

Town of Hillsborough

Nov. 28 Wireless Community Meeting Report

Overview

The issue of wireless technology is not new in Hillsborough. Over the past year and a half many community members have shared their comments, questions and concerns related to the construction of additional wireless facilities. Separate from this process, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has also taken action that impacts our community.

On September 26, the FCC approved new regulations that will go into effect on January 14, 2019. The new rules are intended to make it faster and easier for wireless companies to get local approvals to expand their networks especially in the public right-of-way. Hillsborough is working to update the Town's own wireless policy before the new federal rules go into effect.

On the evening of November 28, 2018, more than 30 community members came together in the Crocker Middle School multipurpose room to learn more about the new FCC rules and address some concerns related to the issue. The goals of this community conversation were twofold: firstly

educational, providing an opportunity for community members to learn about imminent regulatory changes, and secondly to gather community member comments, questions, ideas and concerns that can help to inform policy updates moving forward. The November 28 session was the first of a four-part series of community meetings related to the Town's wireless policy. The next meeting will be held on December 13, with the remaining meetings held in early 2019. The November 28 session aimed to present information that was accessible for those new to the topic of wireless facilities and those familiar with the issue, allowing all residents to share their thoughts and opinions through dialogue with other community members.

The November 28 session format featured two presentations, each followed by facilitated table discussions. The first presentation focused on the FCC's upcoming "small cell" order. The discussion questions focused on concerns and questions around those changes. The second presentation shared parts of the Town's current code and guiding principles for wireless facilities. The table discussion that followed invited participants to react and share additional input about the guiding principles. Participant input was captured by notes from the table facilitators, as well as individual input sheets. This



Hillsborough Public Works Director, Paul Willis, provides an overview of the Town's wireless code during the Nov. 28 community meeting.

document highlights general themes and takeaways from the many valuable insights shared by community participants. Several residents shared that this is a challenging issue. Given the difficult nature of the topic and the short timeframe to act, the Town believes that community participation is particularly important. Crafting new wireless legislation and policy will require ideas and input from across the community.

Common Themes and Concerns

There appeared to be broad agreement overall with the five sample guiding principles that were shared (*see sidebar at right*). The general categories made sense to those newer to the issue and were familiar to residents who have been actively involved with wireless issues for some time. The way these principles are expressed in updated wireless guidelines will be informed by ongoing community input. The following themes also emerged from the conversations:

➤ ***Safety and potential risks associated with small cell development are at the forefront of many people's minds.***

Participants expressed a range of perspectives about safety related to potential wireless development, including concerns that inadequate coverage could negatively impact public safety. A number of community members had many questions about potential harms that could coincide with the development of wireless facilities, including potential exposure to radiofrequency emissions, risks of equipment creating fire hazards, degrading current infrastructure, insurance liabilities and costs, and the potential impacts on property values. Others saw the current lack of wireless facilities, and the current lack of reliable wireless service in some areas of the Town, as its own safety hazard, raising concerns related to the lack of phone service availability during an emergency, poor coverage near schools or on roads, and communications platforms being unavailable to first responders. These concerns illustrate that safety and potential risks are of the utmost importance to community members who were present. Participants would like the Town to keep these concerns in mind moving forward.

➤ ***Aesthetics are a key value in Hillsborough, with many residents citing the Town's visual environment and character.***

SAMPLE WIRELESS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles were shared on Nov. 28. They reflect the values and beliefs that have guided the Town's current wireless standards, as well as feedback received over the past two years from community members.

PRINCIPLE #1

Minimize potential adverse impacts on the community

PRINCIPLE #2

Limit wireless site visibility and impacts to Town aesthetics

PRINCIPLE #3

Promote sufficient cell coverage for emergency needs

PRINCIPLE #4

Ensure that Town standards reflect local values while conforming to state and federal law

PRINCIPLE #5

Continue to engage the community through this process

Hillsborough is a beautiful community. Many residents expressed a desire to maintain elements of this beauty while considering potential wireless deployments. Aesthetic concerns related to Hillsborough's scenic landscapes and views were present in every table conversation. This is consistent with prior community input about Hillsborough's rural character and the integral role it plays in the community's identity. Related to aesthetics were conversations about the design of wireless facilities, questions about where facilities might be located and questions about how these locations are determined.

"If we don't come to our own solution one will be coming to us"

—Hillsborough resident

➤ ***Cell service throughout the Town can be improved and there is an opportunity to capitalize on this challenge.***

Many participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the current cell service available throughout different parts of Hillsborough. This sentiment was shared in four of the five table conversations. Frustrations with cell service were expressed in several directions: toward specific providers, that there is not currently adequate coverage, that some neighborhoods have substantially worse coverage than others, and that both call and data service is of low quality. This lack of service is a large challenge for many of the residents who participated in the meeting.

➤ ***Additional community engagement and input are needed as this process moves forward.***

Several participants asked for more opportunities for input and expressed their desire to see additional community members aware and involved. While expressing appreciation for the effort on November 28, some called for additional outreach in future sessions to increase attendance. Although a few dissenting opinions were expressed, it was also noted at numerous points that this situation creates a unique opportunity for the residents of Hillsborough to come together and celebrate the values that unite the community, while collaborating on potential solutions.

We should use the knowledge and experience that is readily available in the community

—Hillsborough resident

➤ ***What options do the Town and community have moving forward?***

There is still a lack of clarity for many community members related to the development of wireless facilities. Some of this is due to the highly technical aspects of the issue, for instance, what can be installed underground, which specific types of facilities will be proposed at what locations, and what is the lifespan for some of these facilities, to name a few. Confusion also comes from information that is still unfolding, such as pending court challenges to the FCC's order, and the changing nature of communication technology.

While the Town's current ordinance and municipal code have clear guidelines in place, new federal rules are requiring that changes be made. Engaging the community will be an ongoing effort that involves soliciting input and feedback from residents throughout the process. Hearing what is most important to community members and how they would like to see wireless needs addressed are essential feedback for the Town as it develops shared understanding of its options.

Next Steps

- Another community meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 13, 2018, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.** at the North Hillsborough School (545 Eucalyptus Ave.). During this meeting, presenters will share what was learned on November 28 and spend more time focusing on developing the Town's aesthetic standards for wireless deployments.
- As Hillsborough works together to develop a new wireless policy, the Town wants to hear from as many community members as possible. Please encourage your friends and neighbors to attend on December 13.
- To learn more and stay up to date with announcements and relevant information, please visit the Town's [Wireless Updates Page](#). While there, you can also download copies of the November 28 meeting materials, such as the PowerPoint presentation and background handout.
- If you have a question or concern that you would like to make sure we address, please email William Li at wli@hillsborough.net.

The screenshot shows the Hillsborough California website. The navigation menu includes Home, Engineering, Sewers, Storms & Streets, Water, and Site Tools. The main content area features a search bar and a sidebar with categories like Current Town Projects, Open Space Management, Parks, Public Bids & RFPs, Refuse & Recycling, and Trees. The main content area displays a breadcrumb trail: You Are Here: Home > Government > Departments > Public Works > Home > Wireless. Below this is the heading "Wireless Facilities Updates" and the sub-heading "The FCC 'Small Cell' Order". A "Public Meeting Schedule:" section lists "FCC'S 2018 SMALL CELL ORDER - COMMUNITY MEETINGS" and provides details for a meeting on December 13th from 6:00pm to 8:00pm at North Hillsborough School - 545 Eucalyptus Avenue. The text below the meeting details states: "During the meeting, we'll delve deeper into the Town's upcoming wireless policy and legislative changes, and offer additional opportunities for community input. We'll also review ideas, questions and concerns identified during the first..."

For updates and more information, visit hillsborough.net/482/Wireless