

WCAC Review
Proposed Modifications to WCF
Design Standards

City Manager's Report

Hillsborough City Council Meeting
January 13, 2020

WCAC Members & Meetings

Membership

Paul Regan, Chair
Eric Nyhus, Vice Chair
Maryellie Johnson
Thomas Fitzpatrick
Kelly Scandalios
Patrick Shannon
Victor Burns
Tal Simon
Paul Friedman
Steve Benzian
Gus Benz

Meetings

November 20, 2019
December 4, 2019
December 19, 2019
January 8, 2020

Key WCAC Topics

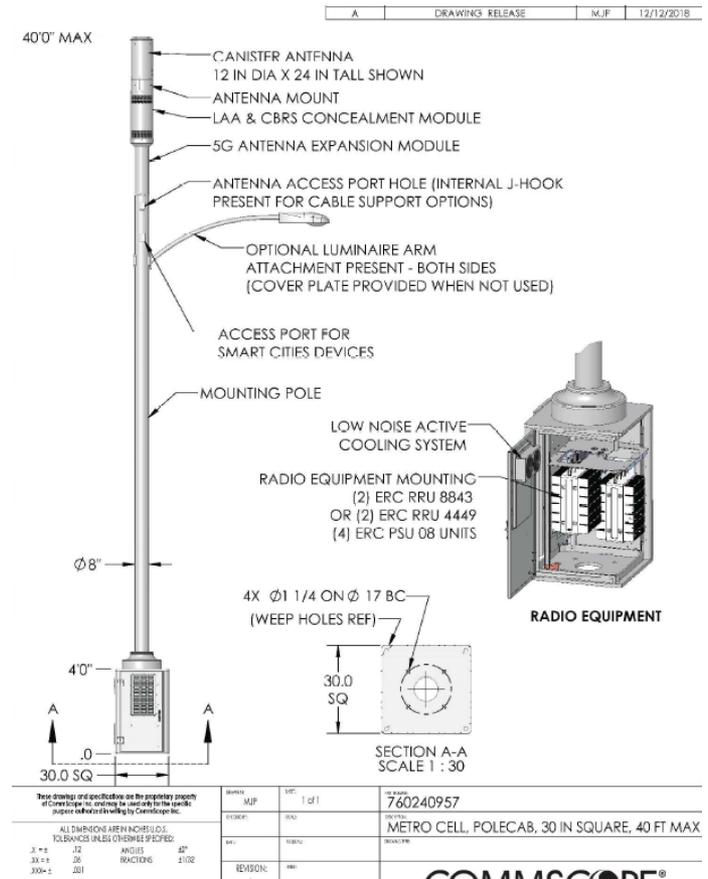
1. New Integrated Poles and Base Designs
2. Undergrounding and Vaults
3. Tree Replacement
4. Shrouds
5. Equipment Volume
6. Pole Heights
7. Setbacks from Intersections and Other Pathways
8. Setbacks from Residential Dwellings
9. Power and Metering
10. Concept Designs
11. Exceptions

1. New Integrated Poles and Base Designs

For new poles, the design standards favor integrated designs (designs where all the equipment is within the pole or the base) but the dimensions included in the standards were not consistent with available designs or PG&E restrictions.

Amendments would allow for slightly taller poles and slightly larger bases common in industry deployments.

Also would allow flexibility to permit different size designs, by permitting the Town to add “preferred concept designs” and case-by-case exceptions that may vary from strict requirements but still serve the aesthetic goals of the Town. (see discussion of Items 10 & 11 below).

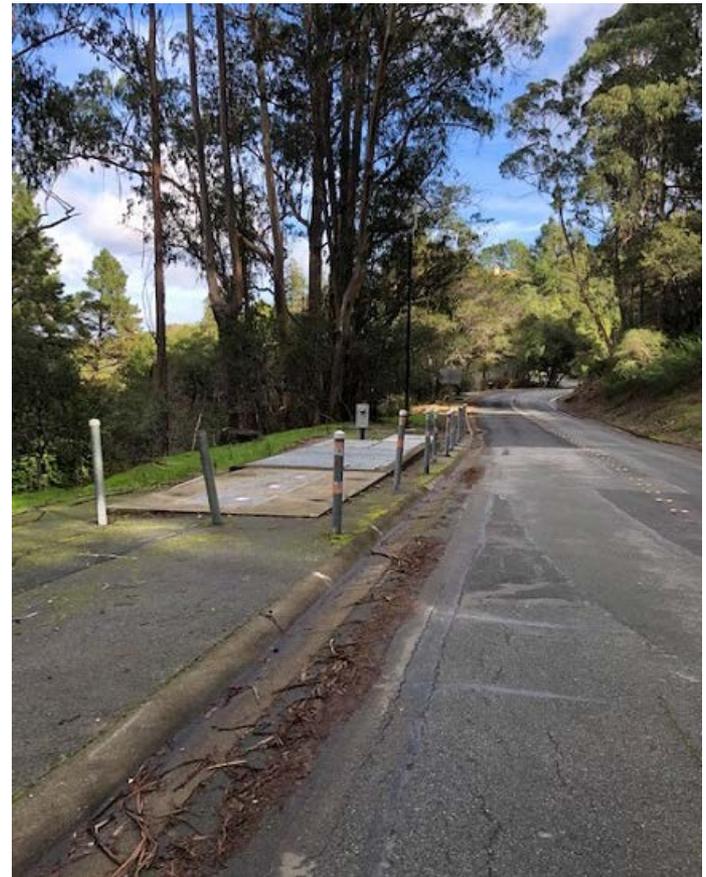


2. Undergrounding and Vaults

The Town has favored use of integrated designs, but as drafted, the design standards could be read to prohibit use of integrated designs in underground areas. There are also concerns about the feasibility and other impacts of vaulting which trade-offs can only be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Amendments would allow for an exception where the proposed integrated pole design meets the goals of the ordinance (minimizing visual impacts) and complies with the standards governing integrated facilities discussed above in Item 1.

A case-by-case exception would also be available based on a detailed feasibility assessment similar to that used in cities like Palo Alto and Sonoma (See CTC Report).



3. Tree Replacement

Trees are a vital and cherished feature of the Town. However, vaulting and other work can cause the removal or damage to trees and other vegetation. The standards had placed the responsibility for replacements on the applicant.

Amendments would require payment of a fee by the applicant to cover costs of replacement and maintenance for a 5 year period and allow the Town to perform the work. This was seen as a preferable to relying on applicants and enforcement mechanisms.

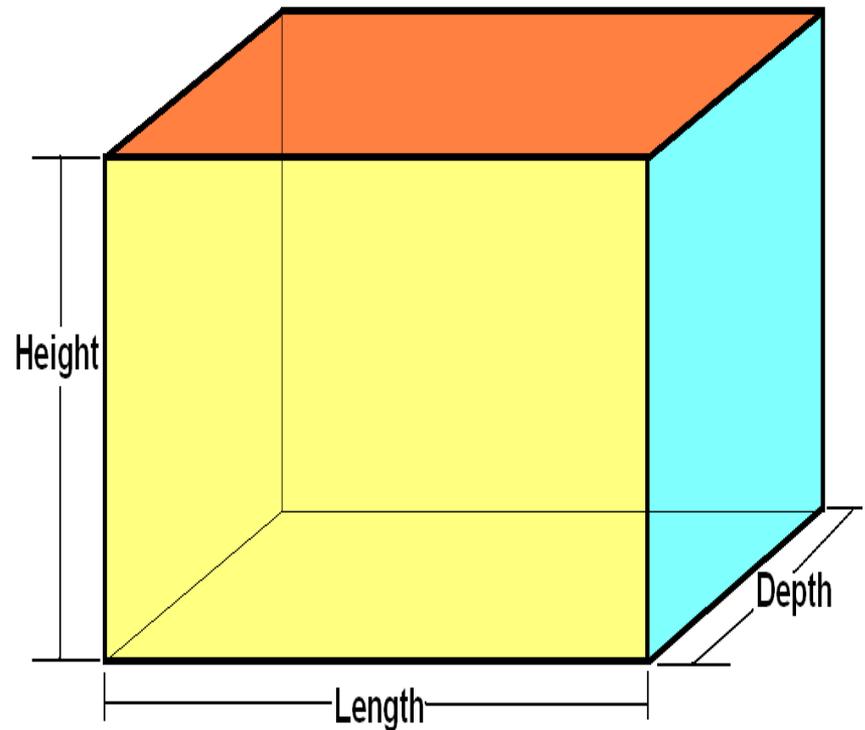


5. Equipment Volume

The FCC rules define a “small wireless facility” to include up to 28 cubic feet of equipment. However, the Town’s design standards limited the volume of equipment allowed to be added to pole or put in a cabinet to much smaller amounts.

Amendments would allow slightly larger volumes more common in industry deployments but still keep the allowed volume well below FCC limits. Exceptions to these limits would be allowed if that would avoid the need for a separate meter box.

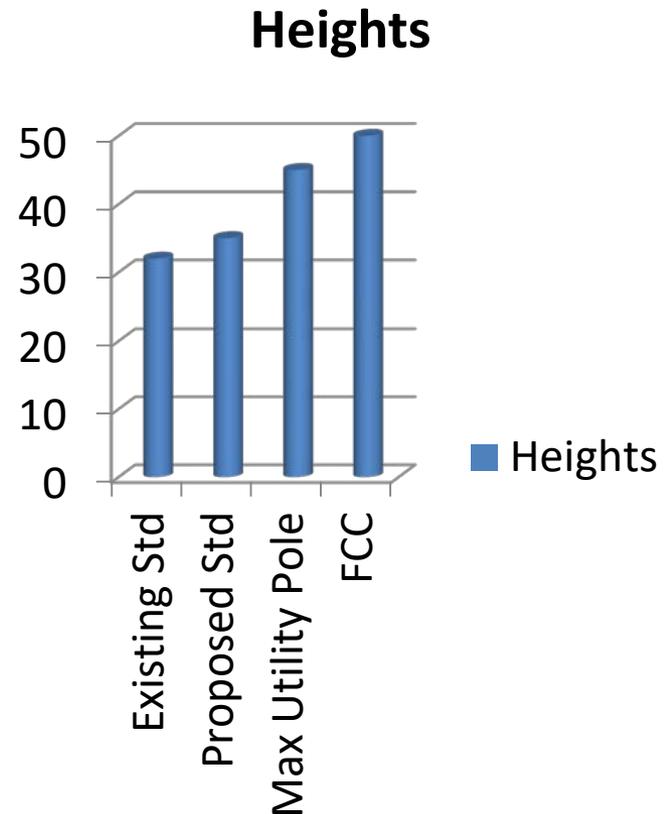
Amendments would also clarify that these limits do not apply to integrated poles which are regulated under other standards (see Item 1 above).



6. Pole Heights

The FCC rules define a “small wireless facility” to be up to 50 feet. However, the Town’s design standards limited the height of poles further.

Amendments would allow a slightly larger height for new integrated poles (35 feet vs. 32 feet) which matches the height of most utility poles in Town. For utility poles a maximum height of 45 feet would only be allowed for safety separation from power lines, recognizing that the Town favors “pole top” antenna designs.

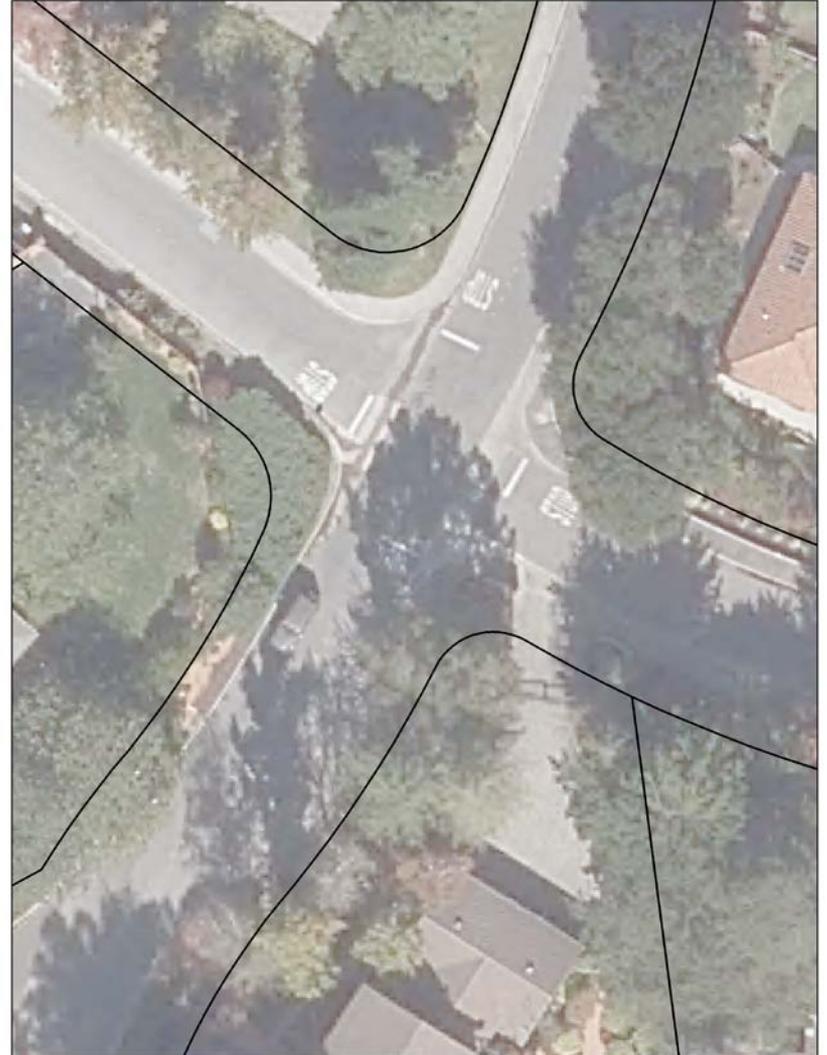


7. Setbacks from Intersections and Other Pathways

The Town's design standards imposed setbacks to limit visibility of sites from residential structures.

Amendments would maintain a 15 foot separation from the edge of alleyways, driveways and pedestrian pathways to residential structures but remove this limitation from road intersections.

Placements at road intersections tend not be as visible from residential structures and have the added benefit of potentially limiting the number of sites by allowing both streets to be served by the same facility.



8. Setbacks from Residential Dwellings

The Town's design standards imposed setbacks from front yards using an average setback formula to limit visibility of sites from residential structures.

Amendments would revise the standard to prohibit placements within the portion of the parcel's lot line that lines up with the primary residential dwelling (including attached garage).



9. Power and Metering

The Town's design standards banned standard meters. However, in some instances PG&E requires a standard meter.

Amendments maintain the clear preference for other options -- flat rate service (requiring no meter) and smart meters (which are smaller and often can be placed on the pole). Amendments would allow standard meters if the other options are not available and would require placement of the meter within the integrated base or cabinet rather than as a standalone meter box, even if that means the volume of the base or cabinet must exceed limits in the other standards (see Items 1 & 5 above).

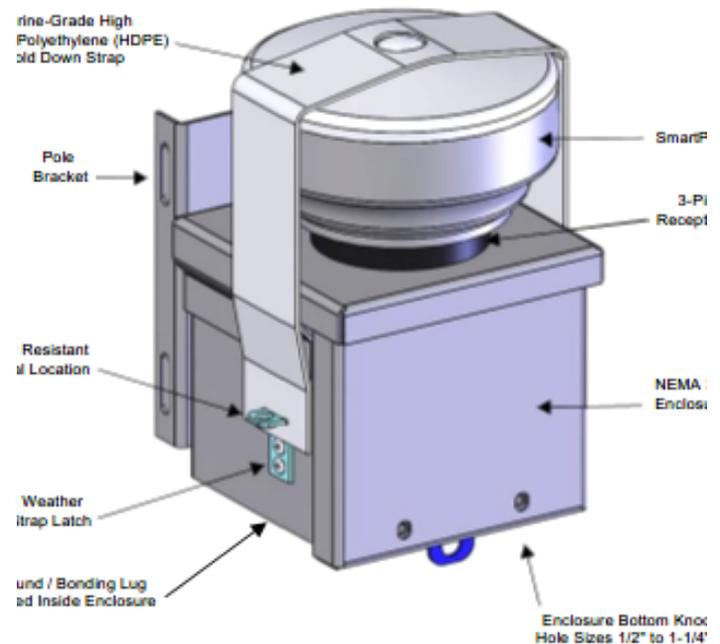


Figure 2
SmartPole Meter, Enclosure, and Pole Bracket

10. Concept Designs

The Town's design standards allowed for "pre-approved designs" but it was unclear how the provision would work in practice.

Amendments would clarify that "preferred concept designs" could be approved by the Town Council, and added to the design standards but applicants would still be required to go through the regular application process for approval of their use at specific locations.

Amendments would also allow for periodic review of the list of approved preferred concept designs by Council.

11. Exceptions

The Town's wireless ordinance allows for exceptions to the standards to be granted only where the applicant can demonstrate refusal to grant an exception would result in a violation of state or federal law such as an effective prohibition of personal wireless service (HMC 15.32.080(E)).

Amendments would add a second limited case-by-case exception process that would allow flexibility to approve applications with minor variations from the design standards in circumstances where the applicant demonstrates strict compliance with the standards would not be feasible, might result in more significant impacts than minor noncompliance, or the minor variation would not result in negative aesthetic impacts, for example a height variation might be allowed where the placement is in a location that would not be viewable from residences.

Next Steps

If Council so directs, the next step would be for the Town staff to develop specific language amendments to the Design Standards in consultation with the WCAC, and bring them to a future Council meeting for consideration.