

# **TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION**

## **Building and Planning Committee**

### **Issue Briefing**

**Topic:** T Mobile Antenna and Equipment Box Replacement

**Prepared By:** Robert Duncan, Assistant Township Manager

**Date:** July 21, 2017

#### **I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:**

This is a request to the Board of Commissioners to grant relief from the Wireless Communication facility provisions in Chapter 140, Telecommunications Facilities, Article 1 140-2, Definition of Micro Facility and 140-6 E Equipment Facility, to permit the replacement of antennas and equipment boxes in the right of way at six locations in the Township.

#### **II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:**

The Board of Commissioners must approve any request for relief from the code.

#### **III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):**

Although no formal policy has been adopted by the Board of Commissioners, they have previously granted numerous approvals to waive Chapter 140 to encourage improved cell service through the installation of DAS antenna systems mounted to utility poles. The DAS systems have improved cell service throughout the Township and reduced the need for new larger antenna towers.

#### **IV. Other Relevant Background Information:**

The DAS antenna has become the option preferred by the Township to improve cell service and avoid the installation of new larger antenna towers. The DAS operates by mounting antennas to utility poles in the right of way as a communication link to the larger tower antennas in the region. The DAS installation falls under the definition of Micro Facility and is permitted in the right of way under Chapter 140 of the Township Code, subject to compliance with specific standards.

The current request for relief includes the replacement of antennas located at the top of the existing utility poles, and the replacement of existing equipment boxes with larger equipment boxes at six locations in Gladwyne. The proposed antennas will total 720 square inches and exceed the code limit of 580 square inches. The equipment boxes will consist of two equipment boxes at each location and totaling just over 15 cubic feet at each location. This exceeds the code limit of 8 cubic feet at each location.

The Board of Commissioners previously granted relief for these locations to T-Mobile to allow a larger equipment box at each location totaling just under 13 cubic feet. The Board will have to determine whether they are willing to grant further relief to allow the single equipment box to be replaced with two equipment boxes totaling just over 15 cubic feet.

These facilities are located in the right of way in front of the six Gladwyne properties listed below.

700 Conshohocken State Road  
999 Conshohocken State Road  
1255 Conshohocken State Road  
951 Mill Creek Road  
1208 Spring Mill Road  
1219 Spring Mill Road

Chapter #140-2, Micro Cell definition limits the surface area of 580 square inches. Chapter 140-6 E limits equipment boxes mounted above grade to 8 cubic feet. Larger units are required to be installed below grade. A copy of the applicable sections of Chapter 140 and plans showing the antenna details and site locations are attached to this memo.

**V. Impact On Township Finances:**

This application will have no impact on Township finances.

**VI. Staff Recommendation:**

The 15-cubic foot equipment box total is split between the two proposed equipment boxes which will reduce the visual impact to some degree. The Board has supported requests for relief in the past to further encourage these smaller DAS type antenna solutions and avoiding new antenna towers. We have not established the point at which larger equipment boxes are considered too large. This request for relief should also include a policy discussion with the Board to determine the limits for equipment boxes required to support the DAS type antenna systems. Staff has not included a staff recommendation on this request and will use the direction provided by the Board on this request to establish the staff recommendation on future similar applications.