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The Roslyn News

- [Current Edition](#)
- [Calendar of Events](#)
- [Archive](#)

[News](#)[Sports](#)[Opinion](#)[Obituaries](#)[Contents](#)

News

Residents Oppose Cell Phone Tower

By Joe Scotchie

The Village of Roslyn continues to hold meetings to both consider a series of proposed laws and to amend the Village's code of ordinances. At its meeting late last month, the board of trustees spent much of its time holding a hearing on plans by Sprint, the telecommunications company, which wants to annex antennas on property by Rallye Motors, which is currently being utilized by LIPA.

Sprint wants to do transmissions from that site, which is located within the Village of Roslyn, but borders a residential neighborhood in East Hills. The purpose of the transmissions is to provide cellular phone assistance to Roslyn residents.

However, residents in the Appletree Lane neighborhood in East Hills are opposing the tower's proposed use. Appletree Lane sits directly above the parking lot at Rallye. According to East Hills Board of Trustee member Linda Nathanson, the residents are concerned that the tower's proximity to their neighborhood may cause health hazards, specifically a breast cancer threat from the transmissions. Members of the Village East Hills Medical Commission recently visited the site. According to Ms. Nathanson, they could not determine if the transmissions present a health hazard, but that possibility does exist.

In all, Appletree Lane residents feel that the transmissions' risks outweigh any benefits. Activating an antenna just for cellular phones, they feel, isn't worth the health risk it may place on certain East Hills residents. No resolution on the matter is expected at the Village of Roslyn's next BOT meeting, scheduled for Jan. 18. However, Ms. Nathanson said Appletree Lane residents will be at the Village of Roslyn's Feb. 1 meeting where they will continue to state their opposition.

Representatives from Sprint claim that the Village of Roslyn only

has at best, limited discretion over the operations of such communications antennas. They cite the 1996 Federal Communications Act, which they believe prevents local jurisdictions from stopping such construction based on, among other things, health hazards.

Sprint is not building a new tower, rather they are using an existing tower. Last summer, the Village of Roslyn BOT, anticipating additions of new electronic towers being constructed in the Village, approved a local law to regulate the placement, construction, and modification of all telecommunications towers in Roslyn.

At the time, Roslyn Mayor Janet Galante said the village had received "many inquiries" by cellular companies to set up towers in the village. The purpose of the law was simply to give the village some say in the construction of any new telecommunications towers. The law also was designed to give the village an opportunity to regulate areas of telecommunication operations "where it can" under the same Federal Communications Act mentioned above. It has yet to be determined whether Sprint's current intentions will collide with the Village law and if so, if that law can prevent Sprint from setting up its antenna.

At the Dec. 21 meeting, BOT members also listened to complaints by local restaurant owners over licensing fees currently mandated by the village. Such business owners feel the fees are too high. Also, according to Chamber of Commerce President Frederic Carlton, they are asking that the BOT license "all businesses" or none at all. Only restaurants, Mr. Carlton notes, are being licensed by the village.

Chamber members hope that at the January 18 BOT meeting, the trustees will either vote to repeal the licensing fees or at least lower them. For now, the BOT has ruled that restaurants can defer payment on their 1999 fees until this year, while the BOT takes another look at the entire issue.



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