



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2009-14
Date: December 10, 2009
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 844 McGrath Highway / 23 Cummings Street

Applicant Name: Clearwire

Applicant Address: c/o Lisa Bera, 5808 Lake Washington Blvd., Kirland, WA 98033

Property Owner Name: 3 RE/LQ Properties LLC

Property Owner Address: 750 Park of Commercial Blvd., Suite 300, Boca Raton, FL 33481

Agent Name: Lisa Bera

Agent Address: 960 Turnpike St #28, Canton, MA 02021

Alderman: William Roche

Legal Notice: Applicant, Clearwire, and Owner, 3 RE/LQ Properties LLC, seeks a Special Permit with Site Plan Review – A under SZO §7.11.15.3 in order to install and relocate wireless communications equipment.

Zoning District/Ward: ASMD / 1

Zoning Approval Sought: SPSR-A (§7.11.15.3)

Date of Application: November 12, 2009

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board 1/7/09

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The property is an 111,970 s.f. parcel located within the Assembly Square Mixed-Use District (ASMD). The La Quinta Hotel is located on the property. The building is a seven (7) story, approximately 70 foot high, brick structure with a series of penthouse structures that extend up to 92 feet in height. The site has received special permits in the past for wireless equipment for Sprint and Fibertower.



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2. Proposal: Clearwire is proposing to install wireless communications equipment, consisting of seven (7) antennas, an equipment cabinet and a new coax cable run. Also, Sprint would be relocating antennas. Below is a list of the proposed changes:

- 1 Wimax GPS antenna
- 3 Wimax antennas
- 3 Backhaul antennas
- New coax cable run on rooftop
- Equipment cabinet would be inside an existing penthouse with Sprint equipment
- 3 Relocated Sprint antennas
- 1 Relocated Sprint GPS antenna

The antennas would be façade-mounted on existing penthouses approximately 10 feet above the rooftop and approximately 10 feet from the building edge. One of the backhaul dishes would be on an angle bracket and project from the side of the penthouse.

The reason for the location of new Clearwire antennas is to service their customer base. Clearwire is a FCC licensed company that is required to comply with all state and federal regulations.

3. Nature of Application: Under SZO §7.11.15.3 establishment of a wireless communications facility requires a Special Permit with Site Plan – A approval.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The property is located adjacent to Interstate 93 at the intersection of McGrath Highway, Fellsway West and Mystic Avenue. The block where this structure is located is composed predominantly of commercial and industrial uses. Across Fellsway West is a residential district.



844 McGrath Highway / 23 Cummings:
looking north (top), looking south (bottom)



5. Impacts of Proposal: All but one of the proposed Wimax antennas would be located on existing arrays. The proposed Wimax antenna on the north side of the building would be on a new pipe mount. Due to the location on existing arrays and color, that would match that of the building, these Wimax antennas would not have a negative visual impact on the existing building. The backhaul antennas due to their shape and location will be a noticeable change to the rooftop equipment. The backhaul antennas are two feet in diameter and will be conditioned to be painted to match the building in order to reduce the impact of

their appearance. The equipment cabinet would be located in an existing penthouse and would not be visible.

6. Green Building Practices: None.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted but has not provided comments.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Roche concurs with the planning staff recommendation.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW (SZO §5.2, §6.4.9 & §14):

In order to grant a special permit with site plan review, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.2.5 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.2.5 in detail.

1. Information Supplied: The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.2.3 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permit with Site Plan Review.

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 find that minimal harm would be imposed upon the health, safety and welfare of the surrounding neighborhood.

Guidelines in Article 14 of the SZO state that antennas should not be located more than 10ft above the roofline, should be located at a minimum of 10ft from the roof edge and below a forty-five degree plane beginning at the cornice of the building. While these guidelines have not been strictly adhered to for three of the proposed antennas, staff find that the unusual height of the penthouses, the existence of other antennas in the areas where these new antennas are proposed, the placement of the antennas on existing penthouse structures, and conditions placed on the proposal in this report would limit the visual impact of the proposal that the guidelines are meant to preserve. Conditions imposed by this report include painting of the antennas to match the building.

The guidelines in Article 14 also state service providers should co-locate, which Clearwire would be following with Sprint. The use of the site is commercial and the antennas are side-mounted onto existing structures and painted to match the surrounding materials and colors, which are other recommendations that would be followed.

Review Criteria for Telecommunications Facilities:

- a) *Height of proposed facility:* The existing building has an approximately 70ft high roof top. Proposed antennas would not extend above existing penthouses on the roof top except for a single GPS antenna that would extend a few inches from the 80ft high penthouse.

- b) *Proximity of facility to residential structures and residential zoning districts:* 844 McGrath Highway is in the Assembly Square Mixed Use District. A Residence A district abuts the property; however, Rt 28 Fellsway West separates the subject property from residential properties. As a result, there would be approximately 120 yards between the antennas and the residential properties. From the residential district the change from the existing conditions would be minimal.
- c) *Nature of uses on adjacent and nearby properties:* Properties to the northwest are residential and properties in all other directions are commercial in nature. Existing antennas on the rooftop of this structure do not have an adverse affect on nearby properties.
- d) *Surrounding topography and prominence of proposed facility:* The surrounding area is relatively flat and there are no other buildings of comparable height or prominence in the surrounding area. Though the proposed rooftop antennas are visible from several vantage points, the proposal to match them to the color of the building would reduce their prominence from any public way.
- e) *Surrounding tree cover and foliage:* There are trees along the edge of the property that are significantly lower in height than the proposed antennas and will be unaffected by this proposal.
- 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:* Not applicable.
- g) *Location of tower, with particular reference to the existence of more suitable locations, as specified in Section 14.3:* Not applicable.
- h) *Proposed ingress and egress:* Ingress and egress to the site will be at the existing curb cut for the property and use existing parking and circulation patterns.
- i) *Distance from existing facilities:* Clearwire is currently establishing several sites in Somerville. The accompanying map shows the proposed future locations of Clearwire antennas.
- j) *Availability of suitable existing towers, poles, other structures, or alternative technologies, as discussed in Section 14.5.2:* The site is an existing wireless site for Sprint. Clearwire and Sprint have a relationship where Clearwire is able to use Sprint's existing arrays and penthouses. This relationship minimizes the impact that this new company's equipment has on the appearance of the building.

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."

Staff find that the proposal, as conditioned, **is consistent** with the purposes of the SZO, specifically "to facilitate the adequate provision of ...other public requirements; to ...increase the amenities of the municipality" (SZO §1.2), and with the specific purposes of Article 14 as noted below:

- 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 find the project to be compatible with the surrounding area and land uses. The antennas proposed are 2ft in diameter to 4ft in length and would be placed on penthouses that are approximately 82ft above street level. A condition that the antennas be camouflaged will reduce any impacts on the site and surrounding area.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit with Site Plan Review – A under SZO §5.2, §6.4.9 & §14

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

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes										
1	Approval is for the installation of 1 Wimax GPS antenna, 3 Wimax antennas, 3 Backhaul antennas, a coax cable run on rooftop, equipment cabinet inside an existing penthouse, 3 relocated Sprint antennas, and 1 relocated Sprint GPS antenna. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP	Plng.											
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>(Nov 12, 2009)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>Jun 29, 2009</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (A-1 roof plan, A-2 elevation, A-3 antenna orientation, A-4 cabinet details)</td></tr><tr><td>Oct 2009</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (photo simulations)</td></tr><tr><td>Nov 2009</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (photo simulations)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(Nov 12, 2009)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	Jun 29, 2009	Plans submitted to OSPCD (A-1 roof plan, A-2 elevation, A-3 antenna orientation, A-4 cabinet details)	Oct 2009	Plans submitted to OSPCD (photo simulations)	Nov 2009	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (photo simulations)
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Any changes to the approved roof plans, elevations or photo simulations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive ZBA approval.														
2	The antenna shall be painted to match the color of the penthouse to which it is attached.	Final Inspection	Plng.											
3	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	BP	FP											
4	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											

5	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 installation activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	Final inspection	DPW	
6	<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 Division, 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. The Applicant shall provide the results of such measurements and certify that the facility complies with the decibel level standards established by the City of Somerville, Noise Control Ordinance, with a copy to the Zoning Board of Appeals.	CO and annually		

7	Compliance with Federal Communications Commission Guidelines for Human Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields. To ensure compliance with the standards established by the 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.	Annually	BOH	
8	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. Failure to remove may result in a fine or penalty.	Perpetual	ISD	
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 inspection	Plng.	

