



Addendum to Minutes

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

Hybrid: Zoom & in person at 4801 Roland Ave., Roland Park Presbyterian

During a regularly scheduled meeting of the Roland Park Civic League (RPCL) thirty minutes of time were devoted to a Q&A session on 5G for those present: the following is an outline of this session respectfully prepared by Mary Kay Battafarano, Secretary RPCL.

- Shira Robinson, a neighbor, shared fears of negative health effects from electromagnetic fields in close proximity to residences, supported by a recent New Hampshire Study whose written overview she circulated to those attending. Her question/s: how do we know that Verizon and the City are looking out for our best interests? And, what is to be gained or lost by expanding the 5G network?
- David Witkowski, an invited telecommunications expert, responded pointing to the number and quality of studies within the whole body of scientific evidence. He referenced hedonic analysis of property values that indicate an upward trend due to connectivity. Concluding by recalling resistance and anxiety when other new technology was introduced: i.e. electric power/lighting, and microwave ovens.
- Andreas Andreou, a JHU Scientist who experiences poor cell connectivity in his nearby residence spoke. He acknowledged emf sensitivity concerns but advised cell phones held close to our bodies are more dangerous than 5G nodes.
- Several present asked if Verizon and the City are committed to following the Design/Aesthetic Requirements for Small Wireless Facilities eff. 3/28/19; neither Paul or Matt responded directly. Instead they identified a “fast track” when all elements are met and an in-depth review where exceptions are permissible.
- A question was raised about city revenue generated by this arrangement. Paul clarified that municipal fees are capped by the FCC, so Verizon pays BCDOT a nominal franchise licensing fee plus \$270 per pole annually.
- David Blumberg challenged earlier statements about increased property value due to cell connectivity, because of recent trends upwards for other reasons.
- Kathy Hudson asked if the community can have some say in site selection and knowledge of it. Paul offered the on-air sites in the area as examples of tight wiring. Matt stated that tree trimming, wiring and trenching require wireless applicants to obtain city permits and undergo review. The points of contact for daily communications were identified as Verizon’s Sara Callahan and City Planning’s Cedrick Lee. Contractors are hired to perform the installation work.
- Kathy then asked if trees will interfere with 5G and require pruning, which Matt replied is not usually the case but if on private property will involve the owner.

However, neighbors present spoke of observing advance pruning by unmarked trucks. Outstanding grass replacement at Oakdale & Roland was brought to Matt's attention; he stated that will occur in due course by contractors.

- Lisa Davis raised the possibility of other carriers sharing infrastructure, which Paul informed us is not planned. He also mentioned Verizon's long term goal is to introduce 5G speeds for home use.
- Paul responded to several questions about pole replacement and positioning. Verizon is taking the opportunity to replace older poles as they install nodes, and if warranted shifting within a few feet to accommodate other infrastructure. Alley locations are not feasible for two reasons: negotiating with individual property owners would be required as the BGE easement does not extend and off street locations are not as useful in responding to coverage goals.
- Joel DePalma reminded us that unlike cell phones which can be turned off, the nodes remain on 24/7/365. He then asked several rhetorical questions: how do Verizon's coverage goals fit with our community's goals, will there be more poles installed by other carriers, and why were City guidelines not followed for the location in front of his home but rather based on tree canopy as an exception?
- Steve Ralston, Plat 2 Rep. questioned how the Board will research this complex matter. Claudia explained that tonight we listen and educate ourselves, this according to our bylaws. Mary Kay added clarification that additional steps will follow as outlined in the RPCL Project Approval Process established 2018.
- Joel DePalma reported being told by Verizon that individuals have no standing, but Councilwoman Middleton advised him she'll listen to the Civic League.
- John Morrel asked about the possibility of additional Verizon small cell locations being added in the future, Paul indicated under the current build plan through 2022, Verizon could add 1 or 2 more locations based on demand.
- If there are changes to the 5G plans in the future, City Planning and Transportation departments will be involved in plan review and permitting.
- Notice is provided by posting a flyer on each pole (or staked at site) for 2 weeks.
- Is there a citywide Plan for introducing public technology with community input? None in place per Matt, due to changing administrations and limited staff.
- Matt explained that Section 106 review performed by Maryland Historic Trust (MHT), as the designated State Historic Preservation Organization (SHPO), rarely alters local decisions. Paul added that the submission typically occurs after public notice as a "request for concurrence", if no local objections were raised; but a wood utility pole with a single light does not require 106 review.