



Chatham County Planning Board Agenda Notes

Date: March 5, 2019

Agenda Item: IX-3

Attachment #: 1

Subdivision

Conditional Use Permit

Rezoning Request

Other:

Subject:	A legislative public hearing request by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners to consider amendments to Sections 1-4, Definitions and Terms; 2-4 (4), Setbacks; and 2-4 (6), Height, of the Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Ordinance to provide a telecommunication tower height waiver for public safety service providers.
Action Requested:	See Recommendation
Attachments:	Communication Tower Ordinance Revision

Introduction & Background:
 A legislative public hearing was held on February 18th 2019. The proposed amendment is to Sections 1-4, Definitions and Terms; 2-4 (4), Setbacks; and 2-4 (6), Height. Jason Sullivan spoke on behalf of staff in support of the matter. Mike Reitz, 911 Communications Center Director, was available to answer technical questions regarding the towers. No one spoke in opposition and planning staff has not received any further calls or comments.

The Chatham County 911 Communications Center has an approved Capital Improvements Program (CIP) project to replace the current emergency radio system infrastructure with a reliable and industry standard P25 radio system. To accomplish this replacement requires the installation of new telecommunications towers in the county in areas that are currently have limited or no coverage. To reduce the cost of this upgrade the telecommunications tower ordinance needs to be amended to provide tower height exception for public safety service providers.

Discussion & Analysis:
 The 2020-2026 CIP includes the following description of the proposed replacement of the current emergency radio system:
 “The existing VHF/UHF radio system used by county public safety agencies is approximately 30 years old. The system has been maintained by replacing and upgrading equipment as needed, but rapidly increasing communication demands and technology

advancements have rendered the system obsolete. The county currently has seven different tower sites which transmit and/or receive communications to fire, emergency medical services, and law enforcement. The current radio system does not cover the entire county. Interoperability with surrounding counties and/or agencies is limited or non-existent due to disparate radio systems. The current radio system poses a serious safety risk for responders and citizens.

Upgrade the current system to a P25 700/800 MHz radio system and connect to the NC VIPER radio system. Eliminate four of the current tower sites that are outdated and not at a location that will permit the countywide coverage that is needed. Build three new tower sites and share the new VIPER tower that the state is constructing in Pittsboro.”

The Chatham County Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Ordinance restricts telecommunication tower heights at 300 feet with the approval of waiver. The 911 Communications Center has identified two sites in the county’s jurisdiction for new towers that would exceed the 300 foot height limit. The request is to amend the ordinance to provide an additional height exemption above 300 feet for public safety service providers.

The County Attorney reviewed the proposed amendments to the Communication Tower Ordinance and made several minor changes. The proposed Ordinance Revision with the County Attorney notes is attached.

Planning staff recommends approval of the proposed amendments.

Recommendation:

The Planning Board has up to three meetings in which to make a recommendation of approval or denial of amendments to Sections 1-4, Definitions and Terms; 2-4 (4), Setbacks; and 2-4 (6), Height, of the Wireless Telecommunication Facilities Ordinance.