
City of Bethel, Alaska

Planning Commission

May 23, 2013

Special Meeting

Bethel, Alaska

I. CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Planning Commission was held on May 23, 2013 at 6:30 pm in the City Hall conference room in Bethel, Alaska.

Chairman, John Guinn, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Comprising a quorum of the Commission, the following members were present for roll call: John Guinn, Joy Shantz, Mike Walter, Abe Palacios, and Cliff Linderoth. Ex -Officio members present were the following, Rachael Pitts, Planning Director and Betsy Jumper, Recorder. Others present: Russ McDonald of United Utilities, and two engineers with United Utilities.

III. PEOPLE TO BE HEARD (5 minute Limit)

Citizen Lisa Meyers called in earlier in the day to the Planning Department and voiced her opposition against the tower – she heard they emit radiation. **Citizen William Ferguson** spoke out against the cell tower, stating GCI is only about economic gain; voicing concerns about his property being devalued and health issues cell towers can cause, including mental illness. He provided information about property devaluation in the state of California. Also, the Tundra Ridge covenants state that the Tundra Ridge neighborhood is strictly residential. **Citizen Tim Bee** voiced his concerns about living next door to a cell tower, specifically how it would affect his DISH Satellite television reception, and did not like the cell tower going in at a residential location. **Citizen Joanne Neck** stated she was not worried about the tower.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: A. Public Hearing: Conditional Use Application from United Utilities, Inc., for a Telecommunications Tower and Utility Structure to be located at 9116 Ptarmigan Street, Bethel, Alaska 99559.

The City Planner provided an introduction of the request.

The United Utilities Company employees gave a presentation about the proposed cell tower located in the Tundra Ridge subdivision. They indicated that the tower would augment present cell phone capabilities in the city. The new tower would allow better coverage in Tundra Ridge, Uivik, Larsen, and Kasayuli subdivisions. This is a chance for GCI to address complaints from customers that the cell phone reception is bad in parts of the city. They stated that there are no ill effects from the towers, and that they are designed to withstand high winds. The tower would not impair television reception in the neighborhood. Specifically addressed were some issues brought up by Commission members at the previous meeting on May 9th:

Can the tower be shortened? The tower would be most effective at 60 feet in height.
Are there issues with the airport flight path? Initial contact with TOWAIR indicates that the tower will not need to be registered.

Is there a different location to put the tower? At this time the present location is considered the best available. Finding a new location will add a year to the process.
 Are the soils and drainage at the site adequate for a tower? The drainage is good at the site, it is not in the floodplain. The tower base in the existing soil will be adequate support.

Representatives of United provided information on the effects of a tower on property values, and issues of exposure to radio frequency fields.

The Planning Commission members discussed the topics at length.

The findings of the Planning Commission were:

1. This land use is not appropriate in Residential zoning.
2. The Tundra Ridge covenants permit commercial use on only a few lots, and not on this one.
3. The effects of such towers on health cannot be verified at this time.

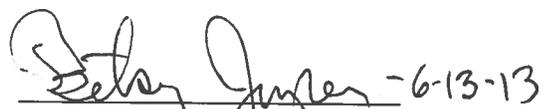
(Cliff Linderoth asked to be excused from voting due to a conflict of interest; Chair Guinn accepted).

MOVED:	Joy Shantz	Approve the Conditional Use Application
SECONDED:	Mike Walter	
VOTE ON MAIN MOTION	0-4 Motion Fails; Guinn, Shantz, Walter, Palacios opposed	

VI. ADJOURNMENT, Motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED:	Joy Shantz	To adjourn the meeting at 7:50.
SECONDED:	Mike Walter	
VOTE ON MAIN MOTION	All in favor 5-0 Motion passes; 5 yes and 0 opposed.	


 John Guinn, Chairman

 -6-13-13
 Betsy Jumper, Recorder