

Opponents to Stewarttown cell tower voice concerns

By CYNTHIA GAMBLE
Staff Writer

A litany of complaints from local residents repeatedly prevented a Rogers' representative from outlining the company's plan to build a 30-metre wireless telecommunications antenna monopole on a corner of the St. John's Anglican Church property in Stewarttown during a public meeting Monday.

The 30-inch diameter monopole, without antenna attachments, will have a small base antenna station—the size of a shed—fenced and landscaped. At this time no lighting or painting is expected to be required.

Several, of the approximately 20 residents who attended, hijacked the meeting, hosted by Rogers representative Sean Galbraith of the Proliferate Consulting Group at The Club at North Halton Monday night, even shouting down a Stewarttown woman who supported the proposal.

Their complaints ranged from health dangers from the wireless signal, reduced property values and difficulty selling their homes, a visual eyesore, the proximity of the pole to nearby homes (70 metres) and Stewarttown school (150 m), an unproven need for an additional pole, inconsistencies in the presentation of information and the lack of notification for both residents and parents of Stewarttown School students about the project.

The residents asked that the pole be moved to either the new 1,000-acre urban expansion lands or to Trafalgar Sports Park.

Galbraith explained the Town has set a policy that no installations be placed on the 1,000 acres until the Vision Georgetown (www.visiongeorgetown.ca) planning process is done. A pole at the Trafalgar Sports Park would be too close to a nearby Rogers antenna installation also serving Georgetown to be effective, he said. Within the 1.7 km search area, the southwest corner of the St. John's parking lot was the best location. He said Rogers attempted to contact an affected local farmer in the area but calls were not returned. A man in

the audience disputed this, saying he represents the farmer and received no such call.

Galbraith said in his introduction that, with the proliferation of smart phones and data devices like tablets and iPads, the wireless network is "in dire straits".

The demand for wireless service in Georgetown is high with too little capacity in the existing antenna sites, he said. Adding more capacity at those sites would not improve wireless services in the Stewarttown area due to the distance and topography of the town, he said.

Across Canada the wireless data network is increasing by 5 per cent per week, and as the capacity demand grows, the coverage area of each antenna installation decreases. He says the wireless tower is being placed at that location to serve the Stewarttown and Stewarts Mill areas and to increase available capacity at the existing antenna sites serving Georgetown.

But many residents at the meeting claimed they had no problems with their wireless service.

A cross-debate developed in the audience, when one woman stood up saying she lives in the Stewarttown valley where wireless reception is limited. She recounted the story of her mother who required medical help during a power outage, and the daughter had to drive around to find cell phone reception. The protesting residents shouted her down demanding to know if she wanted a cell tower in her backyard.

The woman shouted back that she would if it meant wireless service when her mother required it.

Galbraith said the new pole on the ridge



Rogers representative Sean Galbraith of the Proliferate Consulting Group addresses the audience Monday. (Below) The planned monopole.

Top photo by Cynthia Gamble
Bottom photo submitted



would send signals into the valley, to which residents shouted, "Put it down in the valley." But Galbraith explained If a pole was placed in the Stewarttown valley, its height would have to be increased for the signal to get out of the valley and reach the users.

A Black Creek Ct. woman wondered why fibre optics is not promoted. Galbraith answered, while the antenna installation would be serviced by fibre optics, it doesn't do anything for a wireless network.

A Belmont Cres. man, who said his wireless works fine, added, "I'd rather pay a little more than have my daughter (who attends Stewarttown School) exposed to a wireless tower."

Galbraith said Rogers complies with Health Canada's requirement of Safety Code 6. The RF (radio frequency) energy emitted The RF energy emitted at the 70 m point from the tower would only be approximately 0.95% of the Safety Code 6 allowance and at the 150 m point (the school's property line) it would only be approximately 0.5% of the total Safety Code 6 allowance.

"Is this a done deal?," another woman demanded. "I think you should look at other locations that doesn't affect the community."

"In terms of the antenna installation location, this is the site we're going forward with," answered Galbraith, adding that a 20-year lease has been signed with the Anglican diocese.

Industry Canada is the governing body on all wireless towers and will make the final decision. The Town is only a commenting agency.

Galbraith said the Town provided Rog-

ers with a notification list and letters were mailed out- although many said they received nothing and knew about the meeting via an ad in Oct. 31 *Independent & Free Press*.

The Halton District School Board did receive notification of the public meeting concerning the placement of a cell tower near Stewarttown Public School, said HDSB Chief Information Officer Bruce Smith.

"And further, in terms of our position regarding the placement of cell towers near schools, we have been advised by Halton Region's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr Bob Nosal, that there is no convincing evidence weak radio frequency signals from cell towers cause adverse health effects," said Smith in an email.

Residents gasped when Galbraith said that Industry Canada does not consider property or health impacts, or local planning decisions when making its decision. The public is welcome to provide feedback through December 6. The approval schedule will be determined by the municipality, and construction is dependent upon approvals. Ideally, Rogers would like to construct this facility in 2014 if possible, said Galbraith.

Who to contact:

- Send comments, with the reference # C4286 to: Sean Galbraith, Municipal Affairs Manager, Proliferate Consulting Group, 21A Price St., Toronto, ON, M4W 1Z1 or email, sgalbraith@proliferate-group.com

- For more information about Town's telecommunications tower protocol, contact Kelly Patzer, kellyp@haltonhills.ca, 905-873-2601, ext. 2252 or go to www.haltonhills.ca/initiatives/telecommunication-tower.php

- Industry Canada, Central and Western Ontario District, 4475 North Service Rd., Suite 100, Burlington, Ontario, L7L 4X7, spectrum.cwod@ic.gc.ca.

- For more about the use of WiFi in HDSB schools go to <http://www.hdsb.ca/aboutus/IT/Pages/WirelessInformation.aspx>

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