



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Office of the Planning Director
Prince George's County Planning Department

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MR-13002A

February 13, 2013

Ms. Linda C. Janey, Assistant Secretary
Clearinghouse and Communications
Maryland Department of Planning
Room 1104
301 West Preston Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-2305

**RE: USDA Beltsville Agricultural
Research Center (BARC) Antenna
Installation**

Dear Ms. Janey:

The Prince George's County Planning Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the removal and installation of antennas and a microwave dish on an existing water tank at the USDA Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) in Prince George's County. The proposal is to remove three antennas and install three new ones in addition to a microwave dish and cabinet on the wooden ground platform for the purpose of improving communications. The subject site is located on the west of Baltimore-Washington Parkway (MD 295) and is zoned Reserved Open Space (R-O-S).

Staff understands that the proposal is to replace already existing antennas, and the radio frequency (RF) emissions would be expected to increase to ten percent of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Maximum Permissible Exposure (MPE), only slightly more than the current 9.3 percent level. However, it would be preferable (1) to have a process in place to test and monitor the RF levels to ensure they do not exceed the expected level, and (2) that the tower and its equipment be painted a color harmonious with its surroundings so that the visual impact on the adjacent scenic and/or historic roads, i.e., Baltimore-Washington Parkway and Beaver Dam Road can be minimized.

Staff has evaluated the project and is prepared to submit the following comments and the enclosed supporting memoranda:

- This application is consistent with the 2002 *Prince George's County Approved General Plan* Development Pattern policies for the Rural Tier and does not violate the plan's growth goals for the year 2025, based upon review of Prince George's County's current General Plan Growth Policy Update. Also this application conforms to the land use

recommendations of the 1989 *Approved Master Plan for Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt and Vicinity* for public or quasi-public land uses. It is also consistent with the 2010 *Approved Subregion 1 Master Plan* and its vision for the Rural Tier, which is protection of the wooded wildlife habitat, recreation, and agricultural pursuits, and preservation of the existing rural character and vistas.

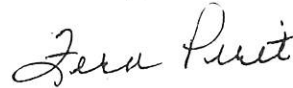
- Environmentally, the proposed project will not affect woodlands, wetlands, or streams. It is anticipated that the project will also not affect scenic and/or historic roadways as long as steps are taken to minimize any visual impacts. There are no adverse effects to 100-year floodplains, nor any soils or stormwater issues associated with this project. No noise issues are found within the project area (non-residential) other than short-term increases related to construction activities. The site is found to be entirely within the Evaluation Area of the 2005 *Approved Green Infrastructure Plan*, and there are no issues.
- Regarding historic resources, the proposal is to install antennas on an existing antenna location. There should be no adverse effect to any historic properties noted below:
 - A 10,361 foot portion of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway (Historic Site 69-026; National Register of Historic Places) is located adjacent to the proposed installation. Completed in 1954, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway runs for approximately 14 miles in Prince George's County. It is a dual-lane parkway with 18 bridges and a flanking buffer of natural forest and cultivated native vegetation. The parkway is a major scenic artery within the park and parkway system of Washington and serves as a formal entrance to the city.
 - Another historic resource that is approximately 1,400 feet to the north of the antenna installation site is the environmental setting of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Lodge (Historic Site 67-008). A portion of the setting (approximately 24 acres which does not include the lodge itself) is located within a one-mile radius of the proposed installation. The lodge was built as a recreation center for the CCC men who planted trees and built bridges and dams. The building is set on a solid foundation of uncoursed stone. The structure has a side-gable roof with an extended west-facing slope and diamond-paned windows. The lodge is significant for its architecture and method of construction in the county. CCC log structures are common in state and national parks in the west but are unusual in the eastern United States. The building formerly served as a visitor center. Finally, the William Shea House is located on the subject property, 7,400 feet to the northwest of the water tank.
- From a transportation perspective, the proposal is consistent with the area and functional master plans that govern transportation. Based on findings given in this memorandum and accompanying information, it is determined that the traffic impact will not change over existing conditions.

Finally, enclosed are four memoranda that include the full evaluations and comments summarized above from the Environmental Planning Section and Transportation Planning Section of Countywide Planning Division, the Urban Design Section of the Development Review Division, and the Community Planning Division.

February 13, 2013

Thank you again for allowing us the opportunity to comment on this project. If you should have any questions or need additional information, please contact Fatimah Hasan, Planner Coordinator, Special Projects Section, Countywide Planning Division, at 301-952-3580 or via email at Fatimah.Hasan@ppd.mncppc.org.

Sincerely,



Fern V. Piret
Planning Director

Enclosures

- c: Derick Berlage, Chief, Countywide Planning Division
Maria Martin, Planning Supervisor, Special Projects Section, Countywide Planning Division
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Katina Shoulars, Planning Supervisor, Environmental Planning Section, Countywide Planning Division
Cynthia Fenton, Planning Supervisor, Community Planning Division
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