Part 3 – Evaluation of the Magnitude and Importance of Project Impacts

Verizon Wireless – Irish Settlement Telecommunication Tower
State Environmental Quality Review
Full Environmental Assessment Form

Action: Site Plan Review Approval and Special Permit
Location: Dryden Road, Tax Parcel No. 38.-1-3.1
Lead Agency: Town of Dryden Town Board

Description: The proposal involves the construction of a 165' free-standing, open lattice telecommunications tower with an overall height of 170' with the proposed 5' lightning rod taken into account. The tower and associated equipment and appurtenances will be contained within a 75' X 75' fenced compound. The compound will be situated on a leased 100' X 100' portion of a 157.9-acre parcel owned by Scott Pinney.

A 184 square foot, roof covered, open equipment platform is proposed to support an equipment cabinet, a propane fired generator and electric and fiber equipment. A 1000-gallon propane tank on a 4' X 14' concrete pad is also indicated as well as a short 12' wide gravel access road

The Town Board is considering granting Site Plan Review approval and granting a Special Use Permit for the project. The proposed actions are Unlisted Actions pursuant to 6NYCRR 617 State Environmental Quality Review.

Using information provided by the applicant in Part 1, as well as other documents provided by the applicant and Planning Department reports, the Town Board has answered questions 1 through 18 in Part 2.

Using Part 2 tools, the Board determined that there would be no impact to the environmental resources evaluated in Questions 2 (Geologic Features), 3 (Surface Water), 4 (Groundwater), 5(Flooding), 6 (Air), 7 (Plants & Animals), 11 (Open Space & Recreation), 12 (critical Environmental Areas), 13 (Transportation), 16 (Human Health) and 17 (Community Plans). Each of these were checked "No Impact".

The Board determined that questions 1(Land), 8(Agricultural Resource), 9(Aesthetic Resources), 14(Energy), 15 (Noise, Odor, Light), and 18 (Community Character) warranted further evaluation and were checked "Yes". Although each principal question was checked "Yes", further evaluation resulted in nearly all the subset of questions in each category receiving a "No, or small impact may occur" response.

1.Impact on Land

During construction, less than ½ acre of land will be disturbed. When completed, the compound's footprint will be less than a ¼ acre. Most, if not all of the 100' X 100' leased area was previously used for greenhouses and is compacted and is comprised of primarily poorly drained soil. Based on the above information, impacts identified in this section would be considered small in magnitude.

8. Impact on Agricultural Resources

Because the 157.9-acre parcel is in Tompkins County Agricultural District 1, question 8 was checked "Yes". Each of the sub questions elicited "No, or small impact may occur" responses, including question

8b, which asks if the proposed action may impact agriculturally valuable soil groups ranked 1 through 4 in the NYS Land Classification System. Twenty percent of the soil is identified as Arport fine sandy loam (ArB), with a NYS Land Classification ranking of 3B. However, the 100' X 100' leased area is located on a portion of the parcel that previously contained greenhouses and is compacted. It is also indicated in Part 1 E2e of the EAF, that 75% of the soil is poorly drained.

Based on the above information, the impacts identified in this section would be considered small in magnitude.

9. Impact on Aesthetic Resources

Question 9 was checked "Yes". While acknowledging that telecommunications towers are critical to modern communications, the Town of Dryden Comprehensive Plan also acknowledges that telecommunications towers can have substantial impacts on the aesthetic quality of the community (Public & Semi-Public Infrastructure – Telecommunications).

Tectonic Engineering conducted a viewshed analysis, in the form of a balloon test and photo simulation for Verizon (see application, Exhibit F). Although the viewshed map indicates large areas of visibility, Tectonic concluded that the view from many of those areas will be partially obscured by surrounding vegetation and that the tower will not have a significant impact on the viewshed and surrounding area.

Route 13 is a heavy commuter route with a speed limit of 55 MPH. The majority of passersby will have a very transient view of this tower against the greater landscape, including travelers on Irish Settlement and Ferguson Roads. The Town has no designated scenic or aesthetic resources. This viewshed is not included in the Tompkins County Scenic Resources Inventory. The tower will be in sharp contrast to the surrounding landscape, however, as a public utility, it is not a unique land use in the area: existing public utilities in the area include underground gas lines and overhead power lines and a NYSEG substation approximately ½ mile from the site. Other telecommunication towers are within three miles of the site.

To the extent practicable, this project complies with the Town's Commercial Development Design Guidelines. The property is in the Rural Highway Corridor. The guidelines dictate parking and access management, landscaping and site details. No parking lots are proposed, no new road cuts or access points are proposed, much of the parcel is buffered by existing vegetation along Route 13; the tower compound shall be further buffered by landscaping, no signage or buildings are proposed. Other than the tower itself, the only other structure proposed is a roof-covered equipment platform where two lights will be located.

The applicant has agreed to relocate the tower site 150 feet to the north (away from Rt. 13), from the original proposed location. Although the viewshed of residents within the immediate vicinity of the proposed tower will be impacted, the overall impact on the Town's aesthetic resources is small.

10. Impact on Historic and Archeological Resources

This question was checked yes because the FCC required an archeological survey The result of that investigation was that the NY State Historic Preservation Office issued a 'No Effect' recommendation regarding the project. Based on the SHPO report, it was determined that there will be no impact to historic or archeological resources.

14 & 15. Impact on Energy, Impact on Noise, Odor, and Light

Questions 14 and 15 were each checked "Yes". Typical of any construction project, transportation of equipment/parts and use of construction equipment will result in an increase in the consumption of fuel (energy) and noise associated with the operation of trucks and machinery will temporarily increase. When the tower is operational, a generator will consume propane. A single light is proposed to be located on the equipment platform. Because the greatest impacts are temporary, each of the sub question responses elicited "No, or small impact may result" responses.
Based on the above information, the impacts identified in this section would be considered small in magnitude.

18. Consistency with Community Character

The EAF workbook indicates a moderate to large impact could occur if a project moderately or significantly changes the visual character of the area. Question 18 was checked "Yes" because a 165' tower is in stark contrast to surrounding structures and landscape.

Because it asks if the proposed action is inconsistent with the predominant architectural scale and character, question 18e was checked "moderate to large impact may occur" while questions 18a through 18d, and 18f elicited "No, or small impact may occur" responses.

The character of the immediate vicinity of the proposed tower, is made up of farmland, single and multiple-family dwellings, a church, an automobile repair facility, a medical office, farm and other commercial buildings, and a cemetery. There is no predominant neighborhood character. The predominant architectural scale is smaller than the proposed tower.

However, in the broader view of the community character, existing public utilities in the area already include underground gas lines and overhead power lines and a NYSEG substation approximately ½ mile from the site. Other telecommunication towers are within three miles of the site. In this zoning district (Rural Agriculture), the proposed tower is allowed by special permit and, as indicated in #9 above, the Town's Comprehensive Plan recommends that the Town ensure that telecommunications technology is available to residents, businesses and educational institutions. The applicant has demonstrated a need for a new facility, that co-location is not feasible and that other sites will not provide the service required.

Based on the above information, as well as information from question 9, the impacts identified in this section would be considered small in magnitude.

Agency Use Only [IfApplicable]

Project : Verizon Wireless - 'Irish Settlement' Tower

Date : July 14, 2016

Full Environmental Assessment Form
Part 3 - Evaluation of the Magnitude and Importance of Project Impacts
and
Determination of Significance

Part 3 provides the reasons in support of the determination of significance. The lead agency must complete Part 3 for every question in Part 2 where the impact has been identified as potentially moderate to large or where there is a need to explain why a particular element of the proposed action will not, or may, result in a significant adverse environmental impact.

Based on the analysis in Part 3, the lead agency must decide whether to require an environmental impact statement to further assess the proposed action or whether available information is sufficient for the lead agency to conclude that the proposed action will not have a significant adverse environmental impact. By completing the certification on the next page, the lead agency can complete its determination of significance.

Reasons Supporting This Determination:

To complete this section:

- Identify the impact based on the Part 2 responses and describe its magnitude. Magnitude considers factors such as severity, size or extent of an impact.
- Assess the importance of the impact. Importance relates to the geographic scope, duration, probability of the impact occurring, number of people affected by the impact and any additional environmental consequences if the impact were to occur.
- The assessment should take into consideration any design element or project changes.
- Repeat this process for each Part 2 question where the impact has been identified as potentially moderate to large or where there is a need to explain why a particular element of the proposed action will not, or may, result in a significant adverse environmental impact.
- Provide the reason(s) why the impact may, or will not, result in a significant adverse environmental impact
- For Conditional Negative Declarations identify the specific condition(s) imposed that will modify the proposed action so that no significant adverse environmental impacts will result.
- Attach additional sheets, as needed.

PLEASE SEE ATTACHMENTS

Determination of Significance - Type 1 and Unlisted Actions

SEQR Status: ☐ Type 1 ☑ Unlisted

Identify portions of EAF completed for this Project: ☑ Part 1 ☑ Part 2 ☑ Part 3

Upon review of the information recorded on this EAF, as noted, plus this additional support information
Applicant's application packet, including a Visual EAF Addendum and a visual resource evaluation (Exhibit F). Planning Department report(s).

and considering both the magnitude and importance of each identified potential impact, it is the conclusion of the Town of Dryden Town Board as lead agency that:

☑ A. This project will result in no significant adverse impacts on the environment, and, therefore, an environmental impact statement need not be prepared. Accordingly, this negative declaration is issued.

☐ B. Although this project could have a significant adverse impact on the environment, that impact will be avoided or substantially mitigated because of the following conditions which will be required by the lead agency:

There will, therefore, be no significant adverse impacts from the project as conditioned, and, therefore, this conditioned negative declaration is issued. A conditioned negative declaration may be used only for UNLISTED actions (see 6 NYCRR 617.d).

☐ C. This Project may result in one or more significant adverse impacts on the environment, and an environmental impact statement must be prepared to further assess the impact(s) and possible mitigation and to explore alternatives to avoid or reduce those impacts. Accordingly, this positive declaration is issued.

Name of Action: Verizon Wireless - 'Irish Settlement' Telecommunication Tower - Site Plan/Special Permit Approval

Name of Lead Agency: Town of Dryden Town Board

Name of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency: Jason Leifer

Title of Responsible Officer: Town Supervisor

Signature of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency: Date:

Signature of Preparer (if different from Responsible Officer) Date:

For Further Information:

Contact Person: Ray Burger

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For Type 1 Actions and Conditioned Negative Declarations, a copy of this Notice is sent to:

Chief Executive Officer of the political subdivision in which the action will be principally located (e.g., Town / City / Village of)
Other involved agencies (if any)
Applicant (if any)
Environmental Notice Bulletin: http://www.dec.ny.gov/enb/enb.html

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