

**HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION REPORT**

Applicant Verizon Wireless c/o Wayne Bruce, Pyramid Network Services

Request Use Subject to County Commission Approval (17.120.040.O.)

Proposed Use Telecommunication tower

Size 100.37± acres

Zoning Current | Agricultural Residential IV (AR-IV, [17.120](#))

Location **4410 Holly Springs Road** | Tax Parcel 15002 000061

Commission District Three

Planning Commission Date April 15, 2024

Staff Recommendation **Approval, with conditions**

Record Number HZCU24-0009

Planning Commission Recommendation..... **Approval, with conditions**

Vote: 4-0 (Varner absent)

Plannig Commission Conditions:

1. The proposed tower shall be located as shown on the site plan and as described in the narrative both dated on February 16, 2024, modified as necessary for compliance with conditions herein and development standards enforced at the time of site plan approval.
2. The total height of the tower and all appurtenances, including lightning rods, shall be limited to 265 feet as shown on the proposed construction drawings.
3. The applicant shall provide an updated Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Determination of No Hazard to Air Navigation letter prior to applying for any permits for the project.
4. All federally required signage shall be permitted at the tower site.

5. No variances or development exceptions are granted as part of this request unless explicitly listed herein.
6. All conditions of zoning shall be made part of any plats or development plans created for the property.

Excerpts from the minutes of the April 15, 2024 meeting

Applicant's Presentation:

Katie Greenway, Planning and Zoning Administrator, presented a summary of the request.

Wayne Bruce, 1901 Munford Place, McDonough, presented the request.

Public Forum:

There were no comments in support or opposition.

Planning Commission Comments:

No comments.

***Motion: A motion to approve, with conditions was made by Mr. Hunt and seconded by Mr. Sosebee.
Vote: 4-0 (Varner absent)***

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Staff Recommend Conditions:

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The following should be considered as exception to the Official Code of Hall County, and shall warrant further determination by the Board should it choose to approve the submitted narrative and site plan:

- **17.410.270.b.1 Tall Structure Permit - Generally**
 - In granting a tall structure permit, the Board of Commissioners may impose conditions to the extent that the board concludes such conditions are necessary to minimize adverse effects from the proposed tower on adjoining or nearby properties, including limiting the height of the proposed tower located in or near residential areas. In no event shall a new tower exceeding 100 feet in height be placed on residentially-zoned property, nor shall a new tower exceeding 195 feet in height be placed on property with any zoning classification.
 - The proposed telecommunications tower is located within an Agricultural Residential IV (AR-IV) zoning district and has a proposed overall height of 265 feet.
- **17.410.140.1 - Landscaping.**
 - Where adequate vegetation is not present, tower facilities shall be landscaped with a strip of plant materials which effectively screens the view of the tower, accessory buildings and equipment, and the tower compound generally. Landscaped strips of plant material shall be a minimum of ten feet in width and located outside the fenced perimeter of the tower compound. Landscaped strips of plat material shall satisfy the minimum design and planting requirements for landscaped buffers established in the county's tree protection ordinance and other applicable ordinances relating to buffers.

- The proposed project includes a 5 foot landscape buffer on the north, east, and south sides of the tower site.
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Summary Analysis

The applicant is requesting County Commission approval to construct a 265 foot tall self-supporting telecommunications tower on a 100.37± acre parcel zoned Agricultural Residential IV (AR-IV). On January 20, 2022, the Board of Commissioners approved this request to construct a telecommunications tower at 265 feet tall; however, the project was delayed and the applicant did not take the required action pursuant to 17.380.13 within the 12 month window. The applicant has updated the application and seeks to reapply for approval of this project.

The applicant has leased an area measuring 100 feet by 100 feet with a 30 foot access and utility easement, which provides access from Holly Springs Road. Per the submitted site plan, the tower and all associated equipment will be located within a 70 foot by 70 foot area that will be enclosed with an 8 foot chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. Per the submitted narrative, the applicant will provide a 5 foot landscaped area for screening on the north, east, and south sides of the tower site. Per the applicant's narrative, the west portion of the tower site is adequately screened with existing vegetation and the applicant does not intend to provide additional screening.

The proposed location is zoned Agricultural Residential IV (AR-IV), and surrounding properties are zoned Agricultural Residential IV (AR-IV) and Planned Commercial Farm District (PCFD). In the narrative, the applicant states that the closest non-residential property is located 2.8 miles away at 3561 Athens Highway and is zoned Light Industrial (I-I).

The applicant has provided evidence that no existing tower or structure in the area can accommodate the proposed antenna. The closest tower is approximately 3.6 miles northwest at 3177 Suggs Road, Pendergrass, GA 30567. The applicant will be co-locating on this tower; however, the submitted narrative states that this will not fill or alleviate the significant gap in coverage.

Per the submitted narrative, the applicant has identified coverage gaps that extend southwest of Gillsville and north of Athens Highway and states that the proposed location will improve coverage in this area. The application states that the proposed location was selected due to owner interest, parcel size, and the location's placement between existing tower sites which will allow the applicant to improve the reliability of service to businesses and customers in the area.

The applicant is requesting to construct a 255 foot structure that will support an antenna centerline of 250 feet with a ten foot lightning rod for an overall height of 265 feet. In the submitted letter from Verizon, it is stated that this height is critical for achieving quality indoor-level service and to enable additional calling and data resources, improve the reliability of service to businesses and customers, and provide additional support for emergency communication in this area of Hall County. The proposed tower will also accommodate the co-location of 4 additional providers ([17.410.090](#)).

The subject property can accommodate the required setbacks from property lines and the required distance from residential structures, which is equal to two times the height of the structure ([17.410.210.B.1](#)). The proposed location is 530 feet from the northern property line, 959 feet from the eastern boundary, 561 feet from the southern boundary, and over 2,000 feet from the western

boundary. According to the narrative, the closest off-site residential structure is 1,024 feet away located at 4428 Holly Springs Road.

Per the application, the proposed tower will maintain a galvanized steel finish and will not be painted. Due to the tower height exceeding 200 feet, the FAA will require lighting. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will require signage on the gate of the compound. The details for the signage are included in the submitted construction drawings.

Zoning Analysis

Hall County Planning and Development contracted with a third-party subject matter expert, River Oaks Communications Corporation, to review and evaluate the application for completeness and criteria for the Factors for Consideration of Approval or Denial for a Tall Structure Permit ([17.410.330](#)). River Oaks comments are incorporated below along with Hall County Planning and Development staff comments.

17.410.330. - Considerations in approval or denial of a tall structure permit.

Any denial of a request to place, construct, or modify a telecommunications facility shall be in writing and supported by substantial evidence contained in a resolution signed by the chairman of the county's board of commissioners. The governing authority shall consider, but is not limited to, the following factors in acting upon a tall structure permit application under the provisions of this chapter:

1. The height and setbacks of the proposed tower;
 - River Oaks: "Tower is 255' tall. The setback from the northerly property line is 530 feet; 959 feet from the easterly property line; 561 feet from the southerly property line; and over 2,000 feet from the westerly property line. See page C-0 of construction drawings for detail."
 - Planning Staff: The maximum height permitted in Agricultural Residential IV zoning is 100 feet. The application **does not meet** this standard.
2. The proximity of the tower to residential structures and residential district boundaries;
 - River Oaks: "Closest residential property line is 850 feet to 4406 Holly Springs Road Owned by John Lipscomb Jr. Nearest Residential Structure is 1,024 feet and is on 4428 Holly Springs Road and is owned by the Lazy L Land and Cattle Company. (Same owner as the parcel the tower is being proposed. Parcel is separate.)"
 - Planning Staff: The distance requirement is equal to two times the height of the structure. The proposed structure is 265 feet. The required setback is 530 feet. The application **meets** this standard.
3. The nature of uses, as well as the height of existing structures, on adjacent and nearby properties;
 - River Oaks: "Nearby properties are a mix of residential housing and farming structures (barns, pens, etc) Heights of these structures vary from single to 2 story. Exact heights are unknown."
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.

4. The surrounding topography;
 - River Oaks: “Mostly farming fields and wooded areas.”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
5. The surrounding tree coverage and foliage;
 - River Oaks: “Tower is in a field and is planned to have a landscaping buffer on 3 sides and use the natural foliage as coverage on one side. See page L-1 of the drawings for more details.”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
6. The design of the tower, with particular reference to design characteristics that have the effect of reducing or eliminating visual obtrusiveness;
 - River Oaks: “Galvanized metal will remain and the tower will not be painted. Landscaping buffer with planted shrubs will hide the equipment at the base of the tower.”
 - Planning Staff: The landscape standard requires the use of landscape strips a minimum of 10 feet in width [17.410.140](#). The applicant has proposed 5 foot landscape strips. The application **does not meet** this standard.
7. The proposed ingress and egress to the tower area;
 - River Oaks: “Access to the site will be from an existing pathway off of Holly Springs Road and is 1,350 feet long.”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
8. The availability of suitable existing towers or other structures for antenna co-location;
 - River Oaks: “No existing structure exists that could provide a suitable location.”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
9. The impact of the proposed tower upon scenic views and the visual quality of the surrounding area;
 - River Oaks: “Tower is set back far enough from the road as it would not be considered intrusive to the area. Tower is 255 feet tall and will be visible from some of the surrounding area.”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
10. The evidence submitted regarding the need for the tower in the area, including, but not limited to, propagation maps and other similar materials;
 - River Oaks: “Justification package from Verizon RF Engineering was submitted with the zoning application that included propagation maps and opinion letter.”

- Planning Staff: See submitted propagation maps and opinion letter (application Exhibit B - Letter from Verizon to Hall County Commissioners).
11. The portion of the tower that will be visible from adjacent and nearby residential properties;
 - River Oaks: “No Balloon test or photo simulations were required by the county for the application.”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
 12. The number of required trips to the tower site on a monthly basis;
 - River Oaks: “After construction is complete, 1 visit per month per carrier is to be expected for inspection and cleaning of equipment.”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
 13. The tower’s effect on property values of adjacent and nearby residential properties;
 - River Oaks: “Good cellular coverage is a high requirement for home buyers. Many homes no longer have land-line or wired telephones. Homes in areas of good cellular coverage generally increase in value.”
 - Planning Staff: Staff is unable to comment on the impact of property values without a full market analysis.
 14. The ratio of the height of the proposed tower to the height of the tallest adjacent and nearby residential structure;
 - River Oaks: “roughly 10:1”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
 15. Safety concerns associated with the proposed tower or antenna;
 - River Oaks: “None”
 - Planning Staff: No additional comment.
 16. The tower’s effect upon potential purchasers of adjacent and nearby residentially-zoned property;
 - River Oaks: “Home buying is generally “opinion” or “personal preference” based, but buyers do value good cellular coverage for work or safety.”
 - Planning Staff: Staff is unable to comment on the impact of property values without a full market analysis.
 -
 17. The coverage or lack of coverage experienced by cell phone users in the area of the proposed tower.
 - River Oaks: “As shown in the provided RF propagation maps, there is currently a strong need for better coverage in this area.”

- Planning Staff: See submitted maps and reports.

Development Support and Constraints – Departmental / Agency Comments

Hall County Environmental Health

In an email dated March 8, 2024, Emily McGahee stated: “No Comment.”

Hall County Fire Marshal

In an email dated March 13, 2024, John Hornick, NPQ Fire Inspector 1, Plans Review Lieutenant stated: “The Hall County Fire Marshal’s Office has no comments as proposed.”

Hall County Public Works and Utilities

In a memo dated March 13, 2024, Bill Nash, Director of Public Works and Utilities, provided the following comments:

Engineering:

Will need a bond prior to land disturbance permit.

Traffic:

No comment

Utilities:

No comment

Georgia Department of Transportation

In an email dated March 14, 2024, Veronica Chavers, D1TO Traffic Operations Civil Engineer 3, provided the following comments: “GDOT coordination required for Utility Permit/Access on State Route.”