

# County Commissioners approve cell phone tower in Ranch of the Rockies

Lynda James, Senior Correspondent | Posted: Friday, November 27, 2015 3:45 pm

Commnet Four Corners received approval from the Park County Board of County Commissioners to install cellular telecommunications tower in Ranch of the Rockies subdivision on Nov. 19.

Ranch of the Rockies is in southwestern Park County.

The lattice tower will be 100 feet tall and placed on a private lot at 403 Adobe Road. Commnet is in the process of purchasing the lot.

It will provide cell phone (voice, text and data) service to the subdivision and possibly some portions of U.S. Highways 24 and 285.

Commnet Vice President Network Support Services Mark Hansen said a lattice tower was chosen over a monopole because lattice towers are stronger and provide more usable space for private entities and local emergency services to co-locate on the tower.

He said cost for either type of tower is about the same. But, the county staff report said one factor in Commnet choosing the lattice was that it is less expensive than a monopole.

Commnet Real Estate Specialist Mark Ray said the galvanized steel tower will not be painted or camouflaged but will have a six feet high cedar fence around equipment on the ground.

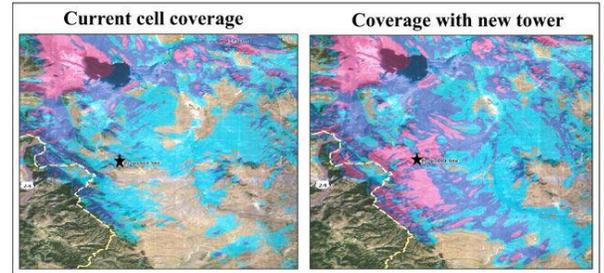
Hansen said painting towers at other locations had been a complaint issue, depending on the location of residences.

For example, a sky blue tower will stick out when it is cloudy or snowing, he said.

Green or brown towers are fine for residents who have a land or forest background behind a tower, but stick out for residents who live closer and have the sky as the background.

Hansen said painting also adds additional costs initially and for maintenance as the paint weathers.

Three Ranch of the Rockies residents spoke in favor of the tower.



## More cell coverage

The left map shows current cell phone coverage and the right map shows coverage with Commnet's new tower in the Ranch of the Rockies. The star is the location of the tower. Antero Reservoir is the dark area at the top left and the Park/Chaffee county line is dashed on the left side. Light and dark gray are areas with no coverage. Good in-building and in-vehicle coverage is in pink. Dark blue areas have marginal in-building and good in-vehicle coverage. Light blue are areas with no in-building and fair in-vehicle coverage. The tower was approved by Park County commissioners Nov. 19. (Maps provided by Commnet's application)

Two who live adjacent to the site said they'd rather not look at it, but having reliable cell phone service was more important plus solved a safety issue.

Three conditions were attached to the approval.

- 1) The tower will cause no interference with local county and emergency services communications.
- 2) Room will be provided for the county and emergency services to co-locate on the tower.
- 3) A performance bond in the amount of 120 percent of the cost to remove the tower will be provided before a building permit is issued.

### **Harris Park tower**

Hansen said that the Harris Park tower in northeastern Park County should be operational by the end of November.

Commnet has been waiting on a fiber connection from CenturyLink for several months. A tower must have a fiber optic connection or be able to bounce off a nearby tower in order to be operational.

Many residents have complained about the tower in a major viewshed, especially when the sun reflects off it.

They requested the tower be painted dark green to blend in with the tree background, so it doesn't intrude as much as into the viewshed as one is driving up County Road 43.

Others have complained that they have a sky background and the current silver color would be better than green for them.

Hansen said the company would like to wait one year to see how the galvanized steel weathers and if that reduces the impact.

If the impact to the viewshed is not reduced, then Commnet would paint the tower.

He said that the county needs to decide what color to paint it.

### **SWCA grant request**

A decision on granting Land and Water Trust Fund sales tax funding to help the 501(c)3 non-profit Shawnee Water Consumers Association comply with state law was postponed until later in December.

The \$16,000 application is for a project costing a total of \$24,750.

The commissioners had reservations about the request and decided to hold a work session with SWCA board and the LWTF board to better understand the project.

LWTF is being asked to fund engineering work including developing spreadsheets for state reporting and evaluation of the water rights decree and augmentation plan.

LWTF request includes purchasing water measuring flumes and a post monitoring gauge, scraping in a vehicular pathway (not a full road) to the monitoring devices and grant administration costs.

The LWTF board unanimously recommended approval because it would protect, improve and maintain Shawnee's water rights and keep the water resource in the county.

The state has stated that they could shut down the water system if SWCA does not comply with regulations, such as monthly reporting of water usage and augmentation water releases.

Monitoring flumes and gauges are required to accurately report usage and augmentation.

The state could also levy heavy fines against SWCA.

If it is shut down, SWCA may have to sell the water rights and possibly buy and truck water to its customers.

Patrick Parker, SWCA's water system operator said, SWCA was formed in 1929 before any reporting regulations were adopted and have been exempt from the regulations until last year.

As a nonprofit, SWCA does not receive any property tax nor can it sell water to those outside its boundaries as water service districts do.

SWCA provides water to 28 homes in Shawnee and the only revenue is monthly payments for residents' water usage.

Since 1929, residents and SWCA's board have maintained the water system and financial bookkeeping with no payment for their work.

Decades later, SWCA was required to obtain augmentation water and that was decreed in 1992.

One concern of the commissioners was setting a precedent for any water or sewer district needing upgrades or repairs to ask the LWTF for funding and drain the account.

Commissioner Mark Dowaliby said, as an example, Alma needed to upgrade its sewer system at a cost \$2 million dollars.

Another example was a person asking for funding to drill a new well because that individual could not pay for it.

Another concern was the use of sales tax for a private benefit. Also the proposal did not include any matching cash from SWCA or the residents that use the water system.

The application did include \$5,250 in-kind from SWCA to install the state-required monitoring devices and \$3,500 in cash from the state to fence the river near the water system's intake gallery on the North Fork of the South Platte.

Another issue raised by the commissioners is that past LWTF projects addressed water quality or stream improvements, not residential water supply and developing a vehicular pathway.

Commissioner Dick Hodges said that having the public works department complete the vehicular pathway work was a possibility.

County Administration Officer Tom Eisenman, also a LWTF board member, said there is a nexus between this project and the sales tax project requirements and mission, such as keeping water resources in Park County and the preservation, protection, maintenance and improvement of water resources in the county.

Eisenman said a nexus also existed with past funding requests, such as engineering, project administration, project materials or equipment. The fund has also paid for stream restoration on privately-owned property.

The commissioners directed Eisenman to document the nexuses he described and any others before the December work session.

### **Guanella Pass Road**

The commissioners signed the final acceptance of the federal reconstruction of Guanella Pass Road. It was completed on Oct. 31.

Hodges said the project cost \$20 million in federal and state funding.

Park County was required to buy additional rights of way for the project.

“We owe a lot to Colorado Department of Transportation,” Hodges said. “They didn’t have to do that and help us. Even the feds tried to block state funding (federally required 17 percent matching funds).”

### **Land use**

The commissioners approved a rezoning from Residential-20 to Residential for a 1.05-acre lot on Beaver Creek Road north of Fairplay.

The property was split from a larger R-20 parcel before the current owners, Edward Bosworth and Laura Bopp, purchased it in 2009.

Because the lot is smaller than the minimum 5-acre lot size, the owners are completing an illegal parcel exemption so they can construct a home on the lot.

The commissioners approved a conditional use permit for a guest house for Michael and Mary King.

The 16-acre property is in Deer Creek Valley Ranchos subdivision on County Road 43.

Having five grown children with families, the original King home is not big enough for family events or holidays, Mary King said.

King said a secondary reason is to provide private space when the Kings’ age or health requires extra help.

The CUP approval contained two conditions. They are:

- 1) Construction will not begin until the plans, specifications, and a site plan are approved in writing by Deer Creek Valley Ranchos HOA.
- 2) Obtain a water augmentation plan or other legal source of water supply for the guest house.

### **Liquor licenses**

The commissioners approved the transfer of two liquor licenses in Guffey because the businesses were sold to new owners.

Steven Wilson received a tavern liquor license for the Freshwater Bar and Grill.

Betty Cain received a retail liquor store license for Bootlegger Spirits.

*Note: The author is a board member of Park County Land and Water Trust Fund.*