

Center For Women to Host Programs on Various Issues

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Center for Women and Families, 1801 E. Second Street in Scotch Plains, has announced events to be held from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at the center. "Children's Fears and Phobias" is the topic for a program on Tuesday, November 5, with Dr. Karen Steinfield. On Wednesday, November 6, Kimberly Rowe will present "Understanding and Applying Your

Leadership Style." "Creative Career Alternatives" will be offered on Thursday, November 7, with Sandra Frank. "Financial Planning for Divorce" will be held on Tuesday, November 12, with Carolyn J. Podchaski. There is a suggested donation of \$10. For reservations and information, please call (908) 322-6007.

Verizon Cellular Telephone Antennas Hearings Continue Before Fanwood Planning Board

By ELAINE VUONO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times
FANWOOD -- In a room filled with concerned Fanwood residents, the Planning Board met October 23 to hear Verizon's continued application for a variance to put cellular telephone antennas on top of a PSE&G tower between Oak Court and Elm Street. Verizon claims that there is a significant gap in coverage for its cellular phone users in the southeast cor-

ner of Fanwood and adjacent towns, which necessitate the placement of the antennas.

Attending the meeting on behalf of Verizon were attorney Richard Stanzione, of the law firm of Hiering, Dupignac & Stanzione, and engineer Dominic C. Vilecco, President of VComm, an expert in radio frequency issues.

When Verizon initially made its application on June 26, the board requested that Verizon consider whether one of three alternate sites could be used instead of the proposed residential site.

Mr. Vilecco testified that none of the three sites, which include: The Ardmore Apartments in Plainfield, The Chelsea assisted living facility on South Avenue and an existing tower on Front Street, would provide as much additional coverage as the proposed site.

Mr. Vilecco went on to explain that even if antennas were placed on more than one of those sites, coverage would still not be equal to the coverage that would be provided by the proposed site.

Board member Eric Hess asked Mr. Stanzione whether Verizon had given further consideration to building a new tower at a municipal site, such as the Department of Public Works (DPW) yard, as had been suggested to company representatives at the prior meeting.

Mr. Stanzione replied that the borough has not put out a date for bid

specifications on that proposed site and Verizon would not put its application on hold while waiting for the bidding process, despite Mr. Hess' assertion that bidding would be imminent.

Later in the proceedings, Mr. Vilecco conceded that the DPW site would provide more coverage than the proposed site, while Mr. Stanzione agreed that a new tower built there would solve Verizon's problem.

Mr. Vilecco testified that they have reviewed call failure data, performed drive tests that demonstrate signal levels and used computer propagation maps that demonstrate gaps in coverage.

He advised that their studies have shown approximately 3,500 call failures per day, an unacceptable number. He explained that call failures include blocked calls, which prevent callers from making a call; dropped calls, where the call falls off the network; hand off failures, where the call fails to transfer from one antenna site to the next and access failures, where the caller is unable to access the network due to interference.

When asked the gross number of calls, Mr. Stanzione objected to the question on the basis of relevancy. As the crowd sneered at his response, Mr. Stanzione went on to say that they did not have that data available and were not sure if it was available.

Mr. Vilecco did estimate that the 3,500 call failures likely represented a 5 to 10 percent failure rate.

In response to a question by resident

Jim Cavanagh, Mr. Vilecco clarified that of the 3,500 call failures, he estimated approximately 30 percent occur in Fanwood, but noted 50 percent of the borough is in a coverage gap.

Mr. Vilecco confirmed that even with the addition of the antennas at the proposed site, 100 percent call success could not be guaranteed, but said that the closer the caller is to the proposed site, the greater the probability of getting service.

Additionally, Mr. Stanzione explained that while the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) does not establish an unacceptable level of call failures; it does require carriers fill gaps in coverage for their customers.

Fanwood residents Ira Skolnick and Patricia Vitale asked Mr. Vilecco why they get service if a coverage gap exists. Mr. Vilecco could not explain why they get service, only that 3,500 other customers do not get service.

Several other residents attempted to ask general questions or give testimony in opposition to the application. However, as last week's portion of the hearing was limited to questions for the engineer, members of the public were advised that they will have ample time to ask other questions and/or give testimony at a later time in the proceedings.

The hearing on the Verizon application will continue at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Board, at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, November 26, at Fanwood Borough Hall.

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