

Boulder County commissioners approve two communication tower plans

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Boulder County commissioners on Tuesday approved two land-use applications to erect communication towers in unincorporated parts of the county.

One tower will be adjustable, with an antenna on it that would be a maximum 65 feet high when fully extended. Amateur radio operator Dayton Jones plans to install in on his property at 2715 Eagle Ridge Road, north of Lyons.

The second will be a 50-foot tower with a whip antenna extending about 7 feet above it. The application was filed by the Mountain View Fire Rescue and Weld County Public Safety Communications for a site at 6452 Somerset Drive, north of the intersection of Somerset and Mineral Road.

The visual impacts of both towers had drawn objections from several neighbors, a few of whom showed up at Tuesday's public hearings to express their continuing concerns.

Jones' proposal was a revision of his original application to build a 70-foot-tall tower. When not in use, the tower would be lowered to a maximum height, with antenna, of about 35 feet, and only raised to its full 65-foot height about 10 percent of the time, he told commissioners.

When retracted, the tower "would not be dominating the skyline," Jones said.

But Gary Kelsick, a Longmont resident who owns property near Jones' home, where he said he might someday build a house, questioned whether the tower could be located elsewhere on Jones' property — in an area that Kelsick suggested "would help preserve my view" and property value.

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Jones, however, said moving the proposed tower to the locations Kelsick suggested would require long runs of cable and wouldn't be viable.

As for Mountain View Fire Rescue's new tower, MVFR Chief Mark Lawley said it's needed to eliminate gaps in the fire district's emergency radio communications coverage of the Niwot and Gunbarrel areas.

Doug Farrar, a resident of the Morton Heights subdivision, said he was concerned that the fire district tower would obstruct that neighborhood's view of the mountains.

Steve Dewitt, who lives at 6378 Snowberry Lane and is building a house at 6351 Somerset Drive, suggested lowering the height of the proposed tower by 16 feet.

The Boulder County Land Use staff had recommended capping the tower and antenna's total height at 50 feet.

But Lawley, a Motorola representative and a representative of the Weld County Public Safety Communications division — which transmits Mountain View Fire Rescue's radio communications — argued successfully to have the commissioners approve a 50-foot tower topped by a 7-foot-tall whip antenna, saying that was needed for the coverage being sought.

Commissioner Deb Gardner said she thought the new emergency communications tower "is really necessary" to provide that coverage, and that "at the end of the day," she wasn't sure a 57-foot-high facility "would make that much difference," compared to a 50-foot-tall tower-and-antenna, "from a visual standpoint."

Commissioner Elise Jones said proposed structures' visual impacts are "not something we take lightly," but said she was persuaded by Mountain View Fire Rescue's case for the location and height of the tower it proposed.

Domenico also voted for the fire district tower plan, and all three commissioners voted their approval of Jones' proposal.

The Boulder County Planning Commission had been scheduled to consider another application on Wednesday afternoon, for a cellular telecommunications tower proposed for a site at 2700 Lake Eldora Ski Road. On Tuesday, county staffers said the applicant had asked that the hearing be postponed so the applicant could try to address objections from the Eldora Mountain Resort.

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