

September 13, 2022 - Montgomery County Council Public Hearing Testimony

RE: ZTA 22-01, Antenna on Existing Structure – Use Standards

FROM: John Parrish

Dear Councilmember,

Please keep the existing sixty foot antenna setback requirements in place or increase the minimum distance further away from residences. Basic internet services and some of the enhanced services can be satisfied, and are being satisfied, without placing antennas closer to homes. My basic service in Silver Spring is adequate under current conditions with fiber optics and was adequate with copper until my neighborhood was forced to transition away from copper.

Electric Energy Use and Climate Impact Assessment Needed

The rollout of 5G is expected to sharply increase electricity demand and further exacerbate our global and local climate crisis. **Nearly fifty percent of the PEPCO fuel mix to generate electricity in the D.C. region comes from natural gas and coal.** Montgomery County has an obligation to lessen, not increase, our use of fossil fuels to reduce CO2 emissions. Placing antennas closer to homes will facilitate the connection of many more internet dependant devices that do not serve basic needs and would sharply increase the electricity demand. This seriously undermines County efforts to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions. **This increased dirty energy demand should be analyzed and quantified so that the public knows whether or not Montgomery County is complying with climate goals.**

Democratic Process Safeguards Severely Weakened by the Council if ZTA 22-01 is Enacted

Democratic processes are increasingly under threat in our country. It is alarming to know the FCC prohibits local governments from making antenna placement decisions based on public health considering that outdated FCC safety guidelines do not reflect current scientific knowledge of the harmful effects of RF radiation exposure. This is all the more reason for the County to keep all of the current conditional-use procedures in place regarding the placement of antennas in residential areas. Our current conditional-use process requires review by M-NCPPC staff and the Planning Board and gives citizens the opportunity to go before the Hearing Examiner and the Board of Appeals if needed. The conditions promoted by ZTA's 19-07 and 22-01 subvert public participation and democratic procedures. We can do better than this!

To Obtain Desired 5G Radio Frequency (RF) Signal Strength, Negative Impacts to Trees Will Occur

The foliage and limbs of trees interfere with RF signals. To achieve adequate reception, trees would require severe pruning and disfigurement. This is not a result that I find desirable nor is it necessary. Basic internet services can be provided via cable, copper and fiber optics. **Will the Council please analyze and quantify how this loss of tree canopy would contribute to climate related problems such as the urban heat island effect? Will the Council also analyze the expected loss of tree biomass and how that impact reduces carbon sequestration in our county?**

Please, at the very least, maintain existing distance standards for antenna placement and keep the existing conditional-use reviews in place. **Please also seriously consider how the rollout of 5G will increase addictions to electronic devices at the expense of societal mental health.** I urge the Council to stop and consider whether the rollout of 5G is really necessary for the quality of life of county residents. I argue it is not.

John Parrish