WIRELESS UPDATE: 
A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

Wireless Communications Facilities (WCFs) have been a topic of discussion in Hillsborough and at City Council meetings since the early 2000s. It is a subject that is prevalent in many communities around the Bay Area and across the country. WCFs come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Examples include traditional cell towers, facilities placed on building rooftops, and facilities mounted on streetlight poles, utility poles and other poles in streets.

In 2017 and 2018, Hillsborough addressed two WCF matters: 1) Crown Castle’s submittal of 16 applications for WCFs and 2) the adoption of the Town’s revised WCF ordinance (Hillsborough’s WCF regulations) and approval of wireless design standards (Hillsborough’s design standards). In 2019, the Town initiated the process to analyze potential changes to the design standards. The details of these actions are discussed below:

2017/18 Crown Castle WCF Applications

Crown Castle provides communication infrastructure for wireless companies. They sometimes (but not always) install fiber infrastructure, and provide services to carry signals from wireless facilities to other locations. On January 4, 2017, Crown Castle submitted 16 WCF applications to place WCFs on a mix of utility poles and new steel poles in the Town streets to be utilized by Verizon.

At the November 13, 2017 City Council meeting, numerous residents raised concerns about the proposed WCFs. On December 7, 2017, the Town held a community meeting to receive more public input. Crown Castle was in attendance to answer questions. The Town also received over 1,600 pages of comments from the public during the public comment period.

The City Manager denied all applications on December 20, 2017 and Crown Castle appealed the City Manager’s decision. The appeal was denied at a special meeting on March 26, 2018. The denial is the subject of litigation discussed further below under Wireless Litigation.

The 2018 WCF Ordinance and Design Standards

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The design standards were adopted by resolution to provide the Town with flexibility should elements of the standards need to be revised. A resolution can be amended in one public meeting compared to multiple meetings required for ordinances for introduction and adoption. This approach seemed particularly advisable because, as discussed below, the FCC orders are being challenged, the FCC itself is considering further limits on local authority, and the Town needs to be in a position to respond quickly to changing circumstances.

Other things, the design standards describe the aesthetic elements of WCFs that would be acceptable in the Town. Under the FCC Order, aesthetic standards for small wireless facilities must be 1) published in advance, 2) objective, 3) reasonable, and 4) no more burdensome than what applies to other infrastructure in the community. No changes have been made to the WCF Ordinance or the design standards since the initial adoption.

and a City Council study session on January 7, 2019 provided input from residents and technical advisors on proposed amendments to the existing ordinance in response to the new FCC Order. At the same time, the Town began working with other communities to challenge the validity of the FCC Order.

On January 14, 2019, the City Council adopted an urgency ordinance amending the WCF ordinance and also introduced a regular ordinance which would extend the regulations upon expiration of the urgency ordinance. The City Council then approved design standards for WCFs at the January 14, 2019 meeting.

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HILLSBOROUGH NAMED A FIREWISE COMMUNITY

The Town of Hillsborough was recently designated as a Firewise Community, enhancing its efforts to improve fire safety in Town. The Firewise USA Program is administered by the National Fire Protection Association and is aimed at teaching communities how to adapt to living with the risk of wildfires and encouraging neighbors to work together and now to prevent future losses.

David Weinberg, a Hillsborough resident for 41 years, is the Chair of the Hillsborough Firewise Board of Directors (Board) and spearheaded the Firewise certification process with help from the Town and the Central County Fire Department (CCFD).

"The main objective of Firewise is to provide education and resources to the residents on fire safety and what it means to be a Firewise Community," Weinberg explains. "This comes up as an opportunity for the Town as it is implementing the Wildland Urban Interface, or WUI, program this year." Weinberg sees Firewise as the third side of a triangle with the Town and CCFD where all three sides work collaboratively to promote, educate, and enhance fire safety in Hillsborough.

It is rare for an entire town to be designated as a Firewise Community, but Hillsborough presents a special case of being mostly residential and an abundance of vegetation. Receiving a Firewise Community certification involves a rigorous eight step process that takes more than a year to complete. Weinberg and the Board have many collaborative projects in the works. One primary initiative is to establish a group of key community liaisons from organizations like the Hillsborough Country Club, CCFD, Hillsborough City School District, Hillsborough Beautification Foundation, and the Hillsborough Neighborhood Network (HNN). The Board is also seeking to establish an panel of industry professionals with expertise in areas such as arboriculture, landscaping, roofing, insurance, and more.

"The Town is working with HNN to utilize their established community footprint and provide an update to the Firewise throughout the various neighborhoods. Through this community outreach, the Board is seeking to enhance the Firewise champions throughout Hillsborough who can assist with education and projects. These champions will work at a critical role with duties like reporting dead trees to CCFD and helping guide their neighbors through potential Firewise projects."

Community meetings will be provided to residents as the Firewise program grows. Be sure to update to the Town’s e-Announcements at www.hillsborough.net/subscribe for monthly updates. For questions related to Firewise, please send an e-mail to firewise@hillsborough.net.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM FIRST PUBLIC SAFETY POWER SHUTOFF EVENT

During the final weekend in October, many Hillsborough residents experienced their first Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS). In total, approximately 69% Hillsborough homes lost power from Saturday, October 26th to Monday, October 28th. The shutoff affected approximately a million customers in Northern California.

California Public Service Company (PG&E) administers PSPS events in anticipation of extreme weather conditions that increase the risk of wildfires (typically from high winds combined with dry conditions). In total, there were ten PSPS events in 2019 affecting approximately three million customers in California.

A California event began, the Public Works Department ensured that the stations and backup generators were operational. Water and tanks were full, while also responding to reports of downed trees and branches to minimize risks. The Police Department was on monitoring potential impacts to traffic in Town and traffic lights on El Camino Real. Police staff also reached out to the 48 residents who had registered for PG&E’s Medical Baseline Program. CCFD Community Risk and Resiliency Specialist Dena Gunnings notes that the biggest challenge was the flow of information. "Along with notifying customers, PG&E was also providing constant updates to local officials," she explains. "The status of the PSPS was extremely fluid and the impact area maps were frequently changing." The Town worked with the Central County Fire Department (CCFD) and San Mateo County Office of Emergency Services (OES) to develop response plans and coordinate communications. "The Town wanted us to ensure that when we went to see residents was accurate, up to date, and consistent with the County’s messaging," Mayor – Shawn Christianson.

Not having power is already stressful enough and misinformation would only make it worse." Gunnings commended the Town’s residents for being prepared: "Town Hall had power, so it was opened as a resource center during the weekend, but not many residents came. It seemed like most everyone had resources and backup plans in place."

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In the Hilltop area of the Town, 9.3% of customers lost power as well. It was certainly the roughest power loss as well and currently do not have back up power generation," Gunnings explains. "This first PSPS event was a learning experience for all of us."

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"Every experience helps us better prepare for the next disruption."

For additional information on PSPS, including PG&E’s contact info and potential FAQ’s for residents, visit PG&E’s PSPS pages at www.pge.com/psps and www.prepareforpowerdown.com.

2020 Concourses d’Elegance Sunday, July 12, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Crystal Springs Golf Course To make reservations, contact Cameron Ford For more information and to volunteer: www.hillsboroughconcourses.org.

HNN Q2 Info Session Tuesday, April 28, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m. Town Hall Council Chambers Police and Fire joint Info Session More information to come in next newsletter. For more information visit the HNN homepage: www.hillsborough.net/hnn.

1st Quarter 2020
HNN’s mission is to assist Hillsborough residents with emergency preparedness. The mission is to provide resources and education essentials. Get involved! Send an email to HNN Chairwoman to get more information.

WIRELESS UPDATE: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

During the past quarter, the City Council:
- Adopted a resolution not to change the rates for basic service and new construction.
- Issued an emergency, gas, flood, kiss safety, down power event, and no power event to report PEER-related incidents.

SARAH FLEMING NEW DIRECTOR OF BUILDING AND PLANNING

Sarah Fleming was appointed the Town’s new Director of Building and Planning on December 2019. Fleming is a graduate of Cal Poly Pomona with a Bachelor of Arts from Brown University. Fleming has served as the Deputy Director of Planning in Los Angeles, California, and Detroit in Chicago, where she oversaw the operations of each department. Fleming has lived in Hillsborough for 15 years. Despite being on the job in Hillsborough for only a few months, Fleming has been busy meeting with the residents to get a sense of what the community needs.

GO TO www.hillsborough.net/NetWater to report leaks and high water charges for calendar year 2020. The Town contracted with HR&H Consultants in 2010 to conduct a five-year cost of service and rate study. These costs are reviewed annually to ensure that rates are sufficient to cover the costs of delivering water. The Water Department has implemented a water conservation program that includes educational outreach and rates for water conservation. The Town has trained its employees on water conservation techniques and encourages residents to conserve water. The Town has implemented a water conservation program that includes educational outreach and rates for water conservation. The Town has trained its employees on water conservation techniques and encourages residents to conserve water.

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Understand your bill

Final details, a brief description of typical WaterSmart account, and the information therein.

Go to www.hillsborough.net/watermain to view the rates.

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