



**Town Council Working List of Discussion Items**

Topic	Sponsor	Date Added to List	1 <sup>st</sup> Discussion	2 <sup>nd</sup> Discussion	3 <sup>rd</sup> Discussion	4 <sup>th</sup> Discussion
<p><i>Lyons</i> stated that there would probably be changes regarding cell towers with this discussion and asked what would happen if someone came in with a cell tower request now? <i>Mr. Wadkins</i> stated that the Town staff would follow the current ordinance requirements, whether the application was a co-location or new tower request. <i>Council Member Lyons</i> asked about a moratorium until the Council had finished with this matter. <i>Mr. Gray</i> stated that was not well advised. <i>Mayor Holcombe</i> stated that Council Member Diehl presented input in a good way and this was a great time to share early guidance to start working with CitiScape and prior to public input. <i>Council Member Lyons</i> suggested a cap on size and height and maybe to consider a different type of process other than a Special Use Permit. <i>Ben Hitchings, Planning Director</i>, stated that this particular issue had some federal protection and was regulated by Federal Communications Commissioner (FCC). Oftentimes structures were required to obtain a Special Use Permit because it offers some protection to the applicant and the community. If it was a straight-forward approval or rezoning request, it would either be permitted or not based on if it was a permitted use. <i>Mayor Holcombe</i> stated that the Town Council just adopted remarks to be sent to agencies on the consent agenda (Item 2011-096). It was important to note that the Town of Morrisville supported telecommunication towers and having those for residents and commercial businesses to provide good service. <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> stated that the Land Use and Transportation Plan discussed both of the goals outlined: to ensure provision of quality service and to protect neighborhoods and the community. <i>Council Member Diehl</i> stated that a lot may be zoned a certain way now, but the LUP called for a different use and that should be a consideration. <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> stated that similar to the Town Center Overlay, any proposal concerning cell towers would provide more specific guidance for particular issues or location. The Town Center Overlay supersedes the Land Use Plan as would a cell tower master plan. Cell Tower was a great non-residential use that could fit in well in certain areas and even in an area that was residential with proper considerations. <i>Mayor Pro-Tem Martin</i> stated that the Planning and Zoning Board already spent countless hours with a consultant on this matter and asked if it would go back to the Planning and Zoning Board after public input. <i>Mr. Wadkins</i> stated that after the public kick-off meetings and open houses (both directly prior to a Planning and Zoning Board Meetings) it would be formally reviewed and discussed by the Planning and Zoning Board who would then forward their recommendation to the Town Council. <i>Mayor Pro-Tem Martin</i> asked if there would be a light required at the top of a cell tower. <i>Mr. Wadkins</i> stated that depended on whether a light was required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) or not. The tower would have to be exceptionally, over 150 feet tall, to be required to have a light. <i>Mayor Pro-Tem Martin</i> asked if the cell tower would need to be tall to pick up a signal or if it could be lower. <i>Mr. Wadkins</i> stated that more information along these lines would be available after initial review by the consultants. <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> stated that it would have to be taller than the tree tops. There was a cell tower on Harrison Street that was camouflaged to look like a pine tree and it did stick up above the surrounding vegetation. It is uncertain if a cell tower was totally surrounded by buildings if that would be an issue or not. It may be. However, you can often see telecom facilities on top of buildings, but it may only serve a particular direction as other directions were blocked by a building. <i>Mayor Pro-Tem Martin</i> stated that if the vegetation died, the cell tower would be left remaining and it would be very obvious. Maybe some other type of camouflage would not be as obvious. <i>John Whitson, Town Manager</i>, stated that a cell phone picked up signal from line of sight frequency. Anything in the way attenuated the signal. With all the vegetation around the sight of the tower the signal could be attenuated before it even gets towards the source. The Town would have to be careful of what was stipulated in any ordinance and the Town could not go beyond federally permitted rights. <i>Council Member Johnson</i> stated that reviewing this was very timely. She had requested cell towers as a discussion topic in light of recent action the Town Council took in denying a cell tower Special Use Permit request. One neighborhood was very happy, but an adjoining neighborhood had cell phone service signal concerns. Clearly this would be looked at across Town to balance community desires and community protection, which were both very important. It would be good to know what this process would look and feel like. It would be helpful for the Town Council and citizens to become educated with this matter including the Federal Communications Commission requirements for cell towers. Then all options that may be palatable to the majority could be considered. There was some feedback from citizens in the neighborhood adjoining the lot where the cell tower was proposed that indicated they would have been fine with the cell tower if it had been shorter than initially proposed and if the tower was camouflaged. One of the main goals in the process was to get feedback. <i>Mr. Wadkins</i> stated that at the kick-off meeting, staff would have a presentation that would include federal law detailing what could and could not be done by the Town. There would be plenty of pictures of short and tall towers and different distribution systems. There would be lots of questions and the hope was for staff and the consultant to get a handle on preferences. <i>Council Member Johnson</i> stated that it would be good to capture how the public perceives their cell signal service level. There were some neighborhoods with cell tower issues and it would be helpful to gauge that. There may be pockets where folks were having issues. Also, it would be good to know the role that the consultant, CitiScape, would have. <i>Mr. Wadkins</i> stated that they would handle the technical writing. Part of their work would be town-wide maps of cell coverage that would also include towers within a mile radius of the Town. <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> stated that part of the public meetings could include questions about the service level. There would be a good a chance to marry the thoughts of having good service and protecting the community. <i>Council Member</i></p>						

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<p><i>Johnson</i> stated that it would be helpful to know where the gaps in service were. If that information was provided by the consultant, that would be helpful. Getting public information as <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> suggested was also helpful. <i>Mr. Whitson</i> stated that after the maps were complete, they could be made available to the public and there could be an inquiry to see if citizens were in agreement with the results. <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> stated that they would have to supply information on who their carrier was and where they were located. <i>Mayor Holcombe</i> noted that they would also have to say where they were experiencing service gaps as it may not be inside their home. <i>Council Member Johnson</i> stated that by the end of the process there should be a master plan for cell towers. Also, a mailing was planned and staff had noted that it may be town-wide or targeted. However, a mailing should only be done if it could be town-wide. <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> stated that the Planning Department budgeted for one town-wide mailing annually. There were also some Town Center projects, including the main street project, and other community events or workshops. Staff was trying to evaluate splitting the funds such as just sending a mailing to residential addresses. It is recognized that businesses have an interest, but staff was trying to split the funds. <i>Council Member Broadwell</i> stated that this was a hot button issue that included labor intensive data collection. It would be good to keep in mind what the goal for this process was. The role as elected officials was to protect the residential and business community. Morrisville was special in that it benefited from higher innovation and technology and the citizens benefit from that. This issue does need to be expanded upon as far as how many towers, what height they should be, whether they should be camouflaged or not and what zoning category they should be permitted within. But, the overall larger scope issue was how to marry the benefits of cell towers with maximum benefits with the least amount or harm. How to get there is probably not realized completely tonight. This was a very important matter and was being considered in a timely manner. It was good that staff planned on getting input from the citizens and other interested parties. <i>Mayor Holcombe</i> stated it would be good if all cell towers in Morrisville were required to be camouflaged and applicants knew that in advance of submitting a request. The biggest issue on a recent cell tower request was what the tower should look like. Line of sight examples in the public meetings would be helpful. <i>Mayor Holcombe</i> asked if the Cell Tower schedule worked with Town Council. <i>Council</i> concurred. <i>Council Member Diehl</i> stated that gaps in coverage could be unique to carriers and asked if there was a universal map. <i>Mr. Whitson</i> stated that the consultant was knowledgeable of each carrier’s frequency and coverage and each carrier used an engineer that was familiar with their towers. <i>Council Member Lyons</i> stated that information on the FCC Regulations concerning cell towers should be sent out to the public in advance of the public meetings so that would not have to be thoroughly reviewed at the meeting and everyone could come in with a good understanding. <i>Mayor Holcombe</i> concurred stating that would set folks up to ask good questions and they would come in with a good understanding. <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> stated that there would be a dedicated webpage and there would also be handouts at the meeting. <i>Mayor Pro-Tem Martin</i> asked about a cap on height with different structures and trees around and different topographies to consider. <i>Mr. Hitchings</i> stated that there was currently a cap on height and there may be a proposal to have different height caps east and west of NC 54 given the different characteristics of these two areas. The topography matter could be explored more as this moved forward. <i>Mayor Holcombe</i> stated that the underlying opinion of the Council was to look for a good balance of provision of cell signal service and consideration of property owners. The kick-off meeting was scheduled for October 17<sup>th</sup> before the Planning and Zoning Board Meeting. Not further discussion required beyond the pending Planning Department led effort that will kick off in October.</p>						