

ORIGINAL

DOCKET NO. 160 - An application of the Department of Public Safety, Division of State Police for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a telecommunications facility located approximately 6,180 feet northwest from the intersection of Stone Ranch Road and Boston Post Road (U.S. 1) on Pump House Hill Road in East Lyme, Connecticut.

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: Council  
: September 29, 1993

FILE  
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OPINION

The State of Connecticut Department of Public Safety, Division of State Police (CSP), applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) on May 4, 1993, for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) to construct, maintain, and operate a telecommunications tower, associated equipment, and building in the Town of East Lyme, Connecticut.

The CSP plan to replace their existing outdated, overburdened, two-way radio system with a modern arrangement using point-to-point microwave and an 800 megaHertz (mHz) two-way mobile telecommunications system. This system would be capable of supporting mobile data terminals, voice encryption, higher transmission speed for computer operation, operation of 1,000-plus units, and future expansion of the system which could not be addressed or upgraded in the current low-band, two-way radio system. Presently, leased telephone landlines provide point-to-point communications to existing CSP troops, district commands, headquarters, and other fixed locations.

The proposed system would allow the CSP to operate an independent, efficient, and more reliable communications network than the existing landline system which is susceptible to a greater number of potential outage risks. In addition, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has recognized a need for effective public safety communications and has established a national plan for frequency allocation in the 800 mHz spectrum. Presently, the CSP and other public safety agencies in the New England and Tri-State Committees for Spectrum Utilization are applying for FCC licenses.

The proposed application is for a point-to-point microwave telecommunications system linking the proposed 140-foot, self-supporting, lattice tower with dispatch tower sites located at Troop E in Montville and Troop F in Westbrook. Both Troop F and Troop E would also use the proposed tower to provide 800 mHz two-way radio coverage to portions of their respective service areas. In addition, the Connecticut National Guard (CNG) would place an antenna on the tower to enhance its existing low-band radio communications, use the tower for training exercises, and have the capability to share the CSP microwave system for emergency use.

Four locations were investigated and three were rejected for various reasons including sites deemed more useful for training by the CNG, the possible impediment of aircraft flight patterns of a nearby landing strip, the privatized development of a SNET Cellular site could jeopardize State bond funding, and the possible increased visibility to the community.

The CSP propose to construct a 140-foot, three-legged, lattice tower, equipment building, and fence. The proposed tower would support nine antennas which would add 14 feet to the tower for an overall height of 154 feet above ground level. The proposed tower fall zone would be on State of Connecticut property, and the equipment building would be the only structure within the fall zone.

The proposed facility is within the Stone Ranch Military Reservation (Stone Ranch), a large tract of land mostly composed of open space with a landing strip and some buildings. The proposed site is zoned rural, is generally level, and has numerous trees with a sparse understory. Although some clearing and grading of the site would be necessary, we believe the character of the immediate area would not be distorted.

Access to the proposed site would be via existing, unimproved roadways within Stone Ranch and only a short accessway off of Pump House Hill Road would need to be developed. Existing utilities to a pump house would be extended underground approximately 500 feet to the proposed site. The CSP would install and maintain erosion and sediment controls during construction and rehabilitation.

Although the top of this tower would be visible above the tree line, it would only be partially visible to the surrounding vicinities because of the rural nature of the area, and secluded within a military reservation. The Federal Aviation Administration will require the proposed tower to be marked and lighted due to its proximity to a landing strip on Stone Ranch. The general visibility of the proposed tower would not be significant to any nearby residences, of which the nearest is 2,800 feet from the proposed site. Consequently, we find the remote site within a tract of land reserved for an institutional use to be acceptable for the proposed facility.

There are no known existing populations of Connecticut Species of Special Concern or State and federal endangered or threatened species occurring at the proposed East Lyme site.

The construction of the proposed facility would have no effect on State's historic, architectural, or archaeological resources listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Moreover, there has not been any evidence that the

development of this facility would have any substantial effect on the natural environment of the site, including effects on the quality of the air, water, or ecology.

The Council generally favors monopole type towers which have a thinner appearance and are visually less obtrusive. However, the proposed lattice tower in this application is appropriate to support the proposed antennas, including that of the CNG, any future expansion by the State Police, and the possible sharing of the tower by federal, State, local, and private entities.

Electromagnetic radio frequency power density is a concern of the citizens of the State as well as the Council's; however, at the base of the tower the calculated power density level would be well below the State standard and it would become much lower as distance from the tower increases.

Based on the record in this proceeding, we find that the effects associated with the construction and operation of a telecommunications tower and associated equipment at the proposed site, including effects on the natural environment; ecological integrity and balance; public health and safety; scenic, historic, and recreational values; forests and parks; air and water purity; and fish and wildlife are not disproportionate either alone or cumulatively with other effects when compared to need, are not in conflict with the policies of the State concerning such effects, and are not sufficient reason to deny this application. Therefore, we will issue a Certificate for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a telecommunications facility at the proposed site on Stone Ranch in East Lyme.

Such certification will be conditioned upon the Certificate holder submitting a Development and Management (D&M) Plan for approval by the Council prior to commencement of any construction at the facility site. This D&M Plan shall include detailed plans for the tower, tower foundation, and tower lighting; locations of all antennas to be attached to this tower; access from a public roadway including all improvements to the accessway; utility line installation; equipment building; erosion and sediment controls; and security fence.