

September 17, 2014

Jonda Joseph, City Clerk
City of Fort Lauderdale
100 N. Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

Re: Notice of Appeal of Denial of Crown Castle Application for the Installation of DAS Antennas/**Application Number: 13-05/Node 61-2** (“Application”) **Denial Letter Item 3**

Dear Ms. Joseph:

Please be advised that our Firm represents Crown Castle NG East, LLC (“Crown”). We have been engaged to pursue an appeal of the denial of the captioned Application. In accordance with Ft. Lauderdale City Code (“Code”) Section 25-100.2, (attached as **Exhibit A**) and any other applicable Code Sections, Crown hereby appeals the denial of the Application. A copy of the August 18, 2014 denial notification is attached hereto as **Exhibit B**.

Crown hereby respectfully requests a de novo hearing before the City Commission of the City of Fort Lauderdale (“City Commission”) to determine if the denial was based upon a departure from the essential requirements of the law; or whether competent substantial evidence exists to support the denial. Crown requests that the denial be reversed and the requested permit be issued. We reserve the right to supplement these materials at the time of the hearing or before.

Details of Appeal

APPLICATION 13-05 (NODE 61-2):

Applicant: Crown Castle NG East, LLC

Application location: 539 NW 17th Avenue

Approximate location: 539 NW 17 Ave (**Exhibit C**)

Approximate street address: 77' south of NW 6th Place (there is no 6th Place according to City records)

Zoning District: RS-8

Application Date: May 21, 2014

Denial Date: August 18, 2014

Description of Construction:

- a. Installation of new 40' concrete utility pole with Crown Castle distributed antenna system, ("DAS")
- b. Installation of new above ground cabinet - 5'3" X 2'0" X 1'6" = 104" Total

Denial Comments:

1. This Application is DENIED on the basis of conflict between the narrative and the site plan and on the basis of failure to comply with Code Sec. 25-100.1 (c) (5) mitigation of visual impact in residential areas.
2. This Application is DENIED on the basis of conflict between the narrative and the site plan and on the basis of failure to comply with Code Sec. 25-100.1 (c) (5) mitigation of visual impact in residential areas.

Appeal Grounds:

1) The City's Right of Way Ordinance ("ROWO"); to wit, City of Fort Lauderdale Code ("Code") Section 25-100 *et. seq.* as applied and likely on its face violates State Law; including Fla. Stat. Chapter 347 and Federal Law including the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996.

2) The denial was a departure from the essential requirements of the law.

- 3) Competent substantial evidence does not exist to support the denial.
- 4) The procedure followed leading to the Permit Application denial constituted a denial of the Applicant's due process rights. The procedure also did not comply with the City Commission's directive to Staff to cooperate with the Applicant in siting installations in the right-of-way ("ROW").
- 5) Denial Comments 1 and 2 appear to be duplicates. Without specifying what the conflict is, the Application was denied based upon a conflict between the narrative and the Site Plan. Crown was unable to identify any conflict. Crown inquired of Staff to identify the conflict. Staff was unable to explain what the conflict. Therefore, this ground for this denial is without support.

The denial comments also state that Crown failed to comply with ROWO subsection 25.100.1(c)(5) (see **Exhibit D**) with regard to mitigation to visual impacts and residential areas. However, that subsection provides that visual impacts shall be mitigated through the incorporation of one or more of certain features in the construction of the facility site. The feature that Crown chose to incorporate was the installation of screen plantings as permitted by the Code. Therefore, the denial on this ground is without support.

The information provided in this letter of appeal is provided as a courtesy to the City. We are hopeful that the information will be helpful to the City in resolving the appeals. The sections of the City Code controlling this appeal however do not require the inclusion of any information in a letter of appeal other than a notifying the City that the applicant is appealing a denial. The applicant objects to its appeal; including argument before the City Commission, being limited to the matters raised in this letter. The applicant also reserves the right to amend or supplement its appeal including but not limited to adding matters related any information supplied by the City in response to Crown's pending public records request.

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Please advise when the matter will be placed before the City Commission for consideration.

Sincerely,



Hope Calhoun
For the Firm

Enclosures

HWC/cl

cc: Mr. Lee Feldman
Ms. Cynthia Everett, Esq.
Mr. Alex Scheffer
Melissa Anderson, Esq.
Wanda Melton
Perry Adair, Esq.

RESPONSE TO APPEAL ON APPLICATION 13-05.

Location: 539 NW 17th Avenue
Zoning RS-8
Description of Work: a. Place new 40 foot concrete utility pole
b. Attach Crown Castle DAS antenna to new utility pole - 24" x 16" = 40" total
c. Install new above ground cabinet – 62" x 24" x 18" (104" total)

**CITY ARGUMENTS
IN SUPPORT OF DENIAL**

- A. The Application is beyond the subject matter jurisdiction of Code Sec. 25-100.1 as the installation is not a *communications service facility* as defined by Code Sec. 25-100.1 (a) and Florida Statute Sec. 202.11 (2014)
- B. The process by which the permit application was denied comports with due process.
- C. Application violates Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(1), *Size limitation in certain areas*.
- D. The Application violates Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(2), *Height limitation in certain areas*
- E. The Application violates Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(5), *Mitigation of visual impacts in certain areas*

A. The Application is beyond the subject matter jurisdiction of Code Sec. 25-100.1 as the installation is not a *communications service facility* as defined by Code Sec. 25-100.1(a).

Florida Statute Sec. 202.11 (2014) defines *communications services* as:

Communications services means the transmission, conveyance or routing of voice, data, audio, video, or any other information or signals, including video services, to a point, or between or among points, by or through any electronic, radio, satellite, cable, optical, microwave, or other medium or method now in existence or hereafter devised, regardless of the protocol used for such transmission or conveyance. The term includes such transmission, conveyance or routing in which computer processing applications are used to act on the form, do or protocol of the content for purposes of transmission, conveyance or routing without regard to whether such service is referred to as voice-over-Internet-protocol services or is classified by the Federal Communications Commission as enhanced or value-added.

City Code Sec. 25-100.1 (a) defines *communications service facilities* as:

Communications service facilities means any tangible thing affixed to the ground and located in any rights-of-way used to deliver communications services the combined height, width and depth dimensions of which are greater than ninety (90) inches, but does not include utility poles.

The proposed installation is an antenna system. There is nothing in the application to demonstrate anything more than an antenna system. The antenna system, in and of itself, does not deliver communications services. Only when coupled with a vendor involved in the “transmission, conveyance or routing of . . . any other information or signals” is the antenna system used to deliver “communications services.” There is nothing in the record to demonstrate that the antenna system delivers *communications services*. Accordingly, this antenna system falls outside the regulatory framework and subject matter jurisdiction of Code Sec. 25-100.1.

Similarly, the argument that Florida Statute Sec. 364.02(14) covers the services contemplated by the installation lacks merit. Fla. Statute Sec. 364.02(14) defines a *Telecommunications facility* to include “real estate, easements, apparatus, property and routes used and operated to provide two-way telecommunications service to the public for hire within this State.” Just as the Record fails to show that the antenna system **delivers** *communications services*, the Record is similarly devoid of anything demonstrating that the system is **used and operated** to provide two-way telecommunications service. Until such time as the system is “hooked up” with a company that actually provides the telecommunications service.

ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICATION
UNDER SEC. 25-100.1

The Applicant’s response to City’s position that the proposed installation does not constitute a communications service facility under Code Sec. 25-100.1(c) and Florida Statute Sec. 202.11(2014) and therefore the Application should not have been accepted by City Staff is without merit. In order to provide an Applicant with due process rights, an Application must be accepted and acted upon in accordance with the City Codes with a resulting “granted” or “denied” after having gone through the appropriate process. It is through the “denial” of the permit application, that an Applicant has due process rights to perfect it appellate remedies. By illustration, one could file an application for a zoning permit to construct a duplex in an RS-4.4 zoning district. City staff lacks the lawful authority to refuse to accept the permit application. The proper procedure under such circumstances would be to accept the permit application, review it in accordance with the City Code, and “deny” it, thereby opening the due process door for the Applicant to perfect and appeal from the “denial.”

The Applicant raises the argument that the person formerly charged with responsibility of administering Code Sec. 25-100.1 had opined that the permit application should be reviewed in light of Code Sec. 25-100.1. Code Sec. 25-100.1 is the only section of the City’s Code of Ordinances that could arguably be used to judge the sufficiency of the permit application. Staff’s opinion that the permit application should be judged against the criteria found in Code Sec. 25-100.1 is not the equivalent of judging that the permit application meets each and every one of the applicable criteria in Code Sec. 25-100.1. In this instance City staff has found several portions of the applicable City Code that the permit application fails to meet.

CODE SEC. 25-100.1
WAS DRAFTED WITH THE INTRODUCTION

OF AT&T THE U-VERSE CABINET

Code Sec. 25-100.1 was drafted with the introduction of the AT&T U-verse cabinets and the City's fears of inundating the City's neighborhoods with "cabinet farms" in our public rights-of-way. Code Sec. 25-100.1 is a poor fit, at best, for the DAS system envisioned in the Applications before use now. In many respects fitting the DAS Applications into Code Sec. 25-100.1 is like trying to fit a round peg into a square hole.

It is for that reason that we are currently within a Moratorium period while staff investigates and drafts legislation more in tune with the DAS antennae and cabinets and small cell systems.

B. The process by which the permit application was denied comports with due process.

The Applicant argues that it has been denied due process as City staff failed to cooperate with the Applicant in siting installations in the right-of-way. City staff had met with members of the Applicant's team. City's staff, however, lacks the authority to "approve" of installation locations that violate the City's Codes. Accordingly, the "lack of due process" argument should be rejected.

Further, Applicant's appeal reveals a number of indications that reveal previous consultations with City staff: Applications 13-01; 13-04; 13-07; 13-11; and 13-12.

It has been suggested that Applicant has been denied due process as a result of City staff not advising them of where the installation could be located *prior to* the "denial." Such an argument has been rejected by the Fourth District Court of Appeal. *Las Olas Tower Company v. City of Fort Lauderdale*, 733 So2d 1034, 1040 (Fla. 4th DCA, 1999), 783 So.2d 1056 (rev. dismissed) (Fla. 2001); *Las Olas Tower Company v. City of Fort Lauderdale*, 742 So. 2d 308, 314-315 (Fla. 4th DCA, 1999) , 783 So.2d 1056 (rev. dismissed) (Fla. 2001).

C. The Application is in violation of Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(1), *Size limitation in certain areas.*

It should be noted at the outside that Sec. 25-100(c)(1) was not listed as a basis of denial in the City Engineer's August 18, 2014 letter of denial. Nonetheless, granting a permit for the application in the face of a violation of the Code would be error.

The Application shows a cabinet with dimensions of 5' 2" x 1' 6" x 2' 0" with a combined dimensional total of 104". The antenna, mounted at the top of a 40-foot wood utility pole has measurements of 24" x 16", with a total dimensions of 40". The combination of 104" and 40" equal 144".

Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(1), *Size limitation in certain areas* recites:

Size limitation in certain areas. Except as may otherwise be provided in sec. 25-100.1(c), at at-grade communications service facility with combined

height, width and depth dimensions exceeding one hundred twenty-four (124) inches, as measure at- and above-grade, shall not be constructed in areas within (a) any of the following zoning districts within the City: (i) City residential zoning districts, (ii) RO, ROA and ROC, or (iii) Broward County residential zoning districts or (b) rights-of-way that are contiguous to the boundaries of the aforementioned zoning districts.

This installation is targeted for an RC-15 zoning district, one of the City's residential zoning districts. Additionally, the Application shows combined height, width and depth dimensions of 144". The combination of the residential zoning district and the combined height, width and depth of the facilities exceeding 124", the Application is in violation of Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(1).

D. Application is in violation of Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(3), *Height limitation in certain areas.*

It should be noted at the outside that Sec. 25-100(c)(3) was not listed as a basis of denial in the City Engineer's August 18, 2014 letter of denial. Nonetheless, granting a permit for the application in the face of a violation of the Code would be error.

Code Sec. 25-100.1 (c) (2) reads as follows:

25-100.1(c) (2) *Height limitations in certain areas.* Any portion of an at-grade communications service facility with a height of five (5) feet, eight (8) inches or greater, as measured at- and above-grade, shall be constructed below grade with the areas referenced in section 25-100.1(c)(1).

The areas referenced in Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(1) include:

- (a) City residential zoning districts
- (b) RO, ROA and ROC
- (c) Broward County residential zoning districts
- (d) Rights-of-way that are contiguous to the boundaries of the aforementioned zoning districts.

Here the Application is for installation of facilities in an RC-15 zoning district, which is a City residential zoning district. The Site Plan shows the 24" x 16" antenna to be placed on top of a 40' AT&T wood utility pole. Accordingly, the Application violates Code Sec. 25-100.1 (c)(2) as it contains a facility (antenna) that exceeds 5'8" as measured at- and above-grade.

The Narrative in the Application refers to the location as being approximately 77 feet South of N.W. 6th Place. Site Plan C-1 also provides a measurement of 77'5" to the centerline of NW 6th Place. However, the line is not drawn from N.W. 6th Place. Instead the line is drawn from the centerline of N.W. 6th Street.

E. The Application is in violation of Code Sec. 25-100.1(c)(5), *Mitigation of visual impacts in certain areas.*

City Code § 25-100.1 (c) (5) requires, in part:

(5) *Mitigation of visual impacts in certain areas.* The location and construction of at-grade communications service facilities located within the areas identified in § 25-100.1 (c) (1) above shall incorporate features that are determined by the City Engineer to optimize, to the extent technically possible, mitigation of visual impacts to surrounding properties and the surrounding neighborhood by incorporating one (1) or more of the following appurtenant features in the construction of the facility site:

- a. Screen plantings consisting of a combination of trees, shrubs and ground cover, with an emphasis on xeriscaping;
- b. Shade trees that do not conflict with overhead utilities;
- ...
- d. Any other features or existing features that mitigates the visual impact of the at-grade communications service facility;
- ...

Page C1.1 of the Landscape Mitigation Plan shows the installation of a hedge row of cocoplum along the Northern, Southern and Western periphery of the new equipment cabinet. The Landscape Plan shows no mitigation of visual impact by way of hedge row or any other feature on the East periphery of the cabinet, facing the street side. Uniformly throughout the City the mitigation of visual impact has been implemented on the street-side of the communications facilities. Here, the Applicant elected not to provide such street-side mitigation of visual impact.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, for the foregoing reasons, the Record demonstrates that the denial of the Application (i) does not show a departure from the essential requirements of the law, Code Sec. 25-1002. (a)(1)(a), and (ii) that competent substantial evidence supports the denial, Code Sec. 25-100.2(a)(1)(b), and accordingly, the denial of Application 13-05 should be upheld as a final decision of the City Commission without any further *de novo* review.