

Wireless Communication Facility – Woodland Downs Subdivision (Ward 6)**Report Purpose**

To request authorization from Council to send a letter of support to Industry Canada for a proposed wireless communication facility (internet/VoIP tower).

Recommendation

THAT Administration write to Industry Canada in support of a proposed wireless communication facility consisting of a 36.58 m freestanding lattice telecommunications tower to be located on NW 24-51-23-W4 (Lot 1MR, Block 1, Plan 792115; Woodland Downs Subdivision).

Council History

March 10, 2015 – Council adopted Land Use Bylaw 6-2015 with an effective date of May 11, 2015.

December 2014 – Council approved the Rural Internet Accessibility Project as part of the 2015 budget, with three years of funding.

July 2014 – Information Technology Services (ITS) presented the Rural Internet Accessibility recommendations to Council. The recommendations presented to Council in July 2014 were:

1. Strathcona County help fund local towers to bridge between infrastructure towers and hard-to-reach residents,
2. Provide free internet in rural community facilities, and
3. Promote digital literacy and a knowledge workforce in rural Strathcona County.

November 2013 – Council approved a Councillor Budget Request co-sponsored by Councillor Riddell and Mayor Carr to have ITS make recommendations to improve the accessibility to high-speed internet for rural residents.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: Stimulate economic growth by spurring rural business development and development training. Support workforce education and training by improving access to remote education and training, and supporting student research and learning. Help to diversify agricultural businesses and technologies by encouraging new business models and future technologies.

Governance: Increase public involvement and communicate with community by providing new channels of communicating with residents, and enabling them to make use of new tools (e.g. County Connect, ePermits). Build strong relationships with civic organizations by helping them to become more sustainable and to deliver new programs and services.

Social: The proposed Wireless Communication Facility (internet/VoIP tower) will assist in building strong neighbourhoods/communities by supporting the diverse needs of the residents.

Culture: Promote a vibrant, creative community by improving residents' on-line interests, researching and learning about community and heritage.

Environment: Improve the efficiency of resource usage by reducing travel. Environmental policies have been taken into consideration in the review of this proposed development.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: Wireless communication facilities are under the federal jurisdiction of Industry Canada. The Industry Canada process requires a proponent to consult with the municipal land use authority regarding local requirements. The local consultation process, pursuant to Land Use Bylaw 6-2015, Section 6.20, results in a letter of support or non-support to Industry Canada on the proposed tower.

Interdepartmental: The proposal has been circulated to internal County departments and external agencies.

Summary

In order to provide continuous wireless (internet and VoIP) coverage to customers in the surrounding area of rural Strathcona County, the service provider (MCSNet) proposes to erect a 36.58 m freestanding lattice telecommunication tower on NW 24-51-23-W4 (Lot 1MR, Block 1, Plan 7921215; Woodland Downs Subdivision). The applicant, when feasible, tries to locate a proposed telecommunication facility near existing vegetation to mitigate the visual impact of the tower. Twenty-eight notices were sent to adjacent/affected property owners and 13 emails and letters and numerous phone calls were received from nearby property owners as a result.

Due to the nature of the phone calls and emails received regarding the proposed tower, an additional letter was sent out to the entire subdivision and nearby properties announcing an open house to discuss these concerns. The open house was held on May 5, 2017, and the attendees voiced the same concerns provided in the phone calls and emails.

The concerns raised with regard to the proposed tower included the following:

- Tower is located too close to the internal subdivision road
- 120 foot tower is too high, can it be reduced
- Negative impacts on property values and community gathering space
- Negative health impacts
- Will this cause more towers to be located in this area
- Use of reserve land

Despite the noted concerns, provided that the tower on the site is constructed based on the proposed plans and information, the communication facility will have satisfactorily met the criteria and guidelines of the Land Use Bylaw 6-2015.

Enclosures

- 1 Location Map
- 2 Site Plan
- 3 Tower Elevation Plans