

**Latah County Planning Commission**  
Minutes, 30 November 2000

Planning Commission [PC] Members: Skyler Schlueter [SS], John Hunt [JDH], Suvia Judd [SJ],  
Kathleen Warnick [KW], James Hagedorn [JH], Janet Hohle [JanH], Louise Barber [LB];  
Planning Director, Gerard Billington [GB]

**Present/Absent:** SS, KW, SJ, JanH, LB present; JDH, JH absent. Staff: GB, S. Moberly

**Special Meeting with representatives of the cellular industry; public in attendance**

Ubiquitel, AT&T, and Voicnex were invited to send representatives. AT&T's Mary Ann Boring attended.

Meeting called to order. GB described the mandate during the moratorium for the PC to draft a revised ordinance for towers in the county. Today's meeting is for PC and public to become better informed.

GB: Since the county must rely on the industry applicant to provide us with monitoring information, who would be responsible for that information? Ms. Boring [MB] said the company would be represented by an RF engineer (specifically trained; not an electrical engineer); information would be provided on a site-by-site basis, and subjective, but would give county "pretty good" information; each company has several RF engineers. Would a third party RF-type engineer exist for county's questions on technical review? Yes; she could try to get names of some independent RFs.

GB: Could adequate coverage be provided by existing structures? What are the consequences to the industry if the county uses same and says no to towers? MB: Existing structures in Latah County would be difficult to use because of winding roads and topography. *The important consideration is topography!* There are two types of towers: 800 mgz (taller) towers with ranges of ca. 10-15 miles, and 1900/2 gig towers of less height and shorter signals, therefore requiring more of them. Each tower can only handle a certain number of calls (ca. 74 each at a time). Industry has to accommodate volume and out of range calls (due to FCC regulations).

GB: Do we need to take note of the difference between the two types? MB: No, other than taller towers would mean fewer towers, and vice versa.

SS: If we require location on existing utility poles, is there a distance requirement from original equipment? And how far from homes is necessary? MB: From homes to actual antenna or panel, 8 feet is fine; more radiation from your microwave. Any danger at eye level? No. On poles between equipment, 20 feet are required by power companies. SS: So 20 feet above a power pole; do utility companies do this? MB: Yes. Is equipment needed at each of these poles? Yes. Lots of equipment? Yes. Additionally, frequency re-use is a problem with too-close settings on poles.

MB: The type and power of antennae must be registered with the FCC; afterwards doesn't know if the FCC stays involved; Re-registration is necessary at each change of angle, etc., however. She has heard that there are spot checks. Wanted to assure us that billions of dollars are being spent on these licenses, and therefore game-playing would be a guaranteed yanking of your license by the FCC. Every company has its own equipment. AT&T, since it is older, requires a small building-sized space of ca. 12 X 28 feet of equipment; USWest, for instance, with newer equipment/technologies requires a space the size of a large-screen television. Antennae can be anywhere from 15-20 feet high, 1.5 inches in diameter to 4-8 feet high and 6 inches wide. These can be camouflaged, but not well. *Line of sight operation, period.*

JanH: Is there an implied obsolescence? MB: No; AT&T has a 1900 broadband license; 800 mgz is here to stay. Digital system not? Environmental issues come up at what stage, before or after license? MB: There is a filing for a site, and letters are sent to various agencies. In Latah/Idaho, the letter would go to NEPA for approval; compliance would be required.

SJ: Do you use guy wires? MB: AT&T is getting rid of them. Where do you see the industry going in general? In five-ten years? Covering the entire county? MB: Coverage will expand. Common carriers will want 100% coverage. In 8-10 years there will be expanded coverage here.

GB: In order to cover county to accommodate this, are larger towers better or will a network of smaller towers/locations with more intrusive equipment stationing be the way you go? MB: Maybe more towers, more frequently. Right now, the 800 mgz system would not cover Latah County. How many for Latah? MB: Three towers now for immediate need. Long term? MB: With the initial 3, an additional 3-5 within the next 3-5 years. Co-location possible? MB: Yes, AT&T looks for them.

SJ: Can existing trees be used for camouflage purposes? MB: Yes, but they end up looking like a stick by the time all the branches come off for co-location.

The meeting was then open to questions and comments from the public.

Wayne Olsen: 19/2 gig system operates for 3-5 miles? MB: Depends on topography. Does increased height help? It can. The frequency re-use issue comes into play.

Don Morse: What is the power output – 100 watts, 1000 watts? MB: 300-foot tower emits 100 watts or less from each site (channel); 33 channels are permissible on a 300-foot tower X 100 watts each.

Lisa Morse: Does AT&T already have an [completed?] application? MB: No, these are all new.

Wayne Olsen: 100 watts per tower? MB: Now 20-40 watts/channel range is what AT&T current range is.

MB: Higher is not necessarily better because of the re-use frequency. The companies look at topographic maps and develop rings. They then look for clients within that ring for locating a tower.

Don Morse: How far out of the ring can a tower be sited? MB: RF engineer checks this out. What is the farthest out it can be? MB: Ca. ½ - ¾ mile outside.

John Bindl: What size is a ring? MB: 2-3-5 miles; depends on the objective for the site. What are the figures for the three proposed initial towers? MB: Didn't bring the information; proprietary at the moment. Possible for that to be given to PD? GB: the purpose of the meetings is not to evaluate these proposed sites.

Rita Bindl: Why is only one homeowner within a ring contacted? Within a ring, why not tell all the people what's being proposed? MB: AT&T looks for the best people for their leases; she's not aware of company's policies regarding area neighbors.

SS: Could we use radio engineers as consultants? MB: You could.

Don Morse: Will the proposed moving of the Highway 95 affect any of this? MB: Believes that AT&T will not locate before highway location is decided.

Lisa Morse: What are the grid parameters? MB: It is based on consumer complaints; when signals drop. There is computer monitoring of where this occurs.

Wayne Olsen: Can towers be placed next to each other when capacity is reached? MB: You have to move out of range; cannot place two towers next to each other; depends upon topography, 110 [120] feet apart. It's like a lawn-sprinkler system; you can't have over-saturation.

Bob Hassholdt: Does the first company to the tower get the prime height spot? First come, first served? MB: That's pretty much the way it works.

Meeting ended. GB: proposed ordinance draft will be in the packet before the 12/13/00 meeting. There will be no 1/2/01 meeting; public hearing is scheduled for 1/16/01.

Next meeting, 13 December 2000, at 5:30pm, County Courthouse, 2-B.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ 5 December 2000  
Louise D. Barber