

Minutes

Planning Board Meeting - Balloon Viewing

Location: Tax Map 11, Lot 83 and Tax Map 14, Lot 13

Date & Time: June 20, 2023 9:00AM

Voting Members Present:

Phil Auger – Chairman
Tim Reed – Vice Chairman
Susan Arnold
Terry Hyland
Lynn Sweet – Selectmen Representative

Non-Voting Members Present:

Donald Coker – Alternate
Donald Clifford – Alternate

Others Present:

Blair Haney, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, Regional Planner
Mimi Jost and Michael Ferber, Strafford Conservation Commission
Elizabeth Evans, Town of Strafford Planning and Zoning

Members of the Planning Board met at 8:45AM at the Town Office parking lot to view balloons that were being floated from 9:00AM to 1:00PM at the proposed cell tower locations associated with the Navigator Properties, LLC. (Mariner Tower) applications presented at the June 1, 2023 Planning Board Meeting. The Chairman, Phil Auger, called the meeting to order at 9:10AM, asked Tim Reed to take notes for the meeting minutes, and described to those present what the route would be for viewing the balloon at the east cell tower location. The attendees included, Phil Auger, Tim Reed, Don Clifford, Don Coker, Blair Haney, Susan Arnold, Michael Ferber, Elizabeth Evans, and Mimi Jost.

At 9:20AM, after determining that the balloon was not visible from the Town Office parking lot, the attendees started the route using four vehicles. The route proceeded from the Town Office parking lot to the public works sand storage facility on Rollercoaster Road where the group turned around and proceeded back to the intersection of Routes 202A and 126. The tour continued onto Route 126 heading toward Barrington, turning around at the end of Pig Lane and returning to the intersection of Routes 202A and 126. The group then turned right onto Route 202A, drove down to Sloper Road, turned around, and stopped along Route 202A near the Third Baptist Church.

The balloon at the east cell tower location was not visible from Rollercoaster Road or the intersection with Parker Mountain Road (Route 126) near the school. The balloon was visible from points along Route 202A/126 near the Stafford Fire and Rescue station and near the Third Baptist Church. The balloon was also visible from points along Parker Mountain Road (Route 126) between Pig Lane and Route 202A, especially properties where trees along the north side of the road were cleared.

At about 9:50AM, the group drove north to the cell tower location on Barn Door Gap Road. Several people were waiting at the existing access point to the property, including Philip Lovejoy, Monty

Lovejoy, Henry Lovejoy, Scott Shroeder, Matt Fernet, Lynn Sweet, Louis Vitali, Paul Spencer, and David Archambault with Virtual Site Simulations, LLC. At 10:09AM, Phil Auger again called the meeting to order at the north cell tower location. The balloon was not visible from the access point to the property or locations along Barn Door Gap Road. The majority of the group then walked into the woods heading up to the proposed cell tower site. Tim Reed, Paul Spencer, and David Archambault remained at the access point to the property. Shortly afterward, Mike Clark arrived, but did not walk up to the cell tower site. Shortly after that, Charlie Moreno, who recused himself as a Planning Board member, arrived and did walk up to the cell tower site to join the others.

The group stopped at a location marked with a grade stake that identified the cell tower location. Mr. Vitali explained that the closed forest canopy at that location didn't allow the balloon to be lifted there so it was placed approximately 150 ft. beyond. The group then walked to the balloon tethering location. Despite there being a small gap in the canopy, the balloon itself was difficult to view at that place. A short discussion about the stone wall boundary and Sanders Ledge viewpoint followed. The group decided to go to the ledges to assess the balloon test further and proceeded to that location.

The balloon and a considerable amount of the string line was quite visible from the ledges. Mr. Vitali showed the plan location and explained the difficulty of siting the tower on that property with such a small overlay zone to work with. Charlie Moreno asked if it couldn't be located further toward the northwest corner of the parcel and meet the same setback requirements. Philip Lovejoy noted that his phone had good reception from this location and Matt Fernet explained that he gets good phone reception on most of Barn Door Gap Road. Charlie Moreno asked what the process would be to allow the tower to be sited closer to the boundary lines. Elizabeth Evans stated that would require a variance from the Zoning Board. Philip Lovejoy stated that this tower would provide good coverage for approximately 8,000 acres of conserved land.

The group then proceeded down slope to the parked cars on the narrow path used by visitors to Sanders Ledges. At approximately 10:45AM, the group returned from the walk up to the proposed cell tower site and stopped on Barn Door Gap Road near the property access point. Phil thanked the attendees for coming out and participating. He asked the group if there were any other questions they wanted to ask. There being none, Phil Auger adjourned the meeting at 10:54AM.