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2-25-2025

Planning Commission

Subject: Opposition to Increase in Maximum Allowable Height for Cellular Tower in Residential Neighborhood

Dear Planning Commission,

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed increase in the maximum allowable height for a cellular tower in my residential neighborhood from 35 feet to 120 feet. This significant height increase would have profound negative impacts on our community, and I urge you to reject this proposal for the following reasons:

1. **Negative Impact on Property Values** – Studies have shown that the presence of large cellular towers in residential areas can decrease property values. The visual intrusion of a 120-foot tower would be detrimental to homeowners who have invested in this neighborhood.

2. **Aesthetic and Community Character** – Our neighborhood was developed with clear zoning regulations to maintain its residential character. A 120-foot tower would be an overwhelming industrial structure in an area designed for homes, green spaces, and small-scale community infrastructure.

3. **Health and Safety Concerns** – While the long-term health effects of cellular tower radiation remain debated, many residents have concerns about prolonged exposure to electromagnetic frequencies. Approving such a dramatic increase in tower height would heighten these anxieties and decrease residents' sense of well-being.

4. **Environmental and Wildlife Impact** – Many studies indicate that tall cell towers can have adverse effects on local wildlife, particularly birds. A structure of this size could pose a threat to migratory patterns and disrupt the ecological balance of our area.

5. **Lack of Necessity** – There has been no demonstrated need for such a drastic increase in tower height. Current technology allows for improved cell service through small-cell infrastructure and distributed antenna systems, I suggest looking to other areas for such towers.

6. **Precedent for Future Development** – If this height increase is granted, it may set a precedent for further industrial developments in our neighborhood, leading to additional zoning changes that could negatively impact the character and livability of our community.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the city assembly to reject the proposed increase and seek alternative solutions that respect the integrity of our residential neighborhood. I appreciate your time and consideration of this matter and request that my concerns be entered into the public record.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Galanin

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Subject: Increasing maximum allowable height from 35' to 120' lots 112 & 116 Nancy Ct.

Dear Planning Commission,

While we do support the concept of improving critical infrastructure development in Sitka, we remain **strongly opposed** to the variance request by Tidal Network to increase the maximum allowable height from 35' to 120' for the purpose of installing a communication tower. We own a house located at 108 Nancy ct. which is juxtaposed to the property the tower is proposed to be installed on. We propose that Tidal Network work with CBS to identify public property that may suite their needs that is not in a residential neighborhood. Alternatively, we suggest that Tidal Network identify an already commercial/industrial zoned private property for their proposed communication tower.

We oppose this variance for the following reasons:

1. Negative impacts on property values: Purchasing a home is the single most impactful financial decision a family can make and efforts to commercialize residentially zoned properties that will reduce that return on investment must be a central consideration of this committee. Research has demonstrated that the installation of communication towers near residential properties reduces property values from 2.46% to 9.78% for towers within 0.72 km of residential properties (Affuso et al. 2017). The Environmental Health Trust (enthrust.org) has also published numerous letters from real estate agents and cited numerous studies confirming that not only do communication towers near residential properties reduce property values, but they also reduce a potential homebuyer's interest in purchasing a given property. Given the numerous peer-reviewed studies and letters from experts (real estate agents) supporting that communication towers near residential properties reduce home values and resale appeal, we strongly oppose the variance request from Tidal Network.

2. Reducing the aesthetic nature of a residential neighborhood: A communication tower like the one on Raptor Way that may be as much as 120' in height would be detrimental to the aesthetic quality of the Eliason loop residential neighborhood and would reduce the quality of life families enjoy. Due to this, we strongly opposed the requested variance by Tidal Network.

3. Negative impacts on wildlife: The hillside of Mt. Verstovia is teeming with both large and small mammals, song birds, and insects. While the direct impacts of electromagnetic pulses on these animals remains uncertain, there is a growing body of evidence that communications have a detrimental impact on wildlife. Research has provided a body of evidence that bird and bat mortality due to impacts significantly increases due to communication towers (Shire et al. 2000, enthrust.org). Bird mortality and a reduction to ecosystem quality/health has direct impacts on homeowners considering the intangible positive impacts healthy ecosystems have on our well-being.

4. Lack of necessity and longevity plan: While Sitka has recently experienced broad internet outages due to undersea cable damage, emerging technology such as Starlink may be outpacing old technology such as conventional technologies such as communication towers. In the short-term, communication towers may need to be a part of the landscape but their future remains uncertain in the long-term. If emerging technologies make towers obsolete, then what is the fate of the proposed tower in 10, 20, or 30 years? From what we can tell from the packet provided, Tidal Network has failed to articulate long-term plans for the proposed tower. For instance, once this tower is obsolete, are there any guarantees that Tidal Network has a plan for removal? Or will this be a tower that families in this residential neighborhood has to deal with once it is out of service or deteriorating due to lack of service for generations? For these reasons, we strongly oppose the proposed variance request.

5. Concerns regarding slope stability and drainage: Currently, lots at 112 & 116 Nancy ct. do not have any drainage infrastructure installed to mediate runoff as a result of development. We have invested considerably on our lot at 108 Nancy ct. to mitigate runoff in a way that directs water down the to Versa Place but much improvement would be necessary to deal with the additional water running off the proposed development of 112 & 116. We have concerns related to drainage and the potential for landslide risk in this steep topography. The packet that was submitted by Tidal Network has no mention of landslide risk or how they would mitigate runoff that would not only impact properties on Nancy ct., but also properties directly below 112 & 116 (Elisaon Loop and Versa Place). These are serious safety concerns for the families residing on Nancy ct., Eliason Loop, and Versa Place. For this reason, we strongly oppose the proposed variance request.

Affuso A., Cummings J.R., Le Huubinh. Wireless towers and home values: an alternative valuation approach using spatial econometric analysis. Journal of Real Estate Financial Economics. 2018, 56:653-676

Shire G. G., Brown K., Winegrad, G. Communication Towers: A deadly hazard to birds. Report compiled by American bird conservancy: killing 230 bird species. 2000