



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2012-96
Date: December 6, 2012
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 15 Weston Avenue

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 02143
Agent Name: Bryan S. Wilson
Agent Address: Northeast Wireless Services, 175 Washington St., B-13, Winchester, MA 01890
Alderman: Robert Trane

Legal Notice: The Applicant, MetroPCS Massachusetts, LLC, and Owner, Somerville Housing Authority, seek a Special Permit under SZO §7.11.15.3 and SZO §14 to expand the use of the wireless communication facility to include the installation of four dish antennas and related equipment.

Zoning District/Ward: RB / 7

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

Date of Application: October 16, 2012

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **Wednesday, December 12, 2012**

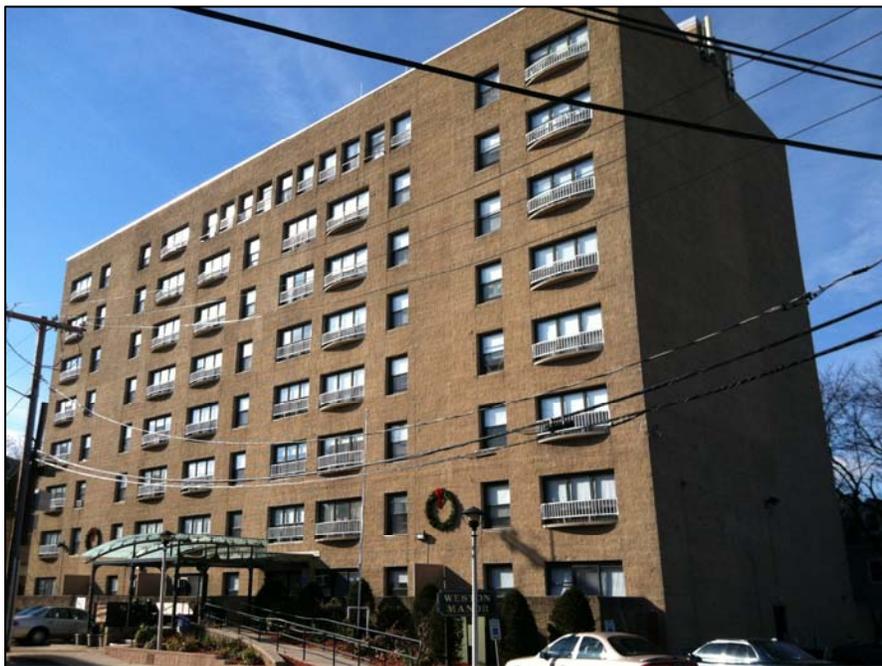
I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 23,612 square foot parcel located in both a Residence B (RB) and a Neighborhood Business (NB) zoning district near Broadway in Teele Square. Weston Manor, a Somerville Housing Authority development, is located on the parcel. Weston Manor is an eight story brick structure that contains 88 residential units. Three penthouses are located on the rooftop. One is at the northern edge; one is at the southern edge and a third is located in the center of the rooftop.



The subject property is currently a wireless communication facility for Sprint, T-Mobile, and MetroPCS. This property has received prior zoning relief related to the establishment of and modifications to these wireless facilities. Metro PCS established their facility at the subject property in 2008 and currently has six panel antennae, five equipment cabinets and a GPS device located on the rooftop.

2. Proposal: The Applicant, MetroPCS, proposes to expand their facility and install four (4) additional façade-mounted dish-style antennae including associated cabling and equipment to the rooftop to enhance communication between existing facilities, which will improve the efficiency of the overall network. The antennae rely on horizontal line-of-site connectivity to function. Two dish antennae, 15” and 26” in diameter, will be installed on the eastern wall of the mechanical or central penthouse. One dish antenna, 15” in diameter, will be installed on the north wall of the northern penthouse and the fourth dish antenna, also 15” in diameter, will be installed on the southern MetroPCS screen wall near the northern penthouse.



15 Weston Avenue

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

MetroPCS established their wireless facility through Special Permit in 2008 (ZBA 2008-35) and currently has six panel antennae, five equipment cabinets and a GPS device installed on the rooftop.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located near Broadway in Teele Square. Properties that front onto Broadway are either mixed use or commercial and St. James Episcopal Church is located nearby on the corner of Broadway and Clarendon Avenue. Two condominium developments are located adjacent to the subject property along Weston Avenue and the larger surrounding neighborhood is predominantly two- and three-family dwellings.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposed changes are not anticipated to negatively impact the site. The two antennae to be located on the eastern wall of the center penthouse would be placed along an existing

row of antennae while the other two antennae would be installed on their own on the screen wall and northern penthouse. Visibility of the dish antennae will be minimized by locating them on rooftop features that are set back from the edge of the roof as low as possible and by paint color.

6. Green Building Practices: The Applicant does not indicate any green building practices.

7. Comments:

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

Ward Alderman: Alderman Trane has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Lights and Lines: Has been contacted but has not yet provided 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: 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, MetroPCS, 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 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. MetroPCS is an 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 existing building is eight stories in height with a 3' parapet at the top. The new antennas would not exceed the height of the penthouse façades or screen wall to which they are attached.
- 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. Sprint and T-Mobile have also established a wireless communications facility on the rooftop of this structure. Therefore, additional equipment would have a limited impact on the surrounding residential structures.
- c) *Nature of uses on adjacent and nearby properties*: The subject property is located near Broadway in Teele Square. Properties that front onto Broadway are either mixed use or commercial and St. James Episcopal Church is located nearby on the corner of Broadway and

Clarendon Avenue. Two condominium developments are located adjacent to the subject property along Weston Avenue and the larger surrounding neighborhood is predominantly two- and three-family dwellings. 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.

- d) *Surrounding topography and prominence of proposed facility:* The subject building is the tallest in the area. The surrounding area is relatively flat and no other buildings of comparable height or prominence are located in the surrounding area. Although the proposed dish antennae are visible from several vantage points, the antennae will be painted to match the color of the building which will reduce their prominence from the public way.
- e) *Surrounding tree cover and foliage:* The surrounding area includes a park and several street trees that are significantly lower in height than the proposed dish antennae.
- 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:* Guidelines of Article 14 of the SZO state that antennae should not be located more than 10 feet above the roofline, façade mounted antennae are encouraged and antennae should be painted to match the surrounding materials and colors. All antennae will be façade mounted and two will be slightly higher than ten feet to align with the existing façade mounted antennas on the central penthouse. All antennae will be painted to match the façade to which they are mounted.
- g) *Location of tower, with particular reference to the existence of more suitable locations, as specified in Section 14.3:* The guidelines in Article 14 state that service providers, when possible, should co-locate and/or locate on facilities owned or managed by the City of Somerville. This proposal is compliant with the intent of this guideline as MetroPCS has an existing facility at this site and the Somerville Housing Authority is a nonprofit organization that services senior residents.
- h) *Proposed ingress and egress:* The existing stairwell and penthouse will be utilized to access the rooftop.
- i) *Distance from existing facilities:* The site currently operates as a MetroPCS wireless facility. 27 College Avenue is the only other MetroPCS wireless facility in the City.
- j) *Availability of suitable existing towers, poles, other structures, or alternative technologies, as discussed in Section 14.5.2, which states the Applicant shall demonstrate that the proposed antennae will not cause interference with existing on site antennae on the site and that alternative technologies are not suitable.* This subject property is an existing wireless communications facility. The Applicant has demonstrated that the location and dish antennae technology are most suitable. The dish antennae are proposed to be installed to enhance communication between existing facilities, which will improve the efficiency of the overall network. The dish antennae are located to allow for line-of-site which is necessary for the antennae to function properly.

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 proposal 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 provide adequate light and air; to facilitate the adequate provision of ...other public requirements; to conserve the value of land and buildings; and to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City.”

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the Residence B district, §6.1.2, which is, “To 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.”

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the Neighborhood Business district, §6.1.4, which is, “To 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.”

The wireless communication facility expansion is consistent with the purposes of both the Neighborhood Business and Residence B districts as the additional dish antennae will enhance communication between existing facilities, which will improve the efficiency of the overall network to local residents and businesses.

Furthermore, Staff finds that the proposal, as conditioned, is consistent with the purposes set forth in Article 14 of the SZO, 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 (as noted in finding 2b, the proposal is in a residential area but it complies with the other purposes and standards of the Ordinance);*
- 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 proposal to be compatible with the surrounding area and land uses. The proposed location of the dish antennae on the penthouse façades and screen wall, as conditioned, would not have a negative affect on the surrounding neighborhood or detract from the appearance of the building due to the other wireless carriers that have also established this building as a wireless facility as well as building height, setback of the penthouse façades and screen wall, and color of paint to match the corresponding façades.

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 facility will have to comply with the applicable FCC requirements relating to radio frequency emissions. The installation of the additional equipment will not generate glare, light, smoke, vibrations dust or noxious materials. Noise from the equipment will be minimal and should not be heard beyond the confines of the property where it will be placed. Standard conditions ensure compliance with the Noise Control Ordinance and FCC Guidelines for Human Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §7.11.15.3 and §14

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

The recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes										
1	<p>Approval is for a Special Permit under SZO §7.11.15.3 and §14 to expand the use of the wireless communication facility to include the installation of four dish antennae and related equipment. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(October 16, 2012)</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August 9, 2012</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (T-1, GN-1, C-1, A-1, S-1, & E-1)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>November 2, 2012</td> <td>Elevations submitted to OSPCD (A-2 & A-3)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>October 3, 2012</td> <td>Photo simulations submitted to OSPCD (sheets 1-12)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Any changes to the approved site plan or use that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.</p>	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(October 16, 2012)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	August 9, 2012	Plans submitted to OSPCD (T-1, GN-1, C-1, A-1, S-1, & E-1)	November 2, 2012	Elevations submitted to OSPCD (A-2 & A-3)	October 3, 2012	Photo simulations submitted to OSPCD (sheets 1-12)	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.	
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2	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP											

3	<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 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.</p>			
4	<p>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.</p>		Health Dept	
5	<p>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.</p>	CONT.	ISD	
6	<p>The applicant shall remove any of that carrier's unused or non-operating wireless equipment prior to installation.</p>	Signoff	Plng.	

7	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.	
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15 Weston Avenue

