

**HARRIS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION**

July 21, 2021  
7:00 PM

Members Present: John Britt, John Brent, Chance Carlisle, Wayne Harbert, Gene Weldon. Members Absent: Paul Dasher, Chris Lintner (vacancy). Staff Present: Nancy McMichael, Recording Secretary.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Britt called the meeting to order.
2. **MINUTES.** The motion to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2021, Regular Session was made by Mr. Harbert, seconded by Mr. Brent, and passed unanimously.
3. **NEW BUSINESS**
  - A. **Final Plat: Coca Lake, second addition to Section Nine, 5 Lots, zoned R-1, in Cataula; Richard Waddell, Harris Developers, LLC, developer.** Jeff Keefe, of Moon, Meeks & Associates, appeared before the Commission representing Harris Developers, LLC. He said that no changes have been made since approval of the Preliminary Plat. There being no questions or comments, the motion to approve this Final Plat was made by Mr. Harbert, seconded by Mr. Brent, and passed unanimously.
  - B. **Final Plat: Coca Lake, Section Five, Mountain Lake addition, 10 Lots, zoned R-1, in Cataula; Richard Waddell, Harris Developers, LLC, developer.** Jeff Keefe, of Moon, Meeks & Associates, appeared before the Commission representing Harris Developers, LLC. He said that no changes have been made since approval of the Preliminary Plat. There being no questions or comments, the motion to approve this Final Plat was made by Mr. Weldon, seconded by Mr. Harbert, and passed unanimously.
4. **PUBLIC HEARING @ 7:15 PM**
  - A. **Explanation of Public Hearing.** Chairman Britt explained the procedures involved for the Public Hearing.
  - B. **Application of Kiersten Lurer, of PM&A, for Verizon Wireless for a Special Use Permit for a Wireless Tower as an ancillary use on a 100' x 100' compound on 231.9 acres of property located on Map 043, Parcel 070, Land Lot 121, Land District 20, on the east side of Grantham Road, approximately 1,035' south of GA Highway 116, Hamilton, on property zoned A-1 (Agricultural & Forestry).** Chairman Britt read the specifics of the application. Kiersten Lurer, representing Verizon, appeared before the Commission and said that the tower will be 215' tall with a 10' lighting rod, self-supporting, and provide needed coverage along GA Highway 116; that the current coverage is limited to vehicle and outside areas with indoor areas marginal; and that it will provide capacity relief to the existing Verizon towers to the east and south; that there will be monthly maintenance visits so there will be little traffic; that there will not be a need for services, other than electricity; and that it meets or exceeds all county requirements. In response to questions, Ms. Lurer said that the closest tower is 3.73 miles away; that while Verizon issues "search rings" for properties, she can't speak to the exact process; that the topography and trees play a role in coverage; that additional antennas can't be added to the existing towers because of interference. Discussion included that lights are required by FAA above 199'.

There being no further questions or comments, Chairman Britt asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of this application.

John Frederick, citizen who lives in Big Sky, appeared before the Commission and said that the cell tower is needed; that during the day, coverage is difficult, but between midnight and 5 AM, there are no problems with the current coverage.

Michael Arsenaut, citizen who lives in Big Sky, appeared before the Commission and said that to use the internet, especially when everyone was home during the COVID shutdown, one had to go to the library to use its internet; that Hughes Net is not like the commercials; and he would appreciate the help for better coverage.

Melissa Wright, citizen who lives in Big Sky, appeared before the Commission and said that she is very concerned about coverage; that her husband will be working from home and she is on call for Hospice; that they had to get a land line for her to be able to get calls regarding Hospice; and that the ability to expand coverage with this tower is imperative.

Chip Spikes, citizen who lives in Big Sky, appeared before the Commission and said that doing work from him home is impossible with the current coverage; that coverage is also a safety issue when it comes to making phone calls.

Ken Callaway, citizen who lives on GA Highway 116, appeared before the Commission and said that the topography is a big issue with coverage and this tower would help the situation.

Danny Anderson, citizen who lives in Big Sky, appeared before the Commission and said that lack of coverage was not a big deal 20 years ago, but with today's form of communication, coverage is necessary, and this tower will help all citizens in the area.

There being no further comments in favor of the application, Chairman Britt asked for comments from those in opposition.

David Childers, citizen who lives on Grantham Road, appeared before the Commission and said that the tower is going to disturb the peace and tranquility of his property; that the tower will be an eyesore; that he has been approached twice by Verizon about a tower on his property and has turned them down both times; that he would like Harris County to remain special; that to have the view on his property, he had electrical lines buried; that the tower is not needed or wanted.

Adam Childers, citizen who lives on Grantham Road, appeared before the Commission and said that he is not interested in looking at the tower and its lights all the time; and that the tower will detract from the natural beauty of his property.

Justin Knox, citizen who lives on Lower Blue Springs Road, appeared before the Commission and submitted a petition signed by 91 citizens of the County who are opposed to the tower; that the tower is not wanted; that the property owner does not reside in the County and won't be bothered by the tower; and that it breaks his heart to know the rural integrity of the area is being threatened by the tower.

David Farmer, citizen who lives on Grantham Road, appeared before the Commission and said that a tower should be in Big Sky (to which Brian Williams, Community Development Director, said that Big Sky is zoned R-1, which does not allow cell towers); that he is opposed to the application; that the property is owned by an absentee land owner who never approached the neighbors about the plan for a cell tower; that he has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to establish his property; that he likes the rural lifestyle; that the tower will be an eyesore; that the quality of life will be impacted by the tower, which will also impact the value of the land; that light pollution will also be an issue; that the current coverage has an adequate signal; that the tower could have an effect on health; and that he is opposed to the tower.

Phaedra Childers, citizen who lives on Grantham Road, appeared before the Commission and said that her driveway is 43 feet from the driveway for the cell tower site; that she will be able to see the tower from her home; that to reduce visual impact, they buried the electrical line to their home; that the tower will disrupt the skyline; that the tower will bring litter, strangers, and the clearing of trees to the area; and that she is opposed to the tower.

There being no further comments in opposition, Chairman Britt asked Ms. Lurer for rebuttal.

In rebuttal, Ms. Lurer said the tower is a utility; that there is a demand for coverage; that it will provide coverage for life, school, and emergencies; that it meets or exceeds the County standards; that the FCC requires the provision of good service to everyone regardless of location or license; and that approval of the application is requested.

Comments from the Commission included that it would be nice to have a “master plan” from Verizon showing current and future locations of towers, to which Ms. Lurer said she could not address; that an engineer or site engineer should be present to answer engineering questions; that when the tower is no longer needed, it must be removed, and that a bond is provided to the County to ensure that removal occurs; and that power to the site is determined by the power company.

There being no further comments of questions, Chairman Britt closed the Public Hearing and asked for a motion. The motion to recommend approval of the Special Use Permit application was made by Mr. Harbert and seconded by Chairman Britt, who added the conditions (1) that there be no lights on the tower, (2) that power going to the tower is to be underground, and (3) that the tower is limited to the 100' x 100' compound on the property. Mr. Harbert amended his motion to include the three conditions, and Chairman Britt seconded the amended motion. The motion passed with four in favor (Harbert, Britt, Weldon, Carlisle) and one opposed (Brent).

5. **ADJOURNMENT**. There being no further business to discuss, the motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Brent, seconded by Mr. Weldon, and passed unanimously.

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John Britt, Chairman

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Nancy McMichael, Recording Secretary