



Development Services Staff Report

Report Number: DS35-2024
Report Title: Communication Tower, 5511 Crowsfoot Rd, West Montrose
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Reviewed By: Deanne Friess, Director of Development Services; Victor Labreche, Manager of Planning Services
Final Review: Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, receive Report DS35-2024 respecting Communication Tower, 5511 Crowsfoot Rd, West Montrose for information purposes.

Background:

Staff were circulated a proposal from SLI Towers Inc. to construct a 65-metre-high communication tower on the Agriculturally zoned property at 5511 Crowsfoot Road. The property is approximately 34 hectares (85 acres) in size and includes barn and farm buildings.

The communication tower would be situated within a 225 square metre (15 m by 15 m) fenced compound area with the radio equipment cabinet installed on a concrete slab. The tower is proposed to be set back approximately 73 metres from the road, next to a small water feature on the southwestern side of the property. Conceptual visuals are provided in the attached justification report.

The applicant has consulted with Staff, circulated the proposal to all property owners within 150 metres from the site, and placed a notice in the Woolwich Observer in regard to the proposed tower to solicit comments.

A virtual public open house was hosted on October 29, 2024. Notices were mailed to adjacent landowners and the notice was placed in the newspaper, detailing the date of the open house, and that comments could be received until November 11, 2024.

The applicant has provided information outlining the need and impact of the tower and has provided information noting that no comments were received through the consultation process.

Comments:

The applicant has proposed to locate the tower to the southwestern side of the property near a small water feature regulated by the GRCA. This location poses minimal disruption to the farmland and farm operations.

It should be noted that the communication tower is exempt from setbacks, farm cluster requirements, and is permitted in any zone under the Public Use and Public or Private Utilities provisions (Section 4.35) of the Township Zoning By-law.

This section of Crowsfoot Road is rural, with few properties and houses. The greatest impact would be to the Agricultural property at 1044 Crowsfoot Rd which is over 340 metres away. This property however would still be able to see the structure. The nearest property in an R-1 zone is located over 1 kilometer away.

No timeline has been provided on the construction of the tower.

Based on reviewing the applicant's report, Staff have no objection to the proposed communication tower and compound area for the following reasons:

- The proposed location is technically suitable to meet network needs;
- No other towers in the area address the need;
- The design of the tower will accommodate other providers;
- The proposed tower and compound area will not be severed from the property;
- The operation will upgrade the existing field access to the site;
- The site poses minimal impacts to the field;
- The radio antenna system will comply with Transport Canada/NAV Canada aeronautical safety requirements and given its location, the communication tower will not require any lighting and/or paint markers; and
- The facility includes a locked, mechanical equipment cabinet and the fenced compound area has a locked gate at the access point to prevent trespassers.

The applicant circulated a newspaper notice on October 31, 2024, and held a virtual Public Information Meeting November 5, 2024, which was attended by only one resident who sought more information on the tower but was in support of the increased coverage in the area. Comments could be submitted until November 11, 2024, but none were received.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

The development of the use as proposed will require that the applicant obtain an entrance permit from Infrastructure Services.

Financial Impacts:

None.

Community Strategic Plan Impacts:

By improving connectivity for locals and agricultural businesses, the communication tower promotes sustainable growth in rural Woolwich. The tower's low-impact location allows it to provide technical infrastructure that can support the needs of agricultural and rural businesses.

Significant community involvement, such as public open houses and notifications to surrounding residents, shows the Township's dedication to openness and inclusivity. This strategy provides a voice and encourages the community to remain engaged.

A transparent and community-focused approach is demonstrated by the Township's thorough evaluation of the proposal and its explicit communication of safety and aesthetic concerns. The Township builds up community trust and cooperation over time by addressing these concerns.

The Township's objective of innovating public service delivery is addressed by improved communication, which increases rural residents' access to services. This supports Woolwich's customer-focused approach and ensures that residents have access to reliable internet and modern communication tools.

Conclusion:

Staff have no concerns with the proposed Communications Tower located at 5511 Crowsfoot Road and as noted in the recommendation section, Staff request Council to acknowledge receipt of this report for information purposes only. The recommendation aligns with the Township's goals and presents minimal impact to the farm operation, and followed the process set out in the Procedural Manual of the Department of Development Services – Planning Section for proposed Communication Towers.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Justification Report

Attachment 2: Newspaper Tear Sheet