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NEWS

Avon Lake votes, nixes Wi-Fi tower near Learwood Square Shopping Plaza

By MEGAN ROZSA

AVON LAKE — A wireless tower will not be built behind the Learwood Square Shopping Plaza in Avon Lake ... at least not yet.

City Council voted against the pole, 5-1, at last night's meeting, with the lone supporter being Ward 4 Councilman David Kos. Council's vote was met with applause by tower dissenters.

Clear Wire Wireless wanted to build a 150-foot Wi-Fi tower behind the Learwood Plaza to increase Internet coverage in that area of town. However, the proposal came under scrutiny when Harbor Court and Meadow Vistas residents questioned the validity and safety of the pole. Currently, Meadow Vistas is zoned commercial.

City Council hired consultant McKenna Associates to research whether a pole was needed in that area, and McKenna came back with the result that it is not warranted.

Before the final vote was taken, several residents spoke against the pole and urged council to vote it down.

"Putting my home in a fall zone is not right," one Meadow Vistas resident said. "If you put this near my home, (Housing and Urban Development) will sue the city. When you gave

permission to build this building on that lot, you should have made it residential. That's a mistake on your part."

A Harbor Court resident reiterated McKenna's finding and said that if it's not needed, what's the point?

Another Meadow Vistas resident brought up the fact that the towers are known to fall, and she doesn't want to become a victim.

"Those towers have been known to fall, burn and drop icicles off them," she said. "(Clear Wire and council) failed to realize that there are people living within 120 feet of the tower. We're still there, even if someone doesn't want to count us."

Clear Wire's attorney spoke in favor of the pole and said that the city violated its own ordinances by hiring a biased consultant who had already prejudged the tower application.

When it came down to the vote, Kos explained that he would vote for the pole because he previously voted for two other towers to come to the city. He wanted to maintain consistency. He also said it will help bring businesses to the area.

"The only way Avon Lake will be able to push forward and stay on top during these tough

economic times is to be on the cutting edge of technology," Kos said. "It can be a lure for new businesses to select the east side to open a business."

He added, "How can I go back to Ward 3 and Ward 4 residents and say, 'I put a tower up in your backyard, but I won't put it up in theirs?'"

Ward 2 Councilwoman Jennifer Fenderbosch, who is also a member of Planning Commission, was originally for the tower, but switched after research. She said Planning Commission made a mistake in voting through the original application, but it was not commission's fault because Clear Wire did not provide a complete packet of information.

Councilman at large Dan Bucci said he voted against the tower because of its location and height, not because of any associated health effects.

Kos has previously stated that he believed Clear Wire would take the city to court should the issue be voted down. Council is unsure where the issues stands at this point.

The next Collective Committee Meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. on Nov. 1.

<http://www.morningjournal.com/articles/2010/10/26/news/mj3549373.txt>