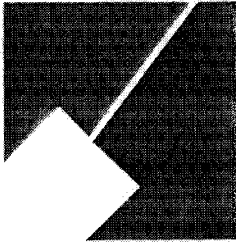


M-NCPPC



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING**

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL  
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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April 8, 2005

**MEMORANDUM – MANDATORY REFERRAL**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** John Carter, Chief  
Community-Based Planning Division

Bill Barron, Team Leader  
Eastern Montgomery County Team



**FROM:** Calvin Nelson, Jr., Planner Coordinator (301-495-4619)  
Eastern Montgomery County Team

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CN".

**SUBJECT:** Mandatory Referral No. 04606-MCPS-1, Northwood High School  
Telecommunications Monopole with Lights; 919 University Boulevard West;  
Kemp Mill Master Plan

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval with the following condition:

1. The support structure and any related equipment buildings or cabinets must be surrounded by landscaping or other screening options that provide a screen of at least six feet in height as required by Section 59-G-2.43(j)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance.

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) submitted, under the Mandatory Referral process, an application by Cingular Wireless, to install a 110-foot telecommunications monopole with lights at the 30-foot level, to illuminate the adjacent tennis courts.

## **THE SITE**

Northwood High School is located at 919 University Boulevard (Maryland Route 193) between Arcola and Caddington Avenues. The subject site and adjacent properties are all zoned R-60. Properties and uses surrounding the site include: a wooded, 150-foot wide State Highway Administration right-of-way along the northern boundary; the Mariner Health nursing home further to the north; single-family detached homes in the Forest Knolls neighborhood to the east and south; single-family detached homes across University Boulevard to the west; townhomes across Arcola Avenue to the northwest; and University Towers and the Warwick Apartments further to the west off Route 193. On the west side of the site, there is a single point of vehicular access to the school off University Boulevard.

The 29.5-acre site is currently improved with a partial two-story building, an un-lit football stadium field, basketball courts, four tennis courts, practice fields, parking areas and a bus staging area. The proposed monopole will be setback 110 feet from the northern boundary about midway into the site.

On July 30, 2001, the Planning Board also recommended approval of MCPS and Nextel Communications Mandatory Referral for a 68-foot telecommunications facility, in another location, closer to University Boulevard on the school site. Nextel however, did not construct their proposed monopole/lightpole.

On February 26, 2004, the Planning Board recommended approval of MCPS Mandatory Referral proposal to modernize and add to the school structure, and to re-open Northwood High School in the fall of 2004 beginning with the ninth grade class only, with a grade to be added each year for the following three years. No telecommunication facility was shown.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Cingular proposes to install in an area along the northern boundary of the site between the basketball and tennis courts, a 110-foot monopole with an antenna array at the top and tennis court lights mounted at the 30-foot level. The proposed 10-foot by 20-foot equipment shelter will be enclosed by a 50-foot by 55-foot chain link fence compound. The monopole would be situated approximately 350 feet to the closest home on Northwood Terrace and 670 feet to the closest home on Loxford Terrace. The monopole would be most visible from the rear yards of homes that back onto Northwood's football field. The lights on the monopole are designed to provide illumination to just the tennis court area.

## **SUMMARY OF ISSUES**

Staff has received calls and letters from neighboring residents who are in opposition to the proposed monopole. Some residents are opposed to the monopole because they already receive interference over their telephones and televisions from the nearby WTOP radio tower in Wheaton, and are concerned that the proposed monopole will only worsen the situation. Staff contacted Dave Garner, an engineer with WTOP, who

commented that upon request, WTOP provides filters that the homeowners can install to help resolve the interference problems. A number of residents are opposed to the monopole because of the potential risk to the health of children from radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation (RF) exposure. Staff does not have the expertise to address this issue. Cingular Wireless will address this issue at the Planning Board Hearing. As of the date of this report, staff has received 12 letters expressing opposition to the proposed telecommunications monopole (see Attachment 7).

Cingular noted in their application to the Telecommunications Transmission Facilities Group (the Tower Committee) that they had investigated several other nearby locations for co-location, including the existing 180-foot monopole at Wheaton Regional Park, but reported that they could not come to an agreement on lease terms with the M-NCPPC for that site. Staff requested Cingular to reconsider the Wheaton Regional Park site for co-location, but they later determined that the site would not meet their coverage objectives.

### **Master Plan**

The 2001 Approved and Adopted Kemp Mill Master Plan describes the site as being within the Forest Knolls neighborhood. The Kemp Mill neighborhood is located north of the State Highway Administration property; the University Towers neighborhood is located in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Arcola Avenue and University Boulevard; and the Sligo Woods neighborhood is located southwest of the site across University Boulevard West. The Master Plan recommended acquiring the SHA right-of-way (adjacent to the north side of the school site) from University Boulevard to Northwest Branch for parkland.

### **Development Standards**

The proposed monopole meets the requirement of telecommunication facility set out in the Zoning Ordinance with the exception of Section 59-G-2.43 (j)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance which states that:

- (4) The support structure must be sited to minimize its visual impact. The Board may require the support structure to be less visually obtrusive by use of screening, coloring, stealth design, or other visual mitigation options, after considering the height of the structure, topography, existing vegetation and environmental features, and adjoining and nearby residential properties. The support structure and any related equipment buildings or cabinets must be surrounded by landscaping or other screening options that provide a screen of at least 6 feet in height.

Since the Board of Education's Policy on Telecommunications Transmission Facilities expressly states that "any proposed installation must satisfy all legal, safety, and health requirements set forth in federal, state, and county codes and regulations," staff recommends the following condition:

1. The support structure and any related equipment buildings or cabinets must be surrounded by landscaping or other screening options that provide a screen of at least six feet in height as required by Section 59-G-2.43(j)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance.

## **Environment**

This Mandatory Referral has a 'Modification of Developed Property' exemption (No. 4-05283E) from Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) requirements (see Attachment 8).

## **Transportation**

The subject telecommunications facility does not generate peak-hour trips during the weekday morning peak period (7:00 to 9:00 a.m.) and the evening peak period (4:00 to 6:00 p.m.) because no permanent personnel are required on-site. One or two employees typically visit such facilities each month for routine maintenance or emergency repairs. For routine maintenance, the site visits would probably not occur during the morning and evening peak periods, because those periods are busier times for wireless telephone use. For emergency repairs, an occasional trip may be generated during the morning and evening peak periods. Therefore, a traffic study would not be required to be submitted to satisfy Local Area Transportation Review (see Attachment 9).

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The proposed monopole was discussed in a Northwood PTSA meeting held on January 18, 2005. Representatives from Cingular Wireless, their attorney Mr. James Michal, and Mr. Henry Johnson, Principal of Northwood High School, were present at the meeting. Mr. Michal reported that no objection to the proposed cell tower was expressed by the group. On February 14, staff sent out postcard notices informing civic organizations and homeowners in the area on the proposed mandatory referral. As noted in the Issues section of this report, staff did receive phone calls and letters expressing opposition to the cell tower. Postcard notices were also sent out on April 7 with the date of the Planning Board's hearing.

## **CONCLUSION**

With the condition noted in this report, the proposed telecommunications monopole would meet the development standards of the Zoning Ordinance, and has no significant impact on the natural environment or on circulation at Northwood High School. The staff recommends approval of this Mandatory Referral.

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### **Attachments**

- 1 Vicinity Map
- 2 Site Plan
- 3 Enlarged Site Plan
- 4 Tower Elevation
- 5 Shelter Elevations
- 6 Tennis Court Lighting Plan
- 7 Letter dated March 17, 2005 (received from 12 homeowners)
- 8 Environmental Planning memo
- 9 Transportation Planning memo