



Planning Commission

Small Cell Zoning Code Amendment- Public Hearing

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Title

Small Cell Zoning Code Amendment- Public Hearing

Recommended Action

Move to recommend approval the code amendments and forward to Council for consideration.

Report

Issue:

Whether to recommend approval of the Unified Development Code Amendments in Olympia Municipal Code, Title 18, Chapter 18.02 and Chapter 18.44 Antennas and Wireless Communication Facilities.

Staff Contact:

Paula Smith, Associate Planner, Community Planning & Development, Planning 360.753.8596
Tim Smith, Principal Planner, Community Planning and Development, Planning 360.570.3915

Presenter(s):

Paula Smith, Associate Planner and Tim Smith, Principal Planner

Background and Analysis:

Verizon Wireless has applied for a zoning code text amendment to update Olympia Municipal Code Chapter 18.44, Antennas and Wireless Communications Facilities, to address the siting of a new wireless technology called "Small Cell." Existing city regulations create challenges for locating small cell facilities that make them effective.

Small cell facility is defined in RCW 80.36.375(2) as a personal wireless services facility that meets both of the following qualifications:

(i) Each antenna is located inside an antenna enclosure of no more than three cubic feet in volume or, in the case of an antenna that has exposed elements, the antenna and all of its exposed elements could fit within an imaginary enclosure of no more than three cubic feet; and

(ii) Primary equipment enclosures are no larger than seventeen cubic feet in volume. The following associated equipment may be located outside the primary equipment enclosure and if so located, are

not included in the calculation of equipment volume: Electric meter, concealment, telecomm demarcation box, ground-based enclosures, battery back-up power systems, grounding equipment, power transfer switch, and cut-off switch.

Small cell facilities would be allowed in most areas in the city but the standards are not ideal for small cell technology.

The primary obstacle in the City's zoning code to the siting of small cell facilities in the right of way is a requirement that wireless facilities be on a utility pole or electrical transmission tower at least 50 feet in height. This height standard was presumably adopted to address potential visual impacts associated with the older wireless technology that consisted of large antennae attached to the tops of poles. Small cell facilities are designed to have less impacts, and function best when located between 25 and 40 feet above the ground.

The text changes focus specifically on the siting of small cell facilities in the public right of way. The City will likely consider a more comprehensive update to its wireless telecommunications regulations as a future work program item. The City of Tumwater is currently conducting a comprehensive update and has hired a consultant to work with the telecommunications industry and City staff to prepare a set of changes to bring forward to their Planning Commission. The work by Tumwater can serve as a starting point for making code revisions to City of Olympia regulations in the future that could lead to a similar approach between the two jurisdictions in the regulation of telecommunications facilities.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Neighborhood concerns may include visual impacts. Neighborhood interest may include faster wireless service and additional capacity that small cell facilities will provide.

Options:

1. Recommend adoption of the draft amendments to City Council as proposed.
2. Recommend adoption of the draft amendments to City Council with revisions.
3. Recommend denial of the draft amendments to City Council.

Financial Impact:

None

Attachments:

Proposed amendments

Applicants Application and Proposed Amendments