



## CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

### PLANNING BOARD

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**Case #:** ZBA2008-35

**Site:** 15 Weston Avenue

**Date:** July 18, 2008

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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## PLANNING BOARD REPORT

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**Applicant Name:** MetroPCS Massachusetts LLC

**Applicant Address:** 285 Billerica Road, Chelmsford, MA 01824

**Property Owner Name:** Somerville Housing Authority

**Property Owner Address:** 30 Memorial Road, Somerville, MA

**Alderman:** Trane

Legal Notice: The applicant seeks Special Permit Approval under SZO §7.11.15.3 for the installation of a wireless communications facility.

Zoning District/Ward: RB and NB / 7

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO§7.11.15.3

Date of Application: June 11, 2008

Date(s) of Meetings/Public Hearing: (PB: July 17, 2008 / ZBA: July 23, 2008)

Date of Decision: N/A

Vote: N/A

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Dear ZBA members:

At its regular meeting on July 17, 2008 the Planning Board heard the above-referenced application. Based on materials submitted by the Applicant and the Staff recommendation, the Board voted (5-0), with Kevin Prior absent, to recommend **conditional approval** of the requested **Special Permit**.

In conducting its analysis, the Planning Board found:

#### I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The property is a 23,612 s.f. parcel located within Neighborhood Business (NB) and Residence B (RB) zoning districts. Weston Manor is a Somerville Housing Authority development located on the site. The building is an eight (8) story, 83 (including 3' parapet) feet high, brick structure.

2. Proposal: The applicant, MetroPCS, is proposing to install wireless communications equipment, including six (6) panel-style antennas located within three (3) flue pipes, one (1) GPS antenna, five (5) roof top mounted equipment cabinets located within an enclosed shelter and associated cabling and equipment.

The rooftop shelter is proposed to extend 10' from the roof top (7' above the roof line due to the parapet). The GPS antenna would extend an additional 2' from the top of the shelter (9' above the roof line). The shelter would be 10' by 16' and located at least 23' from the building edge on all sides.

The flue pipes to house the antennas would be 10' from the roof top (7' above the roof line and at a minimum 10' from any building edge).

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

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: This property is located approximately 75' from Broadway. To the front of the property and along Weston Avenue are commercial and light industrial uses. There is also a condominium development of approximately 20 units on a property that abuts the Housing Authority's property. To the rear of Weston Manor, along Endicott Avenue, are predominantly two and three family homes.

5. Impacts on Abutting Properties: The flue pipes and equipment would be visible from certain locations surrounding the property.

6. Green Building Practices: None indicated.

7. Parking: Additional parking would not be required.

6. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Deputy Chief Steve Keenan has reviewed the application and stated, "The proposed installation of a wireless communications facility would require a code compliant fire alarm and /or fire suppression system per NFPA codes, etc".

Alderman: Alderman Trane has been contacted and has not yet provided comments

## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO§7.11.15.3):**

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 Board 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."

The Board finds that the proposal would not be substantially more detrimental to the area than the existing structure and minimal harm would be imposed upon the health, safety and welfare of the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant has worked with the Staff to reduce the visible impact of the proposed antennas and equipment and the Board finds the screening of the equipment and relocation of the façade mounted panels into flue pipes to be a visually appropriate. Electrical Engineer and Radio Frequency Specialist, M. Sohail Usmani, stated in a letter to the ZBA that the, "proposed facility complies with all applicable Federal and State standards, including those regarding radio-frequency emissions."

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 Board finds that the proposal **is consistent** with the purposes set forth in Article 1 of the Zoning Ordinance; and, with those purposes established for the Neighborhood Business (NB) and Residence B (RB) district in which the property is located, namely, "(t)o establish and preserve areas for small-scale retail stores, services and offices which are located in close proximity to residential areas and which do not have undesirable impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods" (NB). And, "(t)o establish and preserve medium density neighborhoods of one-, two- and three-family homes, free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts" (RB). The Board finds that the antennas and associated equipment will neither negatively affect the local commercial uses, nor the medium density character of the residences in the area.

The Board finds that the proposal **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."

The Board finds the project to be compatible with the surrounding area and land uses. The proposed location of the flue pipes, at minimum 10' from the building edge, meets the guidelines under the SZO and would not have a negative affect on the surrounding neighborhood or detract from the appearance of the building. The rooftop shelter is 10' in height and at no point is closer than 23' from the building's edge. From Weston Avenue and the rear of the structure the shelter is set back approximately 23' from the building edge. From either side the set back is at minimum 35', which will limit the visual impact of the shelter. A condition that the shelter is screened with a material visually similar to the building and that the antennas be painted a similar color to the building will reduce any visual impacts.

5. Review Criteria for Telecommunications Facilities: In addition to those standards outlined in Section 5.1 for the granting of special permits, the SPGA shall consider the following factors in determining whether to issue a special permit for a telecommunications facility:

- a) *Height of proposed facility:* The existing building has an 80' high roof top with a 3' parapet, which creates an 83' high roofline. The rooftop shelter and flue pipes are proposed to be 10' in height as measured from the rooftop (7' above the roofline) and the GPS antenna would extend 2' above the shelter (9' above the roofline). The Board finds that three (3) penthouses and one (1) equipment platform currently exist on the roof. One of the penthouses extends 16' above the roof top (13' above the roofline), other penthouses are of comparable height to the proposed MetroPCS shelter and flue pipes.
- b) *Proximity of facility to residential structures and residential zoning districts:* The building at 15 Weston Avenue is a residential structure in both Neighborhood Business and Residence B districts. Other residential structures directly abut this property. The Board finds that several companies currently have wireless communications equipment on this structure and additional equipment would have limited impact on the surrounding residential structures.
- c) *Nature of uses on adjacent and nearby properties:* Surrounding properties are mixed use in nature and, the Board finds, compatible with the proposed use.
- 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 flue pipes are visible from several vantage points, the proposal to match them to the color of the building, and a condition in this report to maximize their distance from the building edges, will reduce their prominence from any public way.

- e) *Surrounding tree cover and foliage:* The surrounding area includes a park and has several street trees that are significantly lower in height than the proposed flue pipe and 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:* (See figures B and C)
- j) *Availability of suitable existing towers, poles, other structures, or alternative technologies, as discussed in Section 14.5.2:* The attached report prepared by the applicant's professional radio frequency engineer indicates that this location was chosen by MetroPCS, "due to the existing use of the property for wireless communications use, the city's preference for use of city-owned properties for wireless communications sites, and the location and overall height of the property, which provides the opportunity for reasonable service coverage in this area of Somerville".

### **III. RECOMMENDATION**

#### **Special Permit under SZO §7.11.15.3**

Based on the above findings, the Planning Board recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

The Board finds that this application complies with the requirements for granting a special permit as set forth under §5.1.4 and Article 14.

Although the Planning Board is recommending approval of the requested Special Permit, the following conditions should be added to the permits:

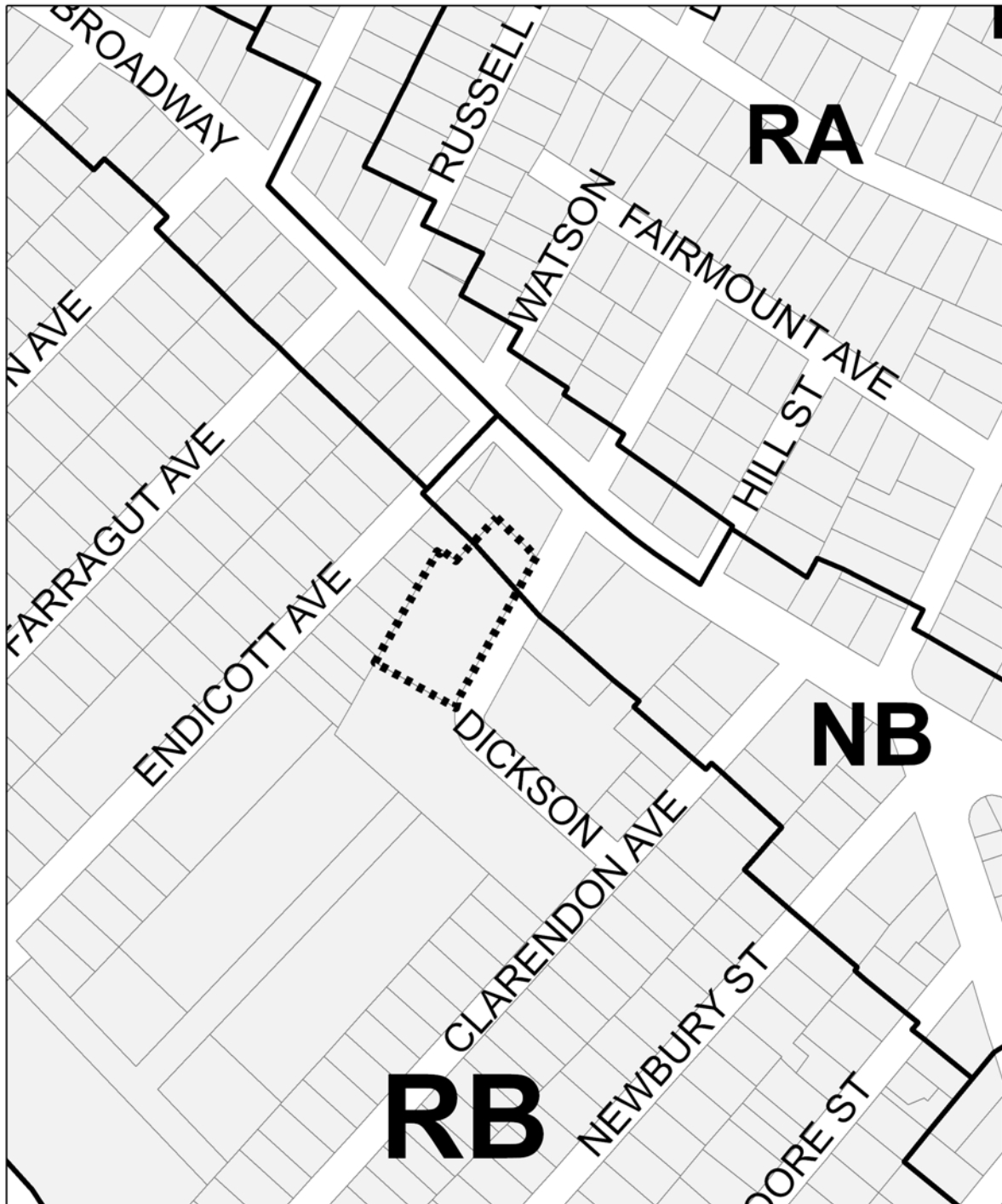
#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	<p>Approval is for the establishment of six (6) wireless antennas within three (3) flue pipes, one (1) GPS antenna, rooftop mounted equipment cabinets in a 10' by 16' equipment shelter and associated cabling and equipment. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant and/or contractor:</p> <table><tr><th>Date</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>June 11, 2008</td><td>Initial application, submitted to the City Clerk's Office.</td></tr><tr><td>July 16, 2008</td><td>P.E. materials, plans, elevations and photograph renditions submitted to OSPCD</td></tr></table> <p>Any changes to the approved site plan, photograph renditions and/or elevations that are not di minimis must receive ZBA approval.</p>	Date	Submission	June 11, 2008	Initial application, submitted to the City Clerk's Office.	July 16, 2008	P.E. materials, plans, elevations and photograph renditions submitted to OSPCD	BP/CO	PLNG.	
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2	<p><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. 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.</p>	CONT.	ISD							
3	<p><i>Compliance with Federal Communications Commission Guidelines for Human Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields.</i> To ensure compliance with the standards established by the</p>	CONT.	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.			
4	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.	CONT.	ISD	
5	The Applicant shall make best efforts to maximize the flue pipes' distance from the building edges.	CO	PLNG.	
6	Flue pipes shall be painted a similar color to that of the building and the equipment shelter walls shall feature materials visually similar to those of the building.	CO	PLNG.	
7	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final sign-off on the building permit 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.	



Elizabeth Maroney  
Acting Chairman

Cc: Applicant: MetroPCS Massachusetts LLC  
Owner: Somerville Housing Authority



## 15 WESTON AVENUE