

PNA Report on C800 Radio Group neighborhood meeting September 18, 2019 at Lakeridge HS Rotunda, 6:30-8:00 PM

The meeting was well-attended by at least 100 neighbors, most of whom were opposed to the tower.

The meeting was introduced by the moderator. There were presentations given by 5 people before the meeting was opened to questions. John Hartsock and Bjorn Morfin from the radio group gave short initial statements regarding the purpose and some of the technical information about the project. The C800 group was formed in 2000 and is comprised of 18 public safety agencies. They chose this site for the tower because it will provide the best coverage for communications in Lake Oswego.

The police chief, fire chief and the head of the dispatch departments described the current situation where there are areas of the city where their radios do not work. Some examples cited were parts of the Lakeridge HS and LO HS buildings and the Blue Heron neighborhood. The inability to communicate by radio puts the emergency responders and residents at risk, when response time is critical.

There was enough time for 36 speakers to be heard, though more people would have liked to speak. Here are the notes on neighbors' questions and statements, and any response that was given by the presenters:

The first speaker asked why the city has tried in 1994, 2002 and now again to put communications towers in the park in violation of the terms of the 1975 donation of the property.

The second speaker was concerned that the technology being considered would be soon out of date, and requested access to the technical specifications and reasons for the choices of technology. The provided answer was that that information is part of the land use application.

The third speaker said that Cooks Butte was not the best site, and asked if alternate locations had been surveyed. The answer was given that 17 possible locations were surveyed but the Cooks Butte site provided the best coverage. Part of the issue is terrain in Lake Oswego.

The fourth speaker stated that he is an orthopedic specialist and that the tower and facility would propose a substantial risk of long-term radiation exposure, which would increase the risk of cancer, ALS and other ailments for neighbors. He said that there is no data to show that there is no risk, and studies purporting to show no risk are inadequate.

The fifth speaker cited the environmental impact, and asked what studies and efforts were being made to comply with the International Migratory Bird Treaty.

The sixth speaker stated his brother owns the Century Farm near Stafford and Rosemont Roads. He asked about whether the Grande Ronde tribe was aware of the proposal. The answer was that the tribe was involved from the beginning of the project. He also asked what would happen to the concrete base for the project after 20 years if the site were no longer in operation.

The seventh speaker introduced herself as a wildlife biologist and asked again about the migratory bird treaty. The answer given was that a biologist is submitting a report as part of the planning process to address this issue.

The eighth speaker yielded time to another.

The ninth speaker asked about the generator and to noise levels. The presenters said that the generator is only in use during power outages, but it must be exercised once a week for about an hour. Testing has been done to show that the sound levels are below allowed thresholds at the required distance from the site. This also applies to the air conditioners needed in the building at the base of the tower to keep equipment at the proper temperature.

The tenth speaker yielded time to another.

The eleventh speaker stated that studies show that property values of homes near tower sites will decline.

The twelfth speaker asked about why existing sites at View Acres and Pete's Mountain could not be improved to provide the necessary coverage. The presenters said that although these sites were being upgraded from analog to digital capabilities, there was not a way to increase their height.

The thirteenth speaker asked about the restrictions in the original deed about uses other than natural space. The answer was that the city went to the family of the donors and got a waiver of the conditions for this use, and then the city entered into a lease with the radio group for the site.

The fourteenth speaker asked about the duration of the noise test done on the generators to determine compliance with the noise requirements. The answer was that the test lasted five to ten minutes.

The fifteenth speaker was a real estate agent, and stated that the tower will definitely affect property values, and she has seen buyers decline to buy homes near towers. She also thinks that allowing this one tower will lead to more towers being built in the park. The answer was that public safety is the only use allowed by the agreement with the Grande Ronde tribe, and only one tower could be built.

The sixteenth speaker said they would not have bought the home they purchased recently had they been aware of this proposal. Also, what is the plan in the event the propane tank exploded? The answer was given that the propane tank would be an underground installation and the facility would be built to withstand a magnitude 9.5 earthquake. A similar facility survived a quake of that strength in Alaska and was undamaged.

The seventeenth speaker asked about how the city could prevent private cell phone providers from also using the tower. The answer was that the lease as written does not allow other uses.

The eighteenth speaker said that we need to protect the environment and the trees in the park. She said that the US standards for radiation safety are less stringent than those of other nations, and so studies showing no risk are not adequate. She also doesn't believe the city will not offer leases to private cell phone companies.

The nineteenth speaker said that since this lease was drawn up two years ago, why are neighbors only now hearing about it. She said that the PNA board had known about this and had done nothing for the neighborhood, and no information had been put on our website until this week.

The twentieth speaker expressed concern about vandalism and cited a tower in southern Oregon which had been felled by vandals. He also questioned the idea that the original grant of the property could allow the heirs to waive the restrictions, since the water storage facilities were the only allowed structures by that grant.

The twenty-first speaker stated that by FCC regulation the city might be obligated to enter into other leases for space on the tower. She asked who would benefit from the lease. (Answer, the city). She also pointed out that the primary information source for the specifications for the tower was provided by Motorola Corporation. The answer was that the lease allows no other uses, and supercedes the FCC regulation. Neighbors are encouraged to call city attorney David Powell with questions about the lease.

The twenty-second speaker expressed concerns about the ability of the fire department to respond to an explosion or fire at the site, and said that in his experience living right at the end of Palisades Crest Drive he is aware of a lot of illegal activity in the park after hours. The fire chief responded that the department is confident they have the ability to respond as necessary to an emergency at the site.

The twenty-third speaker was from the McVey South Shore neighborhood. She is glad to hear that the tower could survive a large earthquake, but is concerned about the effects of radiation exposure and asked if there were indeed no other better locations, or if possibly more than one other location could serve the same purpose. The answer was that this is the best location, and available funds are not enough to develop two or more new sites instead of one.

The twenty-fourth speaker questioned again the legality of the sons of the original donor changing the deed restrictions, and expressed anger that at the recent city council meeting the mayor and city attorney would not allow them to speak about this issue. The answer was that the city attorney indicated that these issues should be raised at the Development Review hearing after the application is submitted.

The twenty-fifth speaker asked when the application would be complete, and was told that it should be in two to three weeks.

The twenty-sixth speaker stated that the city had tried twice before to change the original agreement (presumably in 1994 and 2002 as mentioned by a previous speaker). They pointed out that other neighborhoods had also rejected a tower in their areas and were successful, so why is Palisades being forced to accept this? They also wanted to know from the police chief what percentage improvement in communications ability this would provide.

The twenty-seventh speaker said that police should use their phones to communicate when the radios didn't work. The police chief said that that would not work well in a real emergency when officers need to speak to a dispatcher or fellow officer directly rather than having to call the dispatch center and be connected that way. Radios are essential in fast moving situations.

The twenty-eighth speaker asked why the second-best alternative site was not good enough. He also said that city code says that land use should be compatible with the site, and the tower would be incompatible with nature paths in the immediate vicinity. He said that stringent code requirements need to be met.

The twenty-ninth speaker was concerned about the trend of tearing down trees and general disrespect for nature in the city now and stated that this location is just not appropriate for the tower.

The thirtieth speaker mentioned again the city's two previous attempts to put towers in Cooks Butte and said that the radio group should use the best site, not the easiest site. The answer was that this is the best site, and definitely not the easiest site as evidenced by the opposition. The speaker also raised again the possibility of using two other sites to achieve the same benefit. The answer again was that funding would not allow development of two sites rather than one.

The thirty-first speaker stated that anything forced on the neighborhood by the city council could be reversed by putting it on the ballot, which could be accomplished if 2,400 people signed a petition. He also said that if the facility was built, radiation warning signs should be required.

The thirty-second speaker was the only neighbor to speak in favor of the project. He stated that he had lived here for a very long time (I didn't catch how many years) and was a retired IBM worker. He pointed out that warnings had been around for years about phones and other devices we use daily exposing us to radiation, but we disregard them. He said that radiation exposure would not be a factor, and we should just get on with the project.

The thirty-third speaker wanted access to a study that would show why other sites could not provide the same coverage.

The thirty-fourth speaker said she was the neighbor who had accompanied Marjorie Emery to sign a statement that reiterated the deed restrictions on the original donation at the time of one of the earlier city attempts to bypass them. She said she knew for a fact that Ms Emery would not have wanted this.

The thirty-fifth speaker said trees would need to be removed and we needed to save the trees and keep the area natural. Bjorn Morfin said that the plans call for the removal of only one tree.

The thirty-sixth & final speaker said that corporations and the city council are trying to shove this down our throats, and that it would happen regardless of citizens' opinions. He vowed to fight the proposal.

Meeting ended.