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Proposed Rock Hill cell tower project 'tabled'

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

ROCK HILL — Another chapter has been added to the ongoing saga of the proposed Rock Hill cell tower, which has been a controversial issue for some residents.

On April 22, the Thompson Planning Board held a public hearing, which lasted for three hours, about a new proposed site for the cell tower.

The project seemed to be moving forward until June 9, when the legal team for Tarpon Towers, builders of the cell tower in Rock Hill for Verizon, sent a letter to the Planning Board asking them to table their application until further notice.

Tarpon lawyer, Jared Lusk of Nixon Peabody further said in the letter, "Please do not incur any additional expenses in furtherance of the application until further notified by the applicant."

There's been no word from Tarpon on why they decided to table the application.

The site presented before tabling the matter was off Pine Tree Street and near State Route 17 West, by the on-ramp at Exit 110.

Originally, Tarpon wanted to erect a 184-foot tower on private land near Lake Louise Marie.

The cell tower by State Route 17 West will now be 235 feet tall, with a four-foot lighting rod, for a total of 239 feet.



A cell tower, like this one near Wurtsboro, has been in development for months. It was planned to be installed near Rock Hill but it has now been postponed.

Like the site on Lake Louise Marie, this site is owned by Calcam Associates LLC, and Thompson Town Supervisor Bill Rieber Jr. has part ownership in the company.

Some residents who spoke at the public hearing had a list of grievances on why the tower should be built at another location.

One was Rieber's involvement with the land the tower will be built on.

Some felt it was unethical for the town supervisor to benefit from the deal and wondered why the other sites were not fully vetted.

"During this time of crisis, the county could use the revenue more than the town of Thompson supervisor," said Joan Krieger of Rock Hill in a letter to the planning board during the public comment period.

Rieber told the **Democrat** that he has held off from commenting on the matter for two years and has let the independent planning

board review the application.

"Cell service is desperately needed in this area, and property owned by my family for about 35 years was chosen by Verizon because it has the height and location necessary to solve a real communication and safety problem," said Rieber.

He said he was hesitant at first to strike a deal with Verizon, but after much thought, he said it would solve the long-standing lack of proper cell service in the area.

"We respect every resident's rights to oppose the project, and they have been afforded many opportunities to comment and have their voices heard. This tower has had more review and study than any of the eight or nine towers currently in Thompson," said Rieber.

Rieber went on to say that a tower was built by the County of Sullivan on Pit- taluga Road in Thompson

without a single public hearing or informing the town before constructing the tower.

Another resident, Laura Scovazzo, said in a letter, "Any site owned by a government official ... with approval authority for the action should be eliminated from consideration. It is unethical and likely criminal for the town supervisor to receive financial gain."

Rieber said, "The Town Board has no approval authority over this tower whatsoever, giving me zero influence in the matter. The vile and slanderous comments that have been leveled against me personally are nothing short of disgusting. To the clueless woman from North Bellmore, Long Island, who claims she is a resident, Laura Scovazzo, who slanderously alleges that I may likely be a criminal, I have this to say.

PLEASE SEE **TOWER**, 3A

TOWER: Has been criticized for proposed location

FROM FRONT PAGE

Ms. Scovazzo, you have crossed a line, and you can stay in Long Island and go to hell."

Another primary concern from Lake Louise Marie residents and the adjunct lake community of Wanaksink Lake is that the tower will ruin the pristine views the lake residents have enjoyed for years.

"The very idea of this eyesore plopped down in the center of this residential lake community is unthinkable," said Lake Louise Marie resident Hillary Fabian.

David Wright of Rock Hill said, "The proposed location of the tower will obstruct views of the sunset for virtually every property owner on our lake."

Most residents who oppose the site, do support the need for a tower in the area to address the lack of cell service.

"We are not opposed to the necessary infrastructure to provide a needed service. But we are confident ... much better alternative locations would meet those needs," added Wright.



Pictured above is part of Wanaksink Lake. Residents say a proposed cell tower, which was recently tabled on the Town Planning Board, would block their views.

The Planning Board decided, before the June 9 letter from Tarpon, to hire an independent Radio-Frequency Engineer to reexamine the many locations Tarpon has proposed in the past. Something that lake residents have been pushing

for.

Since the application has been tabled, the engineer will not be hired for the time being.

When it was announced that the planning board would hire an engineer, Lake Louise Marie County Club Home Owner's Association President, Camille Johnston said, "I think it is a positive response by the planning board, to the outpouring of opposition to the proposed site that the com-

munity demonstrated most recently at the public hearing, along with countless letters that were written. I am hopeful that the Independent RF engineer takes into consideration the negative effect on the environment and community some of the proposed sites will have. It is possible to improve cell service and still preserve the natural beauty of the lake communities and maintain the health and welfare of the residents."

NEW LOCATION

After cutting hair

