other less intrusive ways of providing such services), the range of potential providers (e.g., are there ways to ensure shared use of a single system rather than developing multiple systems), and the long-term **impact** on the coastal resources – particularly north coast coastal resources – based on those understandings. The result should be LCP amendments that comprehensively address cell towers in the County, before individual cell network components are authorized that may eventually both prejudice the results of such a planning effort, and that may, separately lead to adverse resource impacts. (We note that the same Applicant recently proposed another **cell** tower in La **Selva** Beach; application 00-0751.) Good planning and **public** policy dictate no less for the protection of the significant public resources at stake.

We would be interested in helping to shape an appropriate LCP amendment package, and willing to meet with you as well as appropriate cell network providers to ensure that all issues and needs are adequately addressed within same. Towards this end, you may be aware that Santa Cruz County is not the only central coast jurisdiction contending with these types of issues; **Monterey** County has recently developed a new cell ordinance for the Big Sur Coast and San **Luis** Obispo County has developed a similar ordinance to **address** such facilities there. To the extent **similar** issues are addressed, these ordinances may provide valuable context to the County in your own efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (831) 427-4893.

Sincerely,



Dan Carl
Coastal Planner

cc: Supervisor **Mardi Wormhoudt**, Santa **Cruz** County Board of Supervisors
Franklin Orozco, Representative for Sprint PCS