

E&R-2011-06: RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY POLICY 303

- 1) WHEREAS residents and businesses are requesting improved telecommunications coverage, the need for wireless capacity and coverage is growing, and telecommunication carriers are applying to place facilities in residential neighborhoods and nearby parks, and
 - 2) WHEREAS the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission have established policy giving priority to locating telecommunications facilities in commercial areas and providing incentives for co-locating antennas on existing telecommunications and other commercial facilities, and
 - 3) WHEREAS residents object to locating towers in or near their neighborhoods because of real or perceived negative impacts on property values, community aesthetics, quality of life, and health, particularly if there is insufficient landscape buffer, and
 - 4) WHEREAS the Fairfax County Park Authority has a responsibility to manage parks as a public trust, and
 - 5) WHEREAS parks have been established for recreation and to protect and preserve natural habitats and environmentally sensitive areas and historic and cultural resources, and
 - 6) WHEREAS communications facilities can impact the recreational uses of parks and can have environmental impacts, including bird collisions with towers, increasing impervious surfaces, and the disturbance and destruction of natural habitat, and
 - 7) WHEREAS less obtrusive types of telecommunication facilities such as Distributed Antenna System (DAS) may be integrated into developed areas of county parks in ways that minimize impacts on nearby residents, surrounding neighborhoods, and the environment, and
 - 8) WHEREAS Fairfax County Park Policy 303 allows Park Authority property to be considered for placement of a telecommunication facility if “a determination has been made that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of parkland,” but criteria for such a determination are unclear, and
 - 9) WHEREAS, clear criteria are needed to protect recreational and environmental values of parkland;
- A) BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens’ Associations requests that the Fairfax County Park Authority change its Policy 303 to evaluate each individual request in accordance with specific criteria (see the attached list of what the criteria might include). a) The criteria should take into account the potential impacts on the natural resources and recreational value of the parkland, including impacts of road construction, installation of power lines, harm to wildlife, damage and removal of vegetation, visual intrusion and viewshed, location, footprint, lighting, pole height, guy wires, etc.; b) The criteria should allow telecommunications facilities in areas where the natural resources and park activities would not be significantly impacted; c) The criteria should prohibit telecommunications facilities in environmentally sensitive areas (refuges, nature preserves, Resource Protection Areas, etc.), in areas with rare or state- and/or federally-listed endangered and threatened species that could be impacted by the proposed facility, or if FCPA determines that other natural or historical or cultural resources or recreational features should be protected;
- B) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the public will be provided opportunity to comment on the criteria;
- C) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the amended policy 303 should ensure that when telecommunications facilities are determined to be suitable on parkland, best practices are incorporated

into their design, and that telecommunications companies mitigate impacts to natural resources, by, for example, planting trees to replace those destroyed, and

D) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Policy 303 should be amended to give preference to the Distributed Antenna System (or other unobtrusive types of telecommunications facilities) as a means to further mitigate the impacts of telecommunications facilities.

Attachment: Examples of Criteria for Siting of Communication Facilities in Fairfax County Parks (Drawn from existing Fish and Wildlife Service Guidelines)

1. Any company/applicant/licensee proposing to construct a new communications facility should be strongly encouraged to collocate the communications equipment on an existing communications or transmission facility.
2. If collocation is not feasible and a new facility is to be constructed, communications service providers should be strongly encouraged to construct a facility of no more than 125 feet above ground level (AGL), using construction techniques which do not require guy wires (e.g., use a lattice structure, monopole, etc.). Such facilities should be unlighted if Federal Aviation Administration regulations permit.
3. Communications facilities should not be sited in or near wetlands, other known bird concentration areas (e.g., state, or Federal refuges, staging areas, rookeries), in known migratory or daily movement flyways, or in habitat of threatened or endangered species.
4. Towers and related facilities should be sited, designed and constructed so as to avoid or minimize habitat loss within and adjacent to the facility "footprint." Road access and fencing should be minimized to reduce or prevent habitat fragmentation and disturbance, and to reduce above ground obstacles to birds in flight.
5. If significant numbers of breeding, feeding, or roosting birds are known to habitually use the proposed construction area, relocation to an alternate site should be recommended. If this is not an option, seasonal restrictions on construction may be advisable in order to avoid disturbance during periods of high bird activity.
6. In order to reduce the number of facilities needed in the future, providers should be encouraged to design new facilities structurally and electrically to accommodate the applicant/licensee antennas and comparable antennas for at least two additional users (minimum of three users for each structure), unless this design would require the addition of lights or guy wires to an otherwise unlighted and/or unguyed tower.

END: MVCCA RESOLUTION E&R-2011-06