

James Feenan - Fwd: AT&T Mobility U\_2019-0014

**From:** PBS PBS  
**To:** James Feenan  
**Date:** 6/15/2020 3:12 PM  
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Planning & Building Services

Planning & Building Services Staff

County of Mendocino

*Main Office:*

860 N. Bush St, Ukiah CA 95482

*Phone:* [\(707\) 234-6650](tel:(707)234-6650)

*Coast Office:*

120 W. Fir St, Fort Bragg CA 95437

*Phone:* [\(707\) 964-5379](tel:(707)964-5379)

*Web:* [www.co.mendocino.ca.us/planning/](http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/planning/)

>>> Joy Calonico <joy.calonico@icloud.com> 6/15/2020 12:07 PM >>>

Proposed AT&T Cell Tower - Sherwood Corridor

CASE#: Major Use Permit U\_2019-0014

Dear Supervisor Haschak:

We are writing to express our **SUPPORT** of the proposed cell tower to serve the Sherwood corridor. We've lived in Willits for 44 years, and the Sherwood corridor has been our home for the past 15 years. We live close to the proposed location for the tower and feel installation of this tower is extremely important and necessary.

Currently, there is a Petition being circulated asking for signatures objecting to this cell tower due to perceived microwave "dangers" and impact to our rural lifestyle. We feel the arguments against the tower aren't based on facts, and the minimal impacts to our lifestyle aren't enough to deprive our community of the technology we desperately need. We feel the time is right to embrace and bring technology into our rural areas.

### **PERCEIVED HEALTH RISKS**

We've done some reading and research, and learned there is minimal health risk from a cell tower.

In the past year, several tower proposals throughout the County all had the same reactions from residents fearing a myriad of health problems, mainly brain cancer, from the towers. These fears have been debunked by the American Cancer Society, the government, scientists, medical studies, technology data, etc., yet fears persist. Despite assurances from respected governmental agencies, scientific studies, cancer organizations and current, readily available safety information, many people in the County just don't want cell towers in their backyards.

To us, their opinions and concerns seem based on the ideal of holding onto a lifestyle appropriate for 1850, not 2020. Though I can appreciate their desire to live a quiet, peaceful life on remote land, the world has changed and we can't ignore the real threats we're all facing without technology and dependable communication. The risk factors have shifted and we can't hold onto the past, go backwards or be left behind. Our children's futures and community are at stake.

### **HYPOCRITES**

We can no longer afford the luxury of living in the past or imagining an ideal life without technology. Many of the people who object to the tower own cell phones, use WiFi, have microwave ovens, satellite TV and PG&E power poles next to, in or serving their homes. These all emit electronic fields and/or forms of radiation, yet no one mentions these as health risks. Using these electronics while objecting to the cell tower is hypocritical.

The guidelines for living near a cell tower are well established and indicate there is no danger within 1200' of the tower. The Sherwood tower would be located much further away from neighboring homes, virtually out of sight, or at least, perhaps a monopine structure to conceal it, and therefore poses no threat to anyone's health. It will be fenced and inaccessible to the public and wildlife.

### **SERIOUS THREATS**

These perceived "health threats" are the main concern for many residents, but there are far more serious, immediate threats if we **don't** install the tower.

### **FIRE SAFETY**

We need to prepare for the worst before it happens and give people a chance to stay safe and survive a fire, and this begins with reliable communications.

We believe this cell tower should be supported by the Sherwood Firewise group as essential to their important work.

Our community is high risk for major fire events, and cell service in the Sherwood corridor is spotty at best. The tower will give us the best chance of communicating, surviving and helping our neighbors during a major fire event.

As an example, let's say there is no tower and we're on our own, as we are now. Then a major fire blows through and wipes out our community. Would we regret not installing the cell tower that might have saved us? YES. And who would everyone blame for their losses? The people who denied the cell tower installation. I would argue there could be lawsuits, everything from loss of property, loss of life, wrongful death, the list goes on, all due to denial of cell tower communications. There is a far greater chance of this happening than anyone ever becoming ill from prolonged exposure to a cell tower.

Some people think a cell tower is a lightning rod, believing it could start fires and using that as an excuse not to put it up. In fact, our area has lightning conditions naturally twice per year. Some years are worse than others. Our property has been struck by lightning twice and we expect and plan for it. Living out here requires adapting to nature, such as lightning, rattle snakes, ticks, predators, etc. Comparing a cell tower to the natural, recurring threats of our environment is ludicrous. No one knows where lightning will strike.

### **PANDEMIC**

Covid-19 upset and destroyed many people's livelihoods with lost jobs, closed businesses, no income, in addition to threats of lost health and potential death from this uncontrolled virus. The Shelter-In-Place (SIP) directives have helped keep our County cases from spiking, but the economic impact has been severe for many and it will take time to recover.

SIP has required everyone to stay home, making us more dependent on the internet and phone services to live our lives. Coping with Covid-19 is our 'new normal' and will be with us for an extended period of time. We need improved phone and internet communications to manage our lives.

### **TWO PHONE SERVICES**

For decades, many people in this area have paid for both landlines and undependable cell phone services in case of emergencies. We all know how critically important reliable communication is living out here. If one service doesn't work, maybe the other will when you need it most. We've lived this way for years, standing outside in the right spots trying to make phone calls, rain or shine. A new cell tower would eliminate this strain and give us more peace of mind.

### **BUSINESS**

The cell tower would provide not only reliable cell phone service, but options for high speed internet to conduct Ecommerce. This is something the Sherwood corridor desperately needs.

We have owned and operated small businesses on our Sherwood ranch for the past fifteen years, using slow WiFi speed connection all this time. Even today, the ISP speed is too slow to stream video. We've contracted with several ISP services hoping one of them would be faster without success. Slow speed internet has been the most frustrating, costly component of living on the Sherwood corridor and doing business in our location.

In today's world, time is money, and time spent online needs to be fast to get work done, orders filled, shipments sent and communications answered. The new cell tower would give us all of these.

More than ever, Ecommerce is a viable option to earn a living, mostly due to the pandemic. When people cannot leave their homes, go to work environments or travel for business without considering the risk to Covid-19, they still need to earn money. More and more people are seeking ways to earn their livings through Ecommerce, and they all need high speed access to the internet and reliable cell service to succeed.

To deny the cell tower for the Sherwood corridor is to deny residents their right to efficiently start Ecommerce businesses and safely earn a living. Their livelihoods and our local economy depend on small businesses. Without the electronic support businesses need, our economy will become more depressed.

### **OUR BUSINESS**

For the past five years, we've had a successful permitted Airbnb business, hosted over 600 guests from 11 countries, including many high-tech guests from the Silicon Valley.

Wherever our guests were from, they all used their cell phones and the internet while enjoying our ranch, and spent between \$200 and \$600 per person in our local shops, eateries and tourist attractions. We pay 11% TOT and BID taxes to our County from this business.

Many of our guests weren't happy with the spotty cell service and slow speed internet we offered which affected our repeat business. Like us, visitors to our area want the best of both worlds, a natural environment with reliable technology.

In March, our business was shut down due to Covid-19, and we don't know when we will reopen, but we know the addition of a cell tower offering our guests better electronic services would be a huge benefit that would increase our reservations and income, and add to County funds that benefit us all.

### **ONLINE EDUCATION**

Due to Covid-19, schools closed in Spring, 2020, and may not open in the Fall. Even if schools do open, many parents will not risk their children's health and enroll them again, at least for the foreseeable future. Homeschooling and distance learning offered online are the best alternatives for local families facing these decisions.

Schools, teachers, children and parents were forced to adjust to online education under extremely sudden circumstances. The outcomes have been varied, but more than half of the families affected adjusted quite well and now prefer the flexibility of online education. Homeschooling has come out of the closet!

Educating children is a tough job either way, brick-and-mortar or online, but one essential component of both is using the internet. Today, all education is delivered online, on computers, through devices. The old model of a classroom full of engaged students listening to one teacher talk about one thing at a time is over.

Installing new cell towers is consistent with the County, State and Federal government plans to provide online access to rural communities. Technology for education is essential. Our County has been working towards giving every student computers, devices and online access to keep up with the world they live in. It is our responsibility to set them up for success in our digital world, not hold them back and cut them off from the resources they need to succeed.

This proposed tower would be located a few miles from Sherwood School, which would give those students a wonderful boost and electronic advantage. And what's great about the Sherwood corridor tower is we would have the best of both worlds, our natural environment with great technology. It's a win-win.

### **PROPERTY VALUE**

Some people feel having a cell tower installed would lower their property values. We feel the opposite. Having good cell phone and internet signal would increase our property value, not lower it. No one will pay top dollar for a property that doesn't have sufficient technology.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Without the tower, there are greater risks to our health, safety, lives, businesses and futures.

We must allow Willits to grow, expand and plan for our future with technology, not without it.

If the tower is ever proven to cause demonstrated health risks, it can be moved. Location is not set in stone.

We can't ignore FIRE SAFETY, COVID-19, struggling BUSINESSES, depressed local ECONOMY and technology-based EDUCATION while prioritizing unfounded health fears from cell towers.

Willits must not become an outdated rural community left behind in a world run by technology.

The cost is too high.

Put in the tower!

Sincerely,

Joy Calonico & Burt Buchmann