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November 12, 2024

Dear members of the Vermont Public Utilities Commission,

As the Head of School at Red Fox Community School, which is located at 184 Pig Pen Road, I am writing to inform you that as an organization we do not support the Northshire Civic Center location Verizon has proposed for a cell tower.

The cell tower location Verizon has proposed is in a town MU2 zone which does not allow telecommunications towers of this kind. The site that Verizon has chosen violates Manchester town plan bylaws. While the height of the proposed tower has been lowered to 130 feet, the tower is still located too close to an emergency helicopter pad. Also, based on the maps Verizon briefly shared the increased coverage area looks to be primarily fields and wooded areas versus business or residential. It is important to point out that the town has hired an engineering firm to find the best location for a telecommunications tower in an approved Manchester town plan zone.

In addition, positioning a cell tower near an elementary school when we are uncertain about the potential negative impacts on our children is a risk none of us should be willing to take. Our K-5 elementary school is located adjacent to the historic Marble Valley Rail Trail and the Northshire Civic Center playing and event fields. Many residents and visitors use the trail and fields frequently, if not daily. We have students ranging in age from 5 to 12 attending the school and playing outside. The concerns around locating a cell tower in close proximity to a school should be strongly considered, especially as alternate locations for the cell tower are being researched by the town of Manchester.

I urge you to look closely at the extensive work our neighboring state of New Hampshire has done with regard to the location of cell towers near schools. They, along with other states and countries, recommend a minimum setback of cell towers from schools of 1600 feet. As a result, the current location that Verizon has proposed does not meet this recommendation.

On behalf of our whole school community we appreciate the time you spend thinking about the well being of residents and visitors to Vermont and in this particular case Manchester and ask that you consider the safety of the children who attend our school when determining whether Verizon may proceed with the proposed cell tower location.

Thank you for considering our position as you review this case and Verizon's materials over the coming weeks. I would be more than happy to meet with or talk to any of you if there are specific questions I can answer.

Sincerely,

Karen

Karen O'Neill Thomson
Head of School
Red Fox Community School

Cc: Governor Phil Scott