

PLANNING & ZONING REVIEW NOTES

VI. A.

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**SUBJECT:**

A request by **Verticality, Inc.** to request search ring approvals for 6 proposed new cell towers in the county.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

*Included in the May 19, 2008 public hearing packet: Please notify the Planning Department if additional copies are needed.*

1. Letter of Request with location and height information for towers from Verticality, Inc.
2. Location map of proposed towers
3. Map of existing and proposed RF coverage
4. Maps of individual tower and search ring locations with existing and proposed RF coverage in areas

*The following can be viewed on the Planning Department webpage at [www.co.chatham.nc.us](http://www.co.chatham.nc.us) under Planning, Rezoning & Subdivision Cases, 2008:*

5. Public hearing sign up sheet
6. Planning Department map of proposed search ring locations

**INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND:**

A public hearing was held May 19, 2008. There were three speakers at the public hearing, including Mr. Ian Ormesher, representing the applicant, Mr. Gerald Smith, a resident living on Highway 87 approximately ¼ mile from the Gum Springs tower search ring, and Mr. Dave LeGrys, previous Planning Board member who volunteers annually to review the tower requests.

Each year the county receives requests from cellular phone companies or other companies, who construct towers, about their plans for expansion of service within Chatham County. This year Verticality, Inc. is proposing six (6) 180-foot to 199-foot tall towers at six (6) locations. A provider has not been identified for this portion of the search ring request but will be specified during the permitting process.

*Re: Verticality, Inc.*

**DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS:**

Verticality, Inc. submitted a request for seven towers, however the Rt. 15/64 tower is in the Pittsboro Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, so the request is for six towers in the following search ring areas. The proposed towers requested have the following site names and are in the following approximate locations of the projected search ring: CH\_H21 located in the area of Big Woods Rd. on or near Windy Ridge Rd.; CH\_H22 located in the area Old Farrington Rd. approximately on or near Wicker Dr.; CH\_H24 located approximately  $\frac{1}{10}$  of a mile west of Manns Chapel Rd. in the vicinity of Tobacco Rd.; CH\_H25 located in the area of Manns Chapel Rd. approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile north of Hamlets Chapel Rd.; Gum Springs located in the area of NC 87 N approximately 1 mile northeast of Silk Hope Gum Springs Rd.; and Brickhaven located in the area of Corinth Road approximately 1 mile northwest of Highway 42.

At the May 19<sup>th</sup> public hearing, Mr. Gerald Smith stated that he lives on Highway 87 North near the proposed Gum Springs site, and would like to have a tower close by for better reception and coverage. Mr. Dave LeGrys stated that he liked the maps, but several of the towers are 19 feet short of the required 199-foot minimum. Article III Section 3-2 of the Chatham County Telecommunications Ordinance states that “to achieve the goal of maximal collocation, towers shall be built at 199 feet in Area #3 unless otherwise specifically approved below 199 feet by the Board of Commissioners.” Verticality, Inc. is proposing four towers (CH\_H21, CH\_H22, CH\_H24, and CH\_H25) in Area #3 to be built at 180 feet. The other two towers Verticality is proposing in Area #2 and Area #3 will be built at 199 feet.

Article III, Section 3-2 (3) of the Chatham County Telecommunications Ordinance states “telecommunication towers may not be placed in any “Major Wildlife Areas” identified in the “Inventory of the Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitats of Chatham County, North Carolina, 1992.” It appears that a portion of the search ring of tower CH\_H22 may fall within the Morgan Creek Floodplain Forest, as identified by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program.

Verticality, Inc. has provided RF coverage maps for the six proposed tower search rings showing the towers will provide coverage in existing gaps or improve coverage in areas where the existing coverage may not be adequate. During the public hearing Mr. Ian Ormesher stated that the company not only had the coverage maps prepared based on existing data, but also had a representative drive around the County with various phones to check the coverage provided by existing antennae locations. The requests have been reviewed by previous Planning Board Chairman Dave LeGrys who authored the County communication tower ordinance. The ordinance recommends that towers be of the maximum height to facilitate any future collocation. After reviewing the radio frequency coverage maps, it is Dave’s opinion that the proposed tower search ring areas are justified.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is the Planning Department recommendation that the Verticality, Inc. search ring requests for all six (6) towers sited as CH\_H21, CH\_H22, CH\_H24, CH\_H25, Gum Springs, and Brickhaven be approved with the condition that the location of any tower within the CH\_H22 search ring be located outside the identified North Carolina Natural Heritage Program site of Morgan Creek Floodplain Forest.