

## **Town of South Hadley Comprehensive Plan Compliance Statement.**

### **BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION:**

On August 30, 2010, the Town of South Hadley duly adopted a new master plan after a three year study working in concert with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. The resultant document, known officially as the Town of South Hadley Comprehensive Plan (the “Plan”), addresses various aspects of town life in South Hadley, assessing present conditions, analyzing trends, and recommending best practices for future growth. Subsequent to adoption of the Plan, South Hadley has required that most applicants for special permits provide a statement indicating how the proposed project will comply with the goals and vision of the Plan. In the instant application, MetroPCS (“the Applicant”) is seeking to install a set of 6 PCS antennae upon an existing smokestack located at the South Hadley High School and to place associated electronic equipment cabinets – known as BTS units – on a poured concrete pad near the smokestack within a fenced compound. Such a facility is allowable within the applicable zoning district upon issuance of a special permit.

### **OVERVIEW OF SERVICE FEATURES:**

The Plan does not directly address the topic of telecommunications facilities. However, the Plan does address areas of development and resources which will be enhanced by the appropriate location of a telecommunications facility. Each proposed location is carefully determined to be within an area of the relevant community that is presently underserved by the applying telecommunications service provider. The Federal law, specifically the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 as well as the applicable sections of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation act passed into law just over a year ago, allow such service providers to build out their network infrastructure in concert with local authorities. Proper geographic placement of the facility is crucial in that a facility placed too close to an existing facility would result in the provision of “redundant coverage” and the placement too far removed from existing sites would result in an “island site” with underserved areas surrounding it. Thus the seamless integration of service is important for a properly functioning network.

Since wireless and cellular technologies were introduced less than a generation ago, both the desire for service and the technology itself have expanded exponentially. Personal communication ability has increased beyond all expectations. At a 2011 hearing

before the Senate Commerce Committee, New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly remarked that a 16-year-old with a smart phone “has more advanced communications capability than a [police officer or deputy] carrying a radio”.<sup>1</sup>

It has been determined that the demand for wireless service is still on the increase and has not yet leveled off. By 2015, a majority of Americans will utilize a wireless device as their primary internet access tool.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, the number of 911 calls placed by people using wireless phones has significantly increased in recent years. It is estimated that about 70 percent of 911 calls are placed from wireless phones, and that percentage is growing.<sup>3</sup> For many Americans, the ability to call 911 for help in an emergency is one of the main reasons they own a wireless phone. Other wireless 911 calls come from “Good Samaritans” reporting traffic accidents, crimes or other emergencies. The prompt delivery of wireless 911 calls to public safety organizations benefits the public by promoting safety of life and property.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to emergency use, wireless technology is becoming pervasive in everyday life. In a recent study in Connecticut, it was determined that the number of adults and children who live in wireless-only households has increased 142.8 percent and 240.5 per cent respectively, in only two and a half years.<sup>5</sup> Further, in testimony at a recent “town hall meeting”, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski and US Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan challenged states to transition to digital textbooks within 5 years to “improve the quality and penetration of digital learning in K-12 public education”. As part of this presentation, Secretary Duncan presented a *Digital Textbook Playbook* that provides recommendations and advice to educators and others to facilitate this transition. The Playbook notes that “[r]obust broadband connectivity is another prerequisite to implementing a rich digital learning environment” and “the key to delivering sufficient connectivity is estimating current and future demand to ensure that schools have enough bandwidth capacity to serve their student body, faculty and staff”.<sup>6</sup> Such statements encouraging enhanced bandwidth availability apply to wireless services as well for many of the same reasons. As times change, the inherent flexibility of wireless services makes it possible to introduce new offerings on a dynamic basis as consumer demands grow and change.

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<sup>1</sup> Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly: Testimony on “Safeguarding Our Future: Building a Nationwide Network for First Responders”. U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation, at 1 (Feb. 16, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Statement of the Wireless Infrastructure Association (PCIA) and the New England Wireless Association (NEWA) before the [Connecticut] Energy and Technology Committee (March 1, 2012)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/wireless-911-services>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/wireless-911-services>

<sup>5</sup> Statement of the Wireless Infrastructure Association (PCIA), above.

<sup>6</sup> [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2012/02/duncan\\_genachowski\\_unveil\\_digi.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2012/02/duncan_genachowski_unveil_digi.html)

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Along with the above described enhancement of emergency and non-emergency communication, business and commercial productivity continues to be strengthened by the supplementation of wireless service. Such services are integral to many businesses

that rely on mobility of their operations to provide goods and services to their customers. Communicating by a wireless network enables companies in various businesses –or home operations- to operate in a more efficient manner, and ultimately to lower the cost to consumers while improving the quality of service.

The above information provides a basis for the consideration of how the proposed facility complies with the goals and purpose of the Plan. Set forth below is specific application of the relevant sections of the Plan.

### **LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN:**

This section of the Plan - designated as Chapter 1 - appears to be the most relevant for a determination of the applicability of the Plan to the proposed facility. As stated in its Introduction, the chapter “is a synthesis of how the other Plan elements for the community-economic development, housing, cultural and historical resources, open space and recreation, natural resources, transportation and municipal facilities-come together to make up South Hadley’s built environment”. According to this chapter, there were various common themes raised by the public as critical concerns regarding South Hadley’s previous and current land use and community design patterns. Below is an identification of these themes along with proposals as to how the proposed facility meets these concerns.

#### **Identification of Issues:**

- Development (particularly multi-family and commercial) appears haphazard and located in appropriate places. The proposed facility, if approved, will be located within a zoning district which allows such facilities by special permit. Placement of these facilities, as described above is based upon careful study of the existing service levels and is based on need for service as described in the Federal Telecommunications Act.
- Development (particularly multi-family and commercial) is out of character with the surrounding neighborhood. The proposed structure is allowable in the zoning district and the Applicant is willing to work with the town to mitigate as much as possible the impact of the facility on the neighborhood. By design it is not substantially intrusive to the existing viewscape.
- Lack of landscaping, trees, greenery in existing and new developments. The proposed facility will not require the removal of existing trees and the

Applicant is willing to add landscaping to the facility as appropriate and reasonably required.

- Unappealing architectural, signage and landscaping of development throughout the town especially with respect to the main thoroughfares (Routes 116, 47, 33, 202); The proposed facility would be located on an existing smokestack structure at the existing high school on Route 116 within the triangle in the southern part of town described by Route 116, Route 202 and Route 33. The visual impact would be exceedingly minimal. The Applicant is willing to work with the town to attempt to meet the additional goals of this section of the Plan.
- Lack of common area The proposed facility will not be of a scale that would require additional common area nor would it be necessary to reduce existing public common area to accommodate the facility.
- Lack of pedestrian connectivity between developments. It does not appear that this concern would be compromised by the proposed development.
- Loss of agricultural lands and scenic vistas to large subdivisions and multi-family development. It does not appear that this concern would be compromised by the proposed development.
- Overabundance of non-conforming land uses throughout town; This proposed use conforms to zoning in that it is allowed in the applicable zoning district.
- Spot zoning of parcels throughout the town. The applicant is not seeking a change to existing zoning.
- Potential for large residential development (“McMansion style development) that use significant pristine forest/agricultural land; It does not appear that this concern would be compromised by the proposed development.
- Lack of comprehensive ideas for development. The proposed facility would be developed and installed according to all applicable zoning and building requirements.
- High noise levels from business disturb neighborhood residents. Subsequent to construction the proposed facility will not produce any noise detectable beyond the fenced compound. The facility is unoccupied and will be visited only once a month for the first six months by a technician.

Maintenance visits after the initial six months of operation are intermittent. There will be no change in traffic circulation patterns within the surrounding area and the proposed facility will not impact pedestrians.

- Insufficient access to the riverfront. It does not appear that this concern would be compromised by the proposed development.
- Insufficient recreational/alternative transportation opportunities (i.e. bike and hiking paths) throughout town. It does not appear that this concern would be compromised by the proposed development, although additional wireless service would enhance the ability of the users of such opportunities the ability to communicate in both emergency and non-emergency situations.
- Overabundance of auto-related services throughout town It does not appear that this concern would be compromised by the proposed development.
- Eateries and shops should be consistent with the character of the town. It does not appear that this concern would be compromised by the proposed development.
- Concern for the environmental impacts of development; As stated, the proposed facility is essentially passive in nature. In addition, the Applicant must comply with all applicable laws and regulations in this regard including those promulgated by the FCC and pursuant to the National Environmental Protection Act.
- Loss of mature, native development due to development. It does not appear that this concern would be compromised by the proposed development.

### **LAND USE AREA VISION STATEMENTS:**

The Plan includes a set of vision statements covering each of South Hadley's greater land use districts or areas. Similar to the above identified issues, these statements were also developed through the public engagement process which was an underpinning of the Plan. As stated above, the facility is proposed to be located within what is described in this part of the Plan as ROUTE 116, ROUTE 33 TO ROUTE 202. The Plan describes this area of town as "a mixed use corridor with residential and commercial properties, a horse farm, several conservation areas, and the high school". In consideration of these characteristics, the following considerations were included. Along with each of this is a statement indicating

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how the proposed facility meets these concerns.

- As there have been a number of single-parcel zoning amendments in this area, the effect is a hodgepodge of commercial and residential properties. Careful attention should be made [sic] to ensure that the many areas that were previously spot-zoned from residential to business do not encroach upon neighboring residential lands. Of particular concern is that these isolated commercial zoning actions do not serve as a rational basis for additional zone changes creeping into the adjoining residential neighborhoods. The facility is proposed to be located upon a residential parcel presently hosting a non-residential use (i.e. a high school). However the Applicant is not seeking an additional zone change.
- Maintain this area as predominantly residential with businesses of a professional nature (versus retail). Enhancements to the aesthetic quality of the commercial properties should be made with the help and guidance of a design review process. The proposed use, while commercial in nature, will enhance the ability of both residents –including students- and professional business owners in the area to communicate. The Applicant is willing to work with the appropriate town officials and agencies in reviewing the design of the facility and will attempt to incorporate suggested reasonable modifications.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of the existing structures when converting residential properties to a professional business or other non residential use. The Applicant is not seeking to convert any residential properties. Further, the Applicant has been able to locate an appropriate existing structure to incorporate into the requisite network build out.
- Aspects of community design standards such as the maintenance of visual character through setbacks, signage and type of structure should be prioritized. The proposed facility will be visible from various areas of town as a relatively small addition to a significant existing architectural feature. The Applicant has attempted to mitigate the impact as much as possible by proposing to set the facility on an existing structure. The Applicant is willing to work with the appropriate town officials and agencies in reviewing the design of the facility and will attempt to incorporate suggested reasonable modifications.
- Given the small size of most of the individually-owned parcels in this corridor, it is vital to insure that the scale of development is compatible with the surrounding areas. Again, the Applicant has located one of the largest parcels within the area to host the proposed facility with an existing support structure. While the facility will be visible due to the height of the

supporting smokestack, the scale of development will be relatively small in that there will be no additional buildings, no large-scale removal of existing landscaping, no noticeable traffic increase, no increase in noise, and no increase in the drain on town resources.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The proposed facility will enhance the quality of life in South Hadley by providing additional communications ability to residents, businesses, and travelers in both emergency and non-emergency situations, in addition to the economic benefit of a secure stream of monthly rent. The need for such enhanced communication is growing exponentially and has been recognized by the federal government by passing the Federal Telecommunications Act and by local governments by creating zoning ordinance and bylaws that respect the authority of the federal government in this area but also provide guidance to applicants. The Applicant in this instance has identified a significant gap in service and has proposed a facility which will fill that gap in service to the benefit of the town of South Hadley in a manner consistent with the goals and purposes of the Town of South Hadley Comprehensive Plan. .



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CANDICE WALCZAK  
Business Administrator

March 6, 2013

Gerry Squires  
J. Lee Consulting, Inc.  
101 Palisades Circle  
Stoughton, MA 02072

Re: Cell Tower Lease Agreement  
South Hadley Public Schools

This letter is to confirm that the South Hadley School Committee has approved the lease agreement for a cell antenna to be placed on the smokestack at South Hadley High School. The School Committee voted to approve the agreement language on January 22, 2013 and the agreement was sent to MetroPCS for signatures.

You explained to me in a phone conversation late last week that the signing of all leases by MetroPCS are on hold pending a merger vote with T-Mobile. You stated, however, that your contacts at MetroPCS are confirming that the lease of the property will still be wanted regardless of the outcome of the merger.

If that is the case, we are hoping that MetroPCS will begin the special permitting process with the South Hadley Planning Board, so that the time being lost now can be recovered by getting a jumpstart on the permitting.

Accordingly, in anticipation that the lease will be executed by MetroPCS, the School Department is authorizing MetroPCS to submit applications required for permitting of the cell antenna and related equipment on and at the smokestack at South Hadley High School. It is understood that no installation of any of the equipment will be undertaken without further authorization by the School Department.

Please contact me directly with any questions you may have and let me know if you hear any additional information about the signing of the lease agreement.

Sincerely,

Candice Walczak  
Business Administrator  
cwalczak@shschools.com

cc: Richard Harris, South Hadley Town Planner



## STATEMENT OF Frantz Pierre, RADIO FREQUENCY ENGINEER

I, Frantz Pierre, state as follows:

I have a degree in Electrical Engineering from Miami Dade College and an IT degree from American Intercontinental University and have worked as a Radio Frequency Engineer for the past 13 years. I am a Senior Radio Frequency Engineer for the New England Region of metroPCS, with an office at 1 Federal Street, Springfield, Massachusetts. I am responsible for the metroPCS network design in South Hadley. I write this Statement based upon my personal knowledge and in support of the accompanying application.

metroPCS is an FCC licensed provider of wireless communications services throughout New England including South Hadley, MA.

In order to meet its obligations under the Code of Federal Regulations [47 C.F.R. § 27.14\(a\)](#), metroPCS must have in place a network of "cell sites" to serve mobile telephones or portable wireless devices throughout its license areas which includes the City of South Hadley. As shown in the attached application, a typical "cell site" consist of equipment cabinets installed on the ground, roof, or in a room connected to antennas mounted on a tall structure such as a tower, a building or other structures. The antennas are connected to the equipment cabinet via thick coaxial cables, and the equipment cabinet is then connected to regular telephone lines from which calls will be routed to their intended destinations.

South Hadley is an area where metroPCS has identified a need to locate a wireless communications facility. A wireless telecommunications facility in this vicinity is necessary to provide coverage in the area and resolve a significant gap in metroPCS' wireless network.

I have reviewed the accompanying application for the proposed installation of a wireless communications facility at 153 Newton St. I have analyzed the potential benefits this site would represent to the metroPCS network and its' users through radio frequency propagation modeling. I employ computer simulations, which incorporate the results of field tests of existing facilities, to determine radio frequency (RF) coverage for the metroPCS system, and to identify gaps in coverage. These simulations model characteristics such as antenna type, antenna height, output power, terrain, ground elevation and RF propagation effects of the frequency utilized.

An evaluation of the proposed location has indicated that an antenna height of 65 feet above ground level (AGL) at this location is required to satisfy the coverage requirements for metroPCS' Network. Any reduction in the proposed height and/or antenna configuration would result in coverage footprint shrinkage. This significantly limits the site's effectiveness in connecting with surrounding sites and severely impacts the level of service metroPCS is attempting to provide. Changes to the site configuration would limit the site's ability to resolve a significant existing coverage inadequacy in South Hadley. The antenna of the proposed facility would consist of a total of 6 antennas.

In my opinion, the proposed location is well suited to meet metroPCS' network requirements in the area due to its location and topographic characteristics. The absence of a wireless communications facility at or near this location would adversely impact metroPCS' ability to provide the FCC mandated quality wireless communications services in the area.

The metroPCS installation will not interfere with public safety communications, commercial television and/or radio signals and other licensed forms of radio frequency communication. All metroPCS equipment operating at the proposed communications facility and the resulting radio frequency exposure level will be compliant with Federal Communications Commission requirements as well as health and safety standards.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frantz Pierre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'F'.

Frantz Pierre  
Radio Frequency Engineer  
metroPCS

March, 2013