



REGIONAL
DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS ANTENNA SYSTEM APPLICATION NO. PL2022-156
1477 HODGES ROAD, ELECTORAL AREA G**

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Regional District of Nanaimo advise TELUS Communications Inc., Rogers Communications Inc., and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada of the following:

- TELUS Communications Inc. and Rogers Communications Inc. have satisfactorily completed their consultation with the Regional District of Nanaimo;
- The Regional District of Nanaimo is satisfied with TELUS Communications Inc. and Rogers Communications Inc.'s public consultation process and does not require any further consultation with the public; and
- The Regional District of Nanaimo concurs with TELUS Communications Inc. and Rogers Communications Inc.'s proposal to construct a wireless telecommunications facility on the parcel legally described as That Part of the North ½ of District Lot 83, Nanoose District, Lying to the Southwest of the Right of Way of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway Company as Said Right of Way is Shown Coloured Red on Plan Deposited Under DD 7738F.

BACKGROUND

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has received a request for concurrence from SitePath Consulting Ltd. on behalf of TELUS Communications Inc. (TELUS) and Rogers Communications Inc. (ROGERS) to allow for the construction of a proposed 63.0 metre tall self-supported telecommunications tower on property located at 1477 Hodges Road in Electoral Area G (see Attachment 1 – Subject Property Map). The applicant hosted a virtual public meeting on January 12, 2023 and submitted required information to fulfill all requirements of *RDN Board Policy B1.23 – Electoral Area Telecommunication Antenna System, Consultation and Information Policy (Board Policy B1.23)*. Responses received as a result of the public meeting and public notification process were both in favour and against the proposed tower. Those in favour cited poor existing cellular coverage in the area and expressed a desire for improved service for both convenience and public safety as reasons. Those in support generally indicated support also for the tower siting and design. Responses in opposition expressed concerns that the proposed telecommunications tower would be too close to nearby residential properties potentially causing negative health, environmental, property value, agricultural and aesthetic impacts. Additional concerns included potential impacts to the flight path for the Qualicum Beach Airport and those related to the notification and consultation process.

Given that the application for a proposed telecommunications tower satisfied all requirements of Board Policy B1.23, is consistent with zoning, will contribute positively to community and economic development, and will

enhance emergency service and public safety initiatives, it is recommended that the Board provide a statement of siting concurrence to locate a proposed telecommunications tower on the subject property.

Land Use Implications

The subject property is approximately 17 hectares in area and is zoned Agriculture 1 (AG1), pursuant to “Regional District of Nanaimo Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987”. The property is in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in the French Creek area within Electoral Area G. The property contains a dwelling unit, farm buildings, and agricultural fields on the western portion of the property and the remainder of the property is forested. The property is surrounded by the E&N railway and Morningstar Golf Course to the northeast and developed parcels within the ALR to the west and south. The RDN was not involved in the site selection or structural designs of the proposed telecommunications tower.

Under federal regulations, the applicant is expected to comply with local zoning and obtain any applicable development permit or building permit for essential telecommunications infrastructure. Transport Canada has undergone an Aeronautical Assessment of the proposed structure and indicated that marking and lighting are required for the proposed tower and that high intensity strobe lights are to be avoided. NAV CANADA has evaluated the proposal and have confirmed they have no objection to the proposed telecommunications tower.

Proposed Development

TELUS and ROGERS are proposing a 63.0-metre-tall self-supported telecommunications tower on private land between Parksville and Qualicum Beach in the French Creek area in response to customer requests for dependable wireless service in the area. The proposed telecommunications tower will reside on the southeast portion of the property within a 20.0 square metre compound housing all necessary equipment and infrastructure. The applicant has provided site plans, elevation plans, photo simulations and detailed structure description and renderings in support of their proposal (see Attachment 2 – Proposed Telecommunications Tower Description and Designs).

TELUS and ROGERS have identified that dependable wireless service is not currently available for its customers within the French Creek area. The intent of the proposed telecommunications structure is to provide dependable voice and data service to the surrounding community to support personal safety, as most emergency calls are made using a cellular phone. TELUS and ROGERS have indicated that no existing antenna support structure, or any other feasible alternatives can be utilized in the surrounding vicinity, and a new tower structure will be required to provide dependable cellular and data service to the surrounding community. The proposed tower would be located approximately 120 metres to the northwest of the nearest residence. Due to its height, the proposed tower will be visible from the surrounding area.

Information on the Role of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Local Governments on the siting and approval process for telecommunication antenna systems is outlined in Attachment 3 – Role of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Local Governments.

To help achieve the benefits of telecommunication infrastructure, Board Policy B1.23 was created to outline the RDN’s role in the siting of telecommunication antenna systems in the Electoral Areas, excluding Electoral Area B. A review of the applicant’s proposal and how it addresses requirements of Board Policy B1.23 is outlined in Attachment 4 – Application Consistency with Board Policy B1.23.

Public Consultation Implications

As part of the public consultation process outlined within Board Policy B1.23, the applicant hosted a virtual public meeting at 5:00 p.m. on January 12, 2023, through the online meeting application WebEx. Notification of the meeting was placed in two separate editions (December 21, 2022, and December 28, 2022) of the Parksville

Qualicum Beach News, and written notices were sent by regular mail to all tenants and property owners within a 630.0 metre radius of the subject property.

Approximately 55 members of the public attended the virtual public meeting, and a significant volume of correspondence was received through the consultation process, both by the applicant and the RDN. The applicant has indicated that approximately 250 sets of comments were received via emails, letters, and phone calls and that approximately 60% of commenters were in support, 30% were in opposition and remainder did not express support or opposition and asked for further information. The RDN received approximately 50 emails and letters, largely in opposition to the proposed tower. Respondents in support of the application identified a longstanding need for service enhancements in the area and the need for more reliable service for public safety. The proposal was strongly opposed by some respondents. Of the responses received in opposition, concerns raised by the public regarding the proposed telecommunications tower were related to its siting and proximity to residents, potential health, agricultural and environmental impacts, perceived decrease in property values, the consultation process, and potential impacts to the flight path for the Qualicum Beach Airport. Of note, moving the location of the tower would require that the consultation process be reinitiated with the new information. Correspondence received by the applicant is included in Attachment 5 - Public Consultation Summary and Request for Siting Concurrence and correspondence received by the RDN is included in Attachment 6 – Additional Correspondence Received. Note, some of this correspondence includes duplicates, as some respondents included both the applicant and RDN in their correspondence.

Written notification was also provided to local agencies, community associations, emergency service providers and the Qualicum First Nation. The Qualicum Beach Airport Manager submitted a letter asking whether an Aeronautical Assessment form (AAF) had been submitted to Transport Canada indicating the type of obstructions marking that would be required given the proximity to the Airport and whether a Land Use Proposal Submission form had been submitted to Nav Canada to determine potential impacts of the proposed tower on the instrument approach procedure for the Airport. As noted above, the applicant has provided confirmation that Transport Canada has undergone an Aeronautical Assessment of the proposed structure and will require marking and lighting for the tower and NAV CANADA has evaluated the proposal and have confirmed they have no objections. As required by Board Policy B1.23, the applicant has provided a summary of the consultation process, including the notes from the virtual meeting, and provided responses to key concerns received through the notification process (see Attachment 5 – Public Consultation Summary and Request for Siting Concurrence).

Given that the proposed telecommunication tower application is consistent with zoning and Board Policy B1.23, all public consultation requirements have been met, there are no other viable co-location opportunities, and the identified need for more reliable service in this area, the siting of the tower on the subject property is a supportable initiative from a land-use perspective.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed development has been reviewed and has no implications for the 2023 – 2027 Board Financial Plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The proposed development has been reviewed and is consistent with the Board Strategic Plan of focusing on Economic Coordination - Set the table to enable diverse economic opportunities across the Region. The proposed telecommunication tower is consistent with this strategic priority as reliable wireless coverage is crucial to business, especially with the recent increase in residents working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

REVIEWED BY:

- P. Thompson, Manager, Current Planning
- L. Grant, General Manager, Development and Emergency Services
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

1. Subject Property Map
2. Proposed Telecommunications Tower Description and Designs
3. Role of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Local Governments
4. Application Consistency with Board Policy B1.23
5. Public Consultation Summary and Request for Siting Concurrence
6. Additional Correspondence
7. Safety Code 6 Assessment