

Comment to Novato Planning Commission – Meeting of 10-10-22

By Steve Glanz

Hi, this is Steve Glanz and I'm a Novato resident. Telecommunications companies have been rolling out wireless antennas, known as macro-towers and small cell wireless facilities (aka 4G and 5G) for some time. Cities deserve broadband access, but this particular technology is bad for health and the environment. Studies backing this up are irrefutable, there's a tug of war between the telecoms seeking profits, and localities who want to protect people and the environment. Fiber optic cable is one of the alternatives which Novato can implement, like other cities have in the US.

Advocates like myself, and groups like Wire Novato have been at the forefront of this issue. In 2019, the city enhanced its wireless code with an urgency ordinance focused on small cell wireless facilities. They were supposed to upgrade and integrate this with the wireless code, but it was postponed for 3 years. The original plan was for a public workshop involving all stakeholders. But at the City Council meeting on September 13 of this year, council vetoed the public workshop, instead suggesting their own incomplete and in some cases, misguided code points, and referring city attorneys to draft a new code.

Unfortunately, city attorneys are not up to speed, so we recommended an attorney who was. That was also vetoed. The lone stakeholder who was not excluded was this Planning Commission, because the city mandates they be involved in the code development process.

Presently, the Planning Commission does not take an active role – staff handles all applications. But City council is now suggesting, at our urging, that the commission evaluate wireless applications in a discretionary, not exclusively ministerial process.

I'm telling you these things to prepare you for what is coming in the near future. Also, it is important to realize that the Novato General Plan 2035 which the Planning Commission oversees, and the Novato Strategic Plan 21-23 justify the Commission's involvement.

For example, the General Plan's theme is sustainability and environmental responsibility. Wireless Transmission Facilities have been responsible for multiple fires across California, from the lack of fuse protectors in smart meters on macrotowers, to the waveforms that cause PG&E transformers to explode, to combustible terpene production in conifer trees. Excessive microwave radiation is an environmental hazard, lowers property values, raises the cost of health care, and puts an excessive burden on uninsured coverage due to lawsuits.

You may have also read a letter sent to you by one of our advisors, Paul McGavin, suggesting how a moratorium on applications could be legally justified until a new code is passed, and a superior method of radio frequency testing.

I also sent a letter to this Commission, which you may have in your file for reading today. Please look it over, and feel free to reach out for more information. We intend to provide more education to this Commission, as we have been to Council and Staff throughout the year.

Thank You Very Much