

Medford Central Record > News

Medford residents oppose cell tower plan

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by Rachel Simpson
for The Central Record

MEDFORD — Township property owners have requested a formal appearance before the zoning board of adjustment in regard to the notice of hearing that was issued on the matter of an application from T-Mobile Northeast, LLC.

According to Stuart Lieberman of Princeton's Lieberman and Blecher, the firm representing the complainant (who was not named), T-Mobile proposed the installation of a cellular phone tower on a small parcel of land located behind the shopping center at 7 Tomlinson Mill Road.

"The driveway on my clients' property empties to the road directly in front of where the proposed tower would be constructed," said Lieberman. He went on to say that his clients are concerned that the notice portrays a misrepresentation of variances required for the project's approval that could potentially affect the aesthetic and property value of their home and neighborhood.

Lieberman said T-Mobile not only neglected to satisfy an obligation that requires them to send a notice of hearing to every resident who lives within 200 feet of the proposed location, they also failed to identify all variances; something they are legally required to do.

In a letter sent to Medford Township's Division of Zoning, Lieberman states "the notice only specifically references the height variance necessary and only summarily addresses the other relief that will be required. The notice should set forth what variances are required and the proofs relating to them so the public is aware of the magnitude of this project prior to the board hearings so they may actively participate in the proceedings."

According to Lieberman, the height variance that is addressed in the notice is also a problem. "Plans call for a 90-foot tower," he said. "The standard is that you have to put the tower at least as many feet away from other structures as it is tall. Right now there is only a 35-foot leeway. If it falls it will cause major damage."

Lieberman says he does not object to T-Mobile building a cell tower in Medford but does not feel the land in question is the right location.

"It should be in a more isolated area. From a land use perspective, a residential community is not a good place for an industrial application of this kind. There is a need to find a place where a tower would be less intrusive and not have such a large visual and audible (due to the generator) impact on natural resources."

Anthony Drollas Jr., the lawyer representing Medford's zoning board, said T-Mobile agreed to revise the public notice of application to reflect all the information the complainant stated was not specific enough in attempt to remove "further issues with the public stating there was not conceivable notice."

Drollas said T-Mobile will re-issue the written notice to adjoining property owners. "It is a very technical issue in the

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Medford residents oppose cell tower pl...

grand scheme of things.”

According to Drollas, after the revised notice is sent, the zoning board is scheduled to hear testimony from T-Mobile in January concerning their entitlement to land use. At that time, the public is also invited to speak before the board makes a decision as whether or not to grant the variance.

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