

CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT

Staff Report to the Regional Planning Committee
Meeting of Wednesday, May 15, 2002

SUBJECT:

Siting of Telecommunications Towers

BACKGROUND:

April 17, 2002: Director Bryce requested staff to look into the matter of the siting of telecommunications towers and report back the Committee.

DISCUSSION:

The siting of a radio tower on Triangle Mountain has generated significant resident concern in Colwood regarding the process by which telecommunications towers are sited under Industry Canada rules. Similar concerns have been raised in other municipalities regarding siting of similar towers including those for cellular telephone signal relay.

The Finance & Administration Committee reviewed this issue on September 30, 1998. Draft guidelines, modelled on those in use in the Greater Vancouver Regional District, were considered regarding applications to site communications equipment on CRD property. The report notes that Industry Canada, as the federal regulator of telecommunications, makes the final decision on cellular telephone tower applications. The Board approved the guidelines on October 14, 1998 (Attachment A).

On March 1, 1999 the Provincial Capital Commission raised the issue of the siting of cellular telephone antennae towers in a letter to CRD Board Chair Geoff Young. The letter argued that the matter was a regional issue and suggested that the CRD work with Industry Canada to establish a region-wide assessment process for the siting of cellular telephone towers. A letter dated March 24, 1999 conveyed Central Saanich Council's support for the PCC position (Attachment B – correspondence on the issue from June 1, 1998 to June 24, 1999).

At the request of Chairman Young the matter was sent to the Inter-Municipal Planning Advisory Committee (IMPAC) for review and comment, particularly with regard to the development of a long term regional plan for locating cellular phone towers. At their May 20, 1999 meeting IMPAC made the following points:

- Although some members felt that it would be helpful for the CRD to take on a role of co-ordinating the development of such a plan, the general consensus was that municipalities should continue to manage the issue independently. Reasons for doing so included the short lifespan of the technology that makes long term planning difficult, and that many municipalities have had success in dealing with applications for siting cell phone towers; and,
- IMPAC suggested that if there was a desire to proceed regionally, it should be at the initiative of the CRD Board.

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IMPAC subsequently heard a presentation by several cellular telephone providers on November 5, 1999 (Attachment C – IMPAC Minutes, Nov. 5, 1999). IMPAC concluded that the issue was best addressed at the municipal level.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Regional Planning Committee receive this report for information.

Mark Hornell, MCIP
Director - Regional Planning Services

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

W.M. Jordan, Executive Director