

Exception: AT&T allowed to place cell antenna

BY JONI HUBRED
JHubred@oea.homecomm.net

Making an exception to a tough city ordinance, Farmington Hills officials have given AT&T Wireless Services, Inc. permission to hang a cellular antenna from a Detroit Edison power tower.

AT&T asked to piggy back on a Detroit Edison high-voltage transmission tower at I-275, east of Haggerty. The city planning office denied their initial request because the ordinance permits antennae to be attached to existing wireless transmission towers, cellular towers or water towers.

The interpretation of the city is that the Edison tower is not wireless; thus, they have requested the exception," Director of Planning Ed Gardiner explained.

However, council members unanimously supported the move, largely because of the requested location.

The tower will be set back from residential properties, as the ordinance requires. The nearest residentially zoned property is 11 Pine, an undeveloped, city-owned property at the corner of 11 Mile and Halsted roads, at least a half mile away, Gardiner added.

The tower would be higher than allowed under the ordinance, council member Barry Brickner pointed out. AT&T requested permission for a 118-foot tower, which is over the 110-foot limit. He expressed hesitation at "tearing a hole" in the ordinance.

"I don't mind, because it's a good place to be," Brickner added. "I don't know if it fits under the exceptions."

City attorney John Donohue said officials had looked at locating cellular antennas near electrical towers and determined there are practical difficulties with trying to work around the larger towers.

"When you're under a tower, you can only locate on top, because you can't build anything underneath," he said.

The additional tower would be hidden in plain view, because it looks like everything else on top of the existing structure, Donohue added. That's what council member Jerry Ellis liked best about it.

"This is wonderful," he said. "The eight feet don't bother me because it's on an existing tower. I have a feeling they're going up eight feet because of the wires."

AT&T is trying to provide the best service to its customers in the I-275/ I-96/ M-6/ Haggerty corridor, which she said is a high traffic area, said company spokeswoman Krysten M. Palco of Richard Conner Riley & Associates.

"We feel this proposal meets the spirit of the ordinance," Palco said.

Each tower can handle only a certain number of calls at a time, so the new site would increase capacity, she said. However, it would also provide seamless coverage to customers.

Council member Vicki Barnett said when the city's cell tower ordinance was drafted, amid intense public scrutiny, the technology wasn't as light as it is now and could have toppled even a large electrical structure.

"Those power towers are unattractive, and I don't think another tower on top will make them look any less attractive," she said. "We've talked about making amendments to our existing ordinance. This may be one."

OCC presents 'Moon over Buffalo' this weekend at Smith Theater

According to Murphy's Law of Live Theater, everything that can go wrong will, thus setting the stage for Oakland Community College's production of "Moon Over Buffalo."

Presented April 27 and 28 in the Smith Theater, the Ken Ludwig play focuses on the lives of the Hay family, as they produce two shows in repertory, Rosalind's classic tragedy "Cyrano de Bergerac" and Noel Coward's "Private Lives." The company is in deep financial trouble, and has been reduced to a laughably bad effort for "Cyrano," using a cast of five.

George Hay, played by Livonia resident Adam Organ, despairing that movies and television are drawing audiences away. But he and his wife, Charlotte, played by Danielle DeForge of Novi, see light at the end of the tunnel when they learn movie director Frank Capra is flying into town to attend their matinee, in hope of casting them as replacements for Ronald Coleman and Greer Garson in his latest film.

Their daughter Rosalind, played by Jackie Smith of Milford, arrives to introduce her fiancée, a star-struck television weatherman played by Frank Sabla of Farmington Hills. By accident, he also meets her former boyfriend, played by Leon Walker of West Bloomfield.

As in all farces, nothing goes as planned. Charlotte walks out on philandering George, after she discovers George had an affair with a starlet, Eileen, played by Stephanie Piquet of Wixom. Add the hard-of-hearing, yet opinionated mother Ethel, played by Clara Wright of Southfield, to the mix, and bedlam follows.

Under the direction of Jamie McDowell of Ann Arbor, the production is backed up by stage manager Sarah Darby of Wixom, Assistant Director Kelly Baumgartner of Royal Oak, Set Designer and Head Carpenter Joshua Collins of Oxford, Costumer Jill Organ of Livonia, Construction workers Richard Lynn of Bloomfield and Ken Alverson of Royal Oak, Sound and Technical Support Dan Walker and Jeremy Lovell both of Farmington Hills and Steven Bender of Farmington.

Show times both nights are 7:30 p.m. The theater is located on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College, off I-696 on Orchard Lake Road. Tickets priced at \$7 for adults and \$4 for students and seniors, are available at the box office the night of the show.

For reservations or more information, call 248-522-3667.

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