



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2011-03

Site: 27 College Avenue

Date: February 3, 2011

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 27 College Avenue

Applicant Name: New Cingular Wireless, PCS, LLC d/b/a AT&T Mobility

Applicant Address: 550 Cochituate Road, Framingham, MA 01701

Property Owner Name: Somerville Housing Authority

Property Owner Address: 30 Memorial Drive, Somerville, MA 02145

Agent Name: Matt McQuaid, SAI Communications

Agent Address: 11 Taylor Road, North Reading, MA 01864

Alderman: Rebekah Gewirtz

Legal Notice: The Applicant seeks Special Permit Approval under SZO §7.11.15.3 and SZO §14 for the installation of a wireless communications facility consisting of three panel antennas and related equipment and cables.

Zoning District/Ward: CBD / Ward 6

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit (SZO §7.11.15.3 and SZO §14)

Date of Application: December 30, 2010

Dates of Public Meeting • Hearing: Planning Board **2/3/11** • Zoning Board of Appeals **2/16/11**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The property is a 15,634 square foot parcel located within a Central Business District (CBD). The Ciampa Manor is a Somerville Housing Authority development located on the site. The building is a six story, 55 foot high, brick structure. The building currently has 11 façade mounted antennas from AT&T and MetroPCS on two penthouse/equipment shelters. Prior zoning relief for the property was granted in 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2008 for the installation of antennas and associated equipment and cables.



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2. Proposal: The Applicant is proposing to install three panel antennas, one per sector, and associated equipment and cables on the rooftop of 27 College Avenue. The antennas will be mounted to the existing penthouse/equipment shelter walls on the rooftop of the building and be painted to match the color of the penthouse/equipment shelter walls. One of each of the three antennas will be installed in between each of the Applicant's existing three pairs of antennas at the site. The electronic equipment will be located inside one of the penthouse/equipment shelters and out of sight.

3. Nature of Application: Under SZO §7.11.15.3 establishment of a wireless communications facility requires a Special Permit.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding area has a wide variety of uses including residential of all types, commercial, office and institutional. This site is one of the tallest buildings in this area of the neighborhood. The property is located approximately 250 feet from the center of Davis Square. Direct abutters include the West Somerville Baptist Church and several retail and office spaces.

5. Green Building Practices: None indicated.

6. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Have been notified and are awaiting comments.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Gewirtz has been contacted, but has not provided comments at this time

Lights & Lines/Highway: Have been notified and are awaiting comments.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §5.1 and §14):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

1. Information Supplied: The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

2. Compliance with Standards: The Applicant must comply "with such criteria or standards as may be set forth in this Ordinance which refer to the granting of the requested special permit."

The Applicant seeks a special permit under §7.11.15.3 of the SZO which requires the applicant to follow guidelines and procedures set forth in Article 14 for the, "regulation of wireless telecommunications facilities so as to allow and encourage such uses in the City with minimal harm to the public health, safety, and general welfare."

Staff finds that minimal harm would be imposed upon the health, safety and welfare of the surrounding neighborhood. New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC d/b/a AT&T Mobility is a FCC licensed company that is required to comply with all state and federal regulations.

Review Criteria for Telecommunications Facilities:

- a) *Height of proposed facility*: The base of the building to the top roof beam is 55 feet and the height to the top of the existing penthouse/equipment shelters is 65 feet. This building is one of the tallest in the surrounding area.

- b) *Proximity of facility to residential structures and residential zoning districts:* The property is located in a Central Business District (CBD). This location abuts an RA District but it is currently being used as a wireless telecommunication facility already and the Applicant has six antennas located there now.
- c) *Nature of uses on adjacent and nearby properties:* The site is located in a Central Business District (CBD). The surrounding area has a wide variety of uses including residential of all types, commercial, office and institutional. The proposed installation will not generate any objectionable odor, fumes, glare, smoke, or dust nor require additional lighting or signage. Noise from the equipment will be minimal and should not be heard beyond the confines of the property where it will be placed. No increased traffic or hindrance to pedestrian movements will result from the proposed installation either. Furthermore, in connection with its FCC license, AT&T is prohibited from interfering with radio or television transmissions.
- d) *Surrounding topography and prominence of proposed facility:* The building is the tallest building in the area with the exception of 36 College Avenue across the street, which is also being used for a wireless telecommunications facility.
- e) *Surrounding tree cover and foliage:* The building upon which the proposed antennas will sit is taller than all trees in the surrounding area and therefore no interference is anticipated with regard to the projection required for the antennas.
- f) *Design of tower, with particular reference to design characteristics that have the effect of reducing or eliminating visual obtrusiveness, as specified in Section 14.3:* The antennas will be installed onto the sides of the existing penthouse/equipment shelters on the roof of the building and will be no higher than the existing antennas which do not protrude above the roofline of the shelters. The antennas will also be painted to match the color of the penthouse/equipment shelter walls to camouflage them. The radio equipment will not be visible because it is being installed inside the existing penthouse/equipment shelters.
- g) *Location of tower, with particular reference to the existence of more suitable locations, as specified in Section 14.3:* The application is in compliance with this review criterion. The Applicant is proposing to locate the antennas on an existing wireless telecommunications facility within a business district. The antennas will be painted the color of the penthouse/equipment shelters they will be attached to for camouflage and they will not protrude over the roofline of the shelters, therefore not impacting the viewshed of the area.
- h) *Proposed ingress and egress:* There is existing access to the roof and equipment on the roof via one penthouse stairwell in the building.
- i) *Distance from existing facilities:* The accompanying map shows the locations of other existing AT&T antennas in Somerville.
- j) *Availability of suitable existing towers, poles, other structures, or alternative technologies, as discussed in Section 14.5.2: Section 14.5.2 states that no new sites for telecommunications facilities shall be permitted unless the Applicant demonstrates that existing sites cannot meet the Applicant's need:* The site where the Applicant is proposing to install the three new antennas is currently operating as a wireless telecommunications facility.

3. Consistency with Purposes: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles."

The Staff finds that the proposal, as conditioned, is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to promoting "the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality."

The proposal, as conditioned, is also consistent with those purposes established for the Central Business District (CBD) which are to preserve and enhance central business areas for retail, business services, housing, and office uses and to promote a strong pedestrian character and scale in those areas. A primary goal for the district is to provide environments that are safe for and conducive to a high volume of pedestrian traffic, with a strong connection to retail and pedestrian accessible street level uses. Staff finds the addition of the antennas and associated equipment, as conditioned, will not negatively impact the local commercial, office or residential uses in the area.

Furthermore, the Staff finds that the proposal, as conditioned, is consistent with the purposes set forth in Article 14 of the Zoning Ordinance as conditioned in this report, to:

- a) *Protect residential areas and land uses from potential adverse impacts of towers and antennas;*
- b) *Encourage the location of telecommunications facilities in non-residential areas;*
- c) *Minimize the total number of towers and antennas throughout the community;*
- d) *Strongly encourage the joint use of new and existing tower sites as a primary option rather than construction of additional single-use towers;*
- e) *Encourage users of towers and antennas to locate them in areas where the adverse impact on the community is minimal;*
- f) *Encourage users of towers and antennas to configure them in ways that minimize the adverse visual impact of the towers and antennas through careful design, siting, landscape screening, and innovative camouflaging techniques;*
- g) *Enhance the ability of the providers of telecommunications services to provide such services to the community quickly, effectively, and efficiently;*
- h) *Consider the public health and safety of communications facilities; and*
- i) *Avoid potential damage to adjacent properties from tower and antenna failure through sound engineering and careful siting of structures.*

4. Site and Area Compatibility: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."

Staff finds the project and the way the equipment is designed to be compatible with the surrounding area and land uses. The antennas will be mounted on the existing penthouse/equipment shelter walls on the rooftop

and will be painted to match the color of the shelters. The associated equipment would not be visible because it is being installed inside the existing penthouse/equipment shelters. Photo simulations were taken from a variety of locations in the neighborhood and they indicate there will be limited impact of the installation on the surrounding neighborhood.

5. Adverse environmental impacts: The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.

The proposed installation will not generate any glare, light, smoke, dust, or vibrations nor will it emit any noxious or hazardous materials or substances. Noise from the equipment will be minimal and should not be heard beyond the confines of the property where it will be placed. The proposed installation will be located on an existing building and therefore no pollution of waterways or ground water will occur. Additionally, the proposed installation will not be tied into any public sewer or private wastewater disposal system. In connection with its FCC license, AT&T is prohibited from interfering with radio or television transmissions and furthermore, these transmissions function at different frequencies than those licensed to AT&T for the proposed telecommunications equipment.

III. RECOMMENDATION**Special Permit under SZO §7.11.15.3 and §14**

Based on the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**. Furthermore, Planning Staff recommends the following conditions.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes								
1	<p>Approval is for the installation of a wireless communications facility under SZO §7.11.15.3 and SZO §14 consisting of three panel antennas and related equipment and cables. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:</p> <table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>(12/30/10)</td><td>Initial application, submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>11/22/10 (12/30/10)</td><td>Photographs and photo simulations submitted with application</td></tr><tr><td>12/15/10 (12/30/10)</td><td>Plans and elevations submitted with application</td></tr></table> <p>Any changes to the approved site plan, photograph simulations, and/or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.</p>	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(12/30/10)	Initial application, submitted to the City Clerk's Office	11/22/10 (12/30/10)	Photographs and photo simulations submitted with application	12/15/10 (12/30/10)	Plans and elevations submitted with application	BP	Plng.	
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2	The antennas shall be painted to match the color of the penthouse/equipment shelters to which they are attached.	CO	Plng.									
3	<i>Compliance with Noise Control Ordinance.</i> Prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Use and Occupancy Permit for the installation of the wireless telecommunications facility, the Applicant shall submit to the Inspectional Services Department, with a copy to the Zoning Board of Appeals, a sound level measurement certified as accurate by a professional acoustician and shall perform such sound level measurements six months after issuance of the certificate of occupancy, with subsequent sound level measurements annually on or before the anniversary date of the original six month measurement to document that all of the Applicant's installed equipment complies and continues to comply with the decibel level standards established by the City of Somerville, Noise Control Ordinance.	Continued	ISD									
4	<i>Compliance with Federal Communications Commission Guidelines for Human Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields.</i> To ensure compliance with the standards established by the	Continued	BOH									

	Federal Communications Commission Office of Engineering and Technology ("FCC") in OET Bulletin 65 as adopted by Massachusetts Department of Public Health under 105 CMR 122.021, the Applicant shall perform measurements, within two (2) months of the date that the Applicant's wireless telecommunications facility commences operation and at intervals of twelve (12) months thereafter, to establish that the Applicant's wireless telecommunications facility complies and continues to comply with the FCC guidelines and applicable state regulations for human exposure to radio frequency electromagnetic fields for human exposure to radio frequency electromagnetic fields. The Applicant shall provide the results of such measurements with certification of compliance to the City of Somerville, Health Department, with a copy to the Zoning Board of Appeals.			
5	Any antenna that is not operated continuously for a period of twelve (12) months shall be considered abandoned, and the owner of such antenna shall remove the same within ninety (90) days of notice from the City of Somerville informing the owner of such abandonment.	Continued	ISD	
6	The applicant shall remove any of that carrier's unused or non-operating wireless equipment prior to installation.	BP	Plng.	
7	The Applicant shall at his expense replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	Final inspection	DPW	
8	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P	
9	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final inspection by Inspectional Services to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final sign off	Plng.	



27 College Avenue

AT&T Somerville Existing and Proposed sites

MA2231

425 Broadway
Somerville Ma 02145
Rooftop Installation

MA2130

Ciampa Manor
Somerville Housing Authority
27 College Avenue
Somerville Ma 02144
Rooftop Installation

MA2027

Somerville Hospital
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville MA 02143
Rooftop Installation

MA2085

Somerville Housing Authority
252 Medford Street
Somerville Ma 02143
Rooftop Installation

MA2242

Danvers Land Associates
25 Webster Court
Somerville Ma 02243
Rooftop Installation

MA0709

Beacon Associates
175 Beacon Street
Somerville Ma 022
Proposed Rooftop Installation



AT&T Sites in Somerville Existing & Proposed

