



**ACME TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
ACME TOWNSHIP HALL  
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690  
7:00 p.m. Monday, May 22, 2006**

**Meeting called to Order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:00 p.m.**

**Members present:** M. Vermetten (Vice-Chair), B. Carstens, C. David, R. Hardin, D. Krause, J. Pulcifer, E. Takayama, L. Wikle

**Members excused:** O. Sherberneau

**Staff present:** J. Hull, Zoning Administrator  
S. Corpe, Township Manager/Recording Secretary  
J. Jocks, Township Counsel

**1. Consent Calendar:**

**Motion by Takayama, support by David to approve the Consent Calendar as presented, including:**

**Receive and File:**

- a) Draft Unapproved Minutes of
1. **05/09/06 Regular Board of Trustees Meeting**
  2. **05/10/06 Shoreline Preservation Advisory Meeting**
  3. **05/11/06 Farmland Preservation Meeting**
  4. **5/12/06 YCNA Meeting**
  5. **05/02/06 Letter from GT Resort**
  6. **April 2006 Planning & Zoning News**

**Action:**

- e) Approve minutes of the **04/24/06 regular** meeting
- f) Review and approve agenda, inquiry as to conflicts of interest: Approved with no conflicts of interest noted.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**2. Limited Public Comment:**

Vermetten welcomed new commissioner Linda Wikle.

Ann Rundhaug, 3733 Bunker Hill Road stated an impression that the proposed cell tower would be “smack in front of her window” but is uncertain because the presentation has not been made yet. She wonders why the proposed antenna cannot be located on the Resort water tower.

**3. Public Hearings:**

- a) **Public Hearing – SUP/Site Plan Application #2006-06P by National Tower, LLC, c/o Cellere to locate and construct a cell tower just east of the Holiday Inn Express, 3536 Mt. Hope Road, Acme, Michigan:** Dave Larsen from Cellere has been working with Verizon to bring cellular phone and wireless internet service to Northern Michigan, beginning with major transportation corridors. Verizon is co-locating on the existing Yuba tower, but this is not enough to provide sufficient coverage for the entire township. They are proposing a 185-tall monopole tower behind the Holiday Inn Express. Siting a tower begins with a look at “search rings” within a desired location area. These rings are compared to local zoning maps to narrow down the list of suitable properties. The properties are further winnowed by

availability and other factors, and then the service provider makes a preferred selection. The possibility of co-locating on the Resort water tower has been explored and will not work because it already has two antennae on it and Cellere has been told that it may be removed in the future. The Resort Tower itself is already at capacity. They have looked for other tall structures that might be available and have contacted a variety of landowners for suitable lands to see if they are interested in negotiating.

Verizon would have preferred a 250' tower to meet their coverage objectives; however, after reviewing the ordinance they decided to limit the height to 185' to cover as much of the township as they can without having to be lit for airplanes. The Holiday Inn property has enough room to provide for required setbacks and is within a mixed use development and zoned appropriately for the use.

Steve Fox from Bishop & Heintz is representing Cellere. The applicants believe they have met the special use standards in the Personal Wireless Services Ordinance. Hull has raised some questions regarding technology and service, and an expert is present this evening to answer those questions.

Wikle has questions about grounding for the tower and protection for wells adjoining the property. Mr. Braxton from Cellere stated that the grounding system construction drawings have been provided and meet regulatory codes. A ground ring and grounding rods every 8-10' are provided depending on soil resistivity. The goal is to reduce resistivity below 5 ohms. Any lightning strike to the tower would be discharged below grade. Wikle asked if soil borings had been taken; they have and revealed sand and gravel. She asked if the rods are set in cement; they are not. All metal features are tied into the grounding ring, in part because ungrounded features will generate noise in the network. Wikle asked if the question of what might occur if lightning travels through sand to neighboring wells has been addressed. Mr. Braxton stated that this has not been studied, but all industry and local codes will be met.

Takayama asked what areas outside of the township a 185' tower would cover/what is the service radius of the tower? Mr. Braxton stated that the radius will approximate 2 miles, depending on local topography. He referred to RF study information that had been provided. Some overlaps in coverage are needed so that as people travel between towers their calls are passed from one to the next smoothly and without loss of signal. It is also important for towers to be able to generate information for the 911 system that will provide the origination location of a cell phone call to within 25'. The wavelength Verizon uses is 1,800 – 1,900 mh. It was auctioned off to them in the 1990s, and has turned out to be a wavelength that does not easily penetrate buildings or even foliage. So during the spring and summer coverage areas actually shrink with the increased foliage on the trees. Area coverage is also impacted by the number of callers connected to the tower at any given time. A limited amount of power can be pushed through an antenna before sound quality degrades. Takayama noted that some of the areas on the RF map are heavily wooded.

Hardin asked about the RF map with the proposed tower, noting an area of increased service near a pre-existing tower and asking why that would occur. Mr. Braxton stated that this is a result of the planned overlap between towers for service and 911 triangulation.

Wikle asked if there was any thought given to locating the proposed tower near the Ameritech building on M-72; this was not considered but would be undesirable due to shadows cast by topography. Wikle asked if thought was given to location off White Road at the top of Bunker Hill; this is a residential area which would be one

barrier. The Verizon search ring was centered on the Resort water tower; pushing a tower as far south as Bunker Hill Road would essentially result in a proposed redesign of Verizon's network.

Wikle asked how the Verizon signal is provided right now; currently it is not. They are building their network. If an out-of-area Verizon user comes to Traverse City their calls are currently handled on the Alltel network. Mr. Braxton stated that one benefit to building the tower in the proposed location is that when other services such as Cingular and T-Mobile arrive they will have a place to go. It could also serve as a place for relocation of the antennae on the Resort water tower if and when that tower is taken down. A tower becomes full at 4-5 antennae, but can be made taller or strengthened. There must be at least 10' of separation between each antenna, and a tower can carry up to 6 before it becomes economically not viable to upgrade the tower.

David stated that he can see 17 lighted towers from where he lives. Why are there so many if they could have been combined. Mr. Braxton stated that those are TV and radio towers which generally don't lend themselves to cellular use. Those towers also have capacity limits. Verizon will be co-locating on a tower in East Bay Township next to the TART as well. A tower must be lit once it exceeds 199'. Cellere wants to avoid coming even close to impacting the local airports with this tower.

Takayama asked about the description "monopole" and if it needs guy wires; it does not. It will resemble the tower at Yuba.

Hull has recommended continuing the hearing to the June meeting pending an engineering review. He also has a question for the Resort; he spoke to their engineer today who gave him no indication that there are plans to tear down the water tower. Mr. Braxton thought perhaps Hull hasn't spoken to the correct individuals at the Tribe about this matter and offered his contact information. It is Hull's understanding that the towers at the Resort and Turtle Creek will be cross-connected in part so that internal maintenance as mandated by the EPA can be performed from time to time without loss of service.

Wikle noted that Hull's staff report contains many items noted as "applicant needs to verify" and asked for a status update. Hull replied that the applicant must make a case that the proposed tower location is the only feasible option. Normally he is able to answer that sort of question himself, but he is over his head in terms of the technical details of the situation and asked the applicant to "fill in the holes." The Commission must decide if the applicant has met the required standard of proof. Mr. Braxton stated that antennae can't be located on buildings due to a general zoning ordinance limit on building heights of 35'. There are also 40' tall pine trees in some parts of the township that absorb signal, and the signal absorption becomes worse when the deciduous trees leaf out. The area is hilly, and RF signals don't bend with the topography. Even using available buildings on US 31 it would be impossible to cover the M-72 corridor and residential areas to the south. It is also important to consider the fact that phones have to send back a signal to the tower, and the signal is much weaker than the tower signal.

Takayama asked Hull when a municipality has the right to say that there are enough towers in its community and that antennae must be located elsewhere. Hull replied that this would be a question for legal counsel to research, and Jocks concurred. David asked if anything in the ordinance states that an applicant must demonstrate a need for the service they seek to provide. Hull believes the ordinance does not

contain such a requirement and would again wish to refer this question to legal counsel. David views the situation as largely a “business decision” and wonders how the township can be protected from being in the middle of a battle between competing business interests. Hull noted that there is also a question of optimizing the number of towers and the amount of service available. Carstens expressed concern that efforts that the township makes to protect land and scenic views could be foiled by tower placement. He fears that location of this tower may negatively impact one of the protected viewsheds identified in the Master Plan. Mr. Fox stated that care has been taken not to impact the viewsheds. The federal Telecommunication Act limits the township’s discretion in this particular matter. Federal law is based on a desire to promote cell phone use and therefore limits the amount of local restriction that can be placed on the industry. Mr. Braxton asked what would happen were there a significant number of cellular customers in the township. Once a tower is in place with its antenna, capacity can be upgraded approximately 12 times to accommodate future usage growth. There is a goal to serve as many customers as possible in a single footprint without needing to build more towers and obtain more approvals.

Pulcifer asked why Cellere doesn’t make the tower 10’ taller to provide room for one more antenna; they would be willing to do this if the township is willing to grant the additional height.

Wikle asked if Cellere is responsible for either of the towers near the Kaliseum in Kalkaska, which she says are unattractive. They are lattice-work towers rather than monopoles, another reason why Cellere is seeking to limit the size of the tower so that the switch from monopole to lattice doesn’t have to be made.

Krause asked for the diameter of the tower. It will begin at approximately 5’ in diameter and taper as it rises. Vermetten asked how tall the Yuba tower is; it is 197’ tall and is a silvery-grey.

**Public Hearing opened at 7:45 p.m.**

Mrs. Rundhaug seeks the cupola at the Holiday Inn Express out her window when she sits and eats dinner. She asked for the relationship of the tower to the cupola. The tower will be centered on the building at about 80’ east into the woods. She was shown a parcel map of the area, and based on what she was shown believes that the tower would be in the middle of her only view of the water.

Andy Andres, 1107 Barlow Street is representing his parents who live on M-72 East. He stated that the township has been working hard to bring in a New Urbanist planner to come up with a town center plan for the area including this property. Placement of a tower before that effort has come to a conclusion could have a significant negative impact on the project, which should be considered. Also, his family owns property that has views of everything from Dr. Reabe’s veterinary office on the US 31 waterfront and south. This tower would be within the view from their property and would have a negative financial impact on his family.

Nels Veliquette stated that when he visited Las Vegas last spring there a tower of similar height that was “dressed” as a ponderosa pine. If there hadn’t been men servicing the tower he never would have noticed it among the other trees. He believes that this tower being located in a treeline can be made to blend in.

**Public Hearing closed at 7:52 p.m.**

David asked Veliquette for more information about the Las Vegas Tower. The pole had been painted brown and false branches had been installed. Standing alone in a field it would have looked odd, but mixed in with natural trees it blended well.

Vermetten noted that an e-mail was received from LouAnn Brohl, 4125 Holiday North Court and provided to the Commission on their tables this evening, included and incorporated by reference. Ms. Brohl was present in the audience and stated that many of her questions have been answered at this point. She believes there are creative solutions to appearance issues.

David asked if Cellere has used any tower camouflaging techniques before. Mr. Braxton stated that it is not a common occurrence and they've never had a situation where it would have made a difference. He asked how a 185' pine tree might seem within the current context. David agreed, but felt that something other than a grey, galvanized finish might be better. Hull asked if they had looked into a painting pattern; for instance in World War II battleships were painted to make them difficult to see. Mr. Braxton feels that this would be ineffective because as the light changes throughout the day the paint job might not do a good job the whole time. Perspective also matters. Mr. Fox observed that a tower painted sky blue might fit in on clear days, it will stand out on cloudy days. Hull responded that it is well-established that camouflaging can be successful. Mr. Braxton noted that the military had different camouflage uniforms for different locations and conditions, so one solution will not work for everything. Hull replied that it is fallacious to think that no solution is better than a partial solution. The Cellere representatives stated that there is no standard camouflage painting solution at this time, but they would be willing to consider a proposal.

Wikle asked if there are other Cellere towers in the area to view; there are not but the tower will appear similar to the Yuba tower but shorter. The base will be landscaped. Krause feels that talk about attempts to camouflage the tower are ridiculous, and will only draw attention to it. He feels that painting the tower a neutral color such as beige with a dull finish would be optimal. Nobody wants cell towers, but many people want good cell phone coverage. The base of the tower will not be readily visible; only the top will be seen. We talk about viewsheds, but when he drives down US 31 he sees a house he deems hideous. He doesn't like the appearance of the telephone poles, or the Resort tower, but he has learned to live with them.

Krause feels that the proposed landscaping could be improved. He asked what the graveled road access traverses. The Cellere representatives stated it crosses a drainage ditch that must be maintained according to the Soil Erosion Department. Krause is concerned that white pines will ultimately grow too large and impair the fence. He suggested Arbor Vitae instead. Takayama suggested another pine varietal; lately he has seen problems with Arbor Vitae due to drought conditions and spider mites. He also suggested upright juniper, which deer don't eat and are resistant to salt spray. Krause agreed with the juniper suggestion, planted no more than 4' apart and installed at 6' tall. There will be an irrigation system and monthly maintenance.

Krause asked Hull what might still be missing from the application; Hull replied that the review of the RF propagation map is the key item. We are considering using the same engineering firm that reviewed the Yuba cell tower, and expect a response prior to the next Planning Commission meeting.

**Motion by Carstens, support by Takayama to continue the public hearing regarding Application at the next regular Planning Commission meeting.**

**Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.**

**4. Public Comment/Any other business that may come before the Commission:**

Jay Zollinger, Cranberry Court asked why a township would want to do an RF study, and what would ever be done with it. Corpe replied that the township has the service provider's study verified to see whether there are other possible locations in case a requested site is undesirable to the township for some reason. Applicants cover the cost for the review.

David noted that when the Planning Commission recommended approval of a restaurant at the Traverse Bay Woolen property, it was expected that the Troutman building would be torn down and the restaurant placed in the remodeled antique store building. Now it appears that the Troutman is being remodeled. Hull stated that the applicant for that project never proceeded to final SUP approval at the Board. We are informed that a representative for the family partnership that owns the property made representations to Rob Evina, the applicant, that he had no authority from the rest of the family to make. The plans for the restaurant have fallen through, but Mr. Evina still likes the property for his business. He is preparing to rent the other buildings out to new retail operations, but hopes someday to raise the capital to accomplish his original dream.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.**