

**Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting**  
**Monday, October 17, 2016, 9:00 a.m.**  
**The CBC Lodge Meeting Room, 696 Sky Valley Way**  
**Sky Valley, Georgia**

Commission Members Present: Chairman Will Gurley, Helen Kleiber, Dan McAfee, Tommy Tebeau and Ben Chitwood

Staff present: City Manager Linda Lapeyrouse

Public present: Ed & Hollie Steil; John Hoppes; Allen Jackson; Connie Larsen; Chip Durpo, Ted Szymankiewicz

Guests:

Southern Linc: Wayne Rayburn and Clay Brogdon

Ga. Power reps: Greg Brown

Rabun County 911: Mike Carnes and Greg Dover

Macon County EMS: Jamey Wiggins and Greg Doster

Sky Valley-Scaly Fire Dept: Mark Gramlich

9:00 AM meeting called to order by Chairman Gurley - welcomed everyone

Approval of September minutes...postponed until November meeting to give board a chance to review.

Adoption of agenda: Commissioner McAfee moved to adopt the agenda; 2<sup>nd</sup> Commissioner Tebeau; unanimously approved

Public Hearing

Application from Clay Brogdon for Southern Linc Wireless/owned by Southern Co, the wireless provider for Ga Power; also provides communications for numerous other private companies; currently have a 75' pole since 1985 (31 yrs) which services many customers including City of Sky Valley; Emergency systems—EMS, Fire and Police

Current pole houses old technology and is overloaded; they want to put up a new 100' pole to accommodate new LTE technology and improve their communications. They will allow the emergency governmental agencies to have their antennas on the new pole for free. They are currently on the side of the building and very low. Third party carriers could also add on if it suited their needs, but it would be lower. It would be income for Southern Linc so they are open to it. The parcel is small {1/10 acre/4300 sq ft} which limits how tall the tower can be.

Chairman Gurley stressed that the top of Alex Mountain was the best tower site and having no AT&T service in the area was a huge problem. Gurley asked if they could reach out to AT&T.

Commissioner Kleiber asked if there is any financial benefit (through taxes) to the city? None other than ad valorem taxes and the side benefits of improving services and emergency communications.

The 75' tower will remain as is. New tower would be placed adjacent to the older one.

Greg Brown from GA Power said the increased tower would certainly help them during times of inclement weather and other outages.

Ted Szymankiewicz commented that maybe the tower should be 150' tall to accommodate 3<sup>rd</sup> party carriers.

City Manager Lapeyrouse asked Mr. Brogdon to go through each item in the variance request.

Fencing - Mr. Brogdon said the location is remote and they have not had any trouble with anyone climbing on the existing pole. City Manager Lapeyrouse said it is a big safety liability NOT to have a fence. She also stated, even though the FAA does not require a light on the proposed tower, the City Council required it on the Verizon tower. Mr. Brogdon said a light is not required by the FAA but they will do it if requested. He felt it would bring attention to something that is otherwise not very noticeable especially at night.

Landscaping – Mr. Brogdon explained that the location is remote and full of existing vegetation.

Setback of tower height from adjacent residential use - due to remote location of the site and adjacent properties are vacant and bordered by woods.

Chairman Gurley suggested that AT&T, T-Mobile and Sprint be contacted to see if they're interested to attach before the tower is approved at this height. Mr. Brogdon explained that time is of the essence. They had hoped to already have the new tower built by now, but they are running late.

Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Brogdon took a few minutes outside the room to confer. Mr. Brogdon reported back to the Planning & Zoning that the SHPO (State Historic Preservation) and the Environmental reports have already been done based on the 100' design. It would take months and a lot of expense to re-do everything. As a reasonable compromise, Mr. Brogdon recommended that they design a 100' pole to have a flange at top of the pole to allow for another carrier to bolt on another tower section in the future at their expense. This would not slow down Southern Linc and would they could go ahead and build what they need. After some discussion, Mr. Brogdon said that they could make the pole 105' to accommodate another sleeve instead of the bolt on type and they still would not have to go back through the clearance/permitting process. They will agree to build the foundation to allow for the additional weight of another tower section (in case it is added in the future).

**Comments:**

Allen Jackson: not in favor of the tower. He stated that it would lower his property value. He suggested that P & Z members go view the current tower from the homeowners on upper Ridgepole; there are 10 property owners who will probably be opposed to the tower and he will be contacting them.

Chairman Gurley said there has been a tower there for many years; Allen responded yes, but to add an even taller tower is not acceptable and would further affect the beauty of the mountains which is why most people are here. People come to the mountains to get away from cell phones.

City Manager Lapeyrouse asked the emergency responders that were present to describe the problems with the current system. Rabun County EMS states that the city's police antennae recently got struck by lightning and needs to be replaced at a cost of about \$4000-5,000. In addition, they have problems with communications when they are in this area or trying to communicate with emergency personnel that are responding to a situation in this area. They use Southern Linc phones to communicate due to the failure of radio services.

Commission McAfee asked about the "tree looking" towers. Mr. Brogdon replied that they cost 2-3 times more than a regular monopole and their coverage is not as good. Southern Linc's investment will be about \$250-300,000 as is; it would probably be twice that if "dressed up" like pine tree and would not have as good reception. The "tree" style towers are also high maintenance.

There were no other public comments.

Chairman Gurley closed the public comments at 10:10 AM.

Commissioner Tebeau made a motion that we recommend Southern Linc's application for conditional use zoning and zoning variances; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commission McAfee. Discussion: Commissioner Kleiber wants to wait until she has a chance to view the proposed tower from Ridgepole Drive as was suggested by Allen Jackson. There was discussion as to when the P & Z could meet again. Mr. Brogdon asked if it was possible that they go now and return to vote. Allen Jackson agreed to allow the P & Z to go and see the view from his back deck.

The P & Z members took a "field trip" to view the existing tower from Allen Jackson's back deck.

Reconvened at 10:35

There was discussion of what the P & Z Commissioners observed from the Jackson residence. In summary, the view was very distant and the existing tower looked very small. Ridgepole residents located on the north side of the street would not be affected as their primary views are to the north, not to the south to Alex Mtn. The commissioners felt that the enhanced communications for emergency services and the possibility of improved Southern Linc services/other provider tower availability would do more for property values than any lowering of property values due to the distant view of the tower from a small number of residents.

There was no further discussion. Vote: all in favor of the application as modified; passed unanimously.

Mr. Brogdon asked to clarify exactly what the Commission approved:

105' tower to allow for a slip joint on top for an additional 3<sup>rd</sup> carrier to add on to in the future;

Variance on fencing (he suggested fence posts with wire rope to make a barrier)

Variance on landscaping – remote and wooded area

Variance on set-back – parcel is too small to meet set-back requirements

City staff is not in favor of the variance for no fencing. The City would assume some liability if something were to happen and we did not require a safety barrier. Discussed possible options. Commissioner McAfee made a motion that we not require a fence but rather that both the old and the new poles not have any climbing pegs for the first 10' above the ground; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Commissioner Kleiber. Motion passes. (This replaces the need for a fence). All other variances are approved as submitted in the application.

City Manager Lapeyrouse confirmed that the applicants will be here for the Council meeting next Tues Oct 25 to present their request. There will be another public hearing at that time prior to any final vote by the Council.

Upcoming meeting dates:

November 14th, Monday 9:00 AM, the week before Thanksgiving for tree ordinance workshop. There will not be a meeting on November 21<sup>st</sup>.

Meeting adjourned: 10:50 AM

Helen Kleiber  
Secretary