

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2020

Planning Commission Members in Attendance: Tate Locke, Steve Shea, Steve Schrock, Layne Brones, Tom Kay, Jacob Gray, Eli Wolcott, Dick Gilmore, Brett Hilling

Absent Members:

Planning Staff in Attendance: Community & Economic Development Director, Elyse Casselberry; Current Planning Manager, Kelly Yeager; Administrative Assistant, Vivian Archuleta C & E Dev Tech II, Kate Kelly (zoom)

Chairman Kay opened the meeting at 5:30 with introductions.

**Item #1: SD20-001 Young's Peak Digital Trunk Radio System
Delta County Emergency Management**

Mr. Yeager read the proposal:

The Applicant is applying for the installation of a Digital Trunked Radio System (DTRS) Radio Tower at the summit of Young's Peak, on Bureau of Land Management land in Crawford, Colorado. The communication site will necessitate the installation of a free-standing 60 ft. steel tower, an approximately 12' X 20' communications building to house electronic equipment, HVAC system and backup generator. Outside will be a 1,000 gallon propane tank for the emergency generator and security fencing around the site. The tower will have radio antennas as well as two four to six foot diameter microwave dishes for communication with other DTR sites, specifically the TV Hill DTR site on BLM land north of Paonia off Steven's Gulch Rd, Tank Hill in Austin and/or the Sheep's Knob site in Montrose County by Black Canyon. This project is a cooperation between Delta County and the State of Colorado Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT), Colorado Department of Transportation and the north Fork Ambulance Association. The land all buildings/equipment will be located entirely on land owned by the Bureau of Land Management. No part of this project will be installed on private property. The tower and all communication systems will become an asset of the State of Colorado once completed and is proposed to be built on an existing communications site on BLM land. The BLM has already completed an environment and other impact studies for the communication site to BLM land. The BLM issued a communication site lease for the tower to Delta County in February 2020 after an extensive review of the materials and proposal for this project. Presently, there are only three (3) DTRS 800Mhz public safety communications sites to service the roughly 1,148 square miles of Delta County. These sites are located in Delta at the Sheriff's Office, in Austin on Tank Hill and in Paonia on BLM land east of Steven's Gulch Rd on TV Hill (Tri-State Generation tower). These sites presently service all public safety personnel in Delta County as well as portions of Gunnison and Montrose counties. The location of these towers combined with the terrain of Delta County makes it so there is essentially no communications in and around the Town of Crawford, in both Delta and Montrose County. Current DTRS radio coverage is so poor, ambulance and fire crews often cannot contact dispatch via radio from their vehicles while sitting in the front of their station; and rarely does it work while responding to or on an emergency/call for service. This lack of reliable communications doesn't just affect EMS and fire; it also affects and creates a life-safety issue for deputies with Delta County Sheriff's Office, Montrose County Sheriff's Office and Gunnison County Sheriff's Office. The lack of radio coverage also affects troopers from the Colorado State Patrol, officers with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and law enforcement rangers with BLM when they cannot communicate with dispatch and other units. This radio site is essential to public safety because of the upcoming U.S. Highway 50 construction between mile markers 123 and 127 to straighten U.S. Highway 50 west of Blue Mesa Dam. This extensive highway construction project is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2021 and last through at least 2023. This construction project will require the full closure of U.S. Hwy 50 Monday through Friday except for a few hours, three times a day during the summer of 2021. During this time, all non-commercial vehicle traffic and commercial vehicles up to 40' in length will be routed via CO Hwy 92 over Black Mesa and through Crawford down to Delta. This scenic by-way is not normally a heavily traveled road and during the U.S. Hwy 50 construction project, will become a major artery connecting Gunnison and the rest of Western Colorado, increasing traffic exponentially. Emergency Management

officials and local public safety agency directors have already started conversations about the potential impacts this will have on EMS, fire and law enforcement resources, the extended response to this remote area and the current lack of communications in this corridor when an incident occurs. There is an existing access road to Young's Peak and an established right-of-way to the summit where communications sites presently exist. Young's Peak Trail, open to the public, is located on the southern slope and has been in existence for over 40+ years. As there is an existing access road, no new roads have to be built, however Delta County Road & Bridge will improve the access road to the summit so construction vehicles and maintenance trucks can easily access the equipment. There will be no adverse impacts on property owners/residents in the Town of Crawford. The only impact residents will notice is the addition of a new, taller tower on the summit of Young's Peak which will be visible from the surrounding areas. There is also a slight risk of rock fall and flash flood issues for the Town of Crawford. These natural hazards are existing and will not be increased or decreased by the placement of a communication on the summit. Road improvements may actually improve drainage on Young's Peak trail and reduce the threat of flash flooding to town. Access to the site is via Young's Peak Trail which is a BLM trail which starts at the Crawford Fire Department at Needle Rock Rd and traverses Young's Peak to the summit. No new access roads will be added. Road & Bridge will improve the access road which BLM has granted a 30' right-of-way for access to the site. This is a natural area and efforts will be taken to minimize erosion and runoff during road construction but overall the BLM land cannot be changed due to topography and protection of natural resource. The tower site at the summit is not expected to have any impact or cause runoff, storm water or erosion to the site. Mountain Radio Systems, Inc. the contractor who was awarded the bid for this project indicated in their proposal they can complete the project in 14 days after the road work and site prep is completed by the County Road & Bridge Department. We will allocate two months for construction of this project as OIT will need to set the building and install radios/wiring after the tower is constructed and Road & Bridge will need time to improve the road and do final site grading/BLM inspection.

Presentation by the applicant/representative:

Back in February, 2019, the state of Colorado announced through the office of Information Technology, that they were allocating 2 million dollars to counties to expand the public safety radio network in Colorado, which is the 800 DTRS System. That's what Delta County operates off of for our radios, for ambulance, fire & law enforcement. Presently, we have only 3 DTRS sites in Delta County. One here on the back of the Sherriff's office, one up on Tank Hill, in Austin & then one up on TV hill in Paonia by the old Bowie mine. They are supposed to cover 1500 square miles, canyons & open areas, so we have a bunch of dead spots across the county. One of our biggest dead spots in the county is around the Town of Crawford & out toward Montrose County, towards Gunnison County & to Crawford State park & Fruitland Mesa. One of the main reasons is because Crawford sits behind the hill & gets blocked by the mountain. My background with the County is, I've been with the Sherriff's Office for 9 years, I started on patrol & investigations before coming to Emergency Management. I also did 10 years on Crawford Ambulance with Ralph. So I know firsthand how the radio signals don't work up there. When the state said they would make the money available they would provide a backup generator but we need to provide the tower. We need to build a 60' free standing tower. Young's Peak is a designated a communication site, however it is not a tower that meets the specifications for public radio safety for the state as a tower for klove radio & kvnf & a few other others but it's 40' tower, built in 1984 I believe, is maxed out. A reason for another build of a new tower. OIT agreed that this would be the best spot to build the tower. We did an application with BLM mapping it & conducted geology impacts & factors & determined the tower was no risk & there is a signed lease with BLM that the commissioners signed. The lease includes the 60 foot tower, a 1000 gallon propane tank for emergency backup if the power goes out. A 12 X 24 foot building that will house the radio's equipment & there is a 6 foot security fence to keep people out & from climbing the tower. There will be no impact on air traffic. But that's an overview, ultimately it will improve our communications. I can answer any questions now.

Questions from Planning Commission Members:

Q: Will this help Delta too?

A: It will be mainly be the North Fork area.

Q: Will there be any others in this area put up?

A: We're waiting on legislation, we're waiting on that. The state has put in about \$4-500,000 to contribute to this & the tower itself will cost approximately \$108,000, CDOT has committed \$85,000 to fund it & the North Fork Ambulance Auxiliary has committed about \$85,000 to it. It's a multi-faceted project.

Q: Will it help McClure pass?

A: They make a network with microwave. It will tie into TV hill Tank hill & once that is in, it will be up to McClure pass.

Q: Have all of the conditions been met?

A: No, there are conditions to be met to finalize construction.

Q: You feel like they can all be met?

A: Yes

Q: Will you not know if there will be conflicting with existing signals? Will you have to have it up & operating to find out?

A: It will not interfere according to the state engineers

Q: Road improvements to improve drainage, has a report or erosion control study been done?

A: It hasn't been done, but I'm sure they are going to build a road up there.

Q: Will the road be up to standards?

A: No, it's a 2 track road basically.

Q: Does it wash out?

A: No, there's been erosion but nothing to wash it out.

Q: Is there security at this facility?

A: Yes, it is a state requirement. There will be sensors & alarms. We're trying to minimize our footprint. There will be a security fence as well.

Q: There is no public access?

A: No

Open Public Comment:

Proponents:

Scott Hawkins Montrose manager – This tower will benefit us regionally not just the area. I lost radio reception today & we work closely in the area regionally as well. It will benefit us very much.

Kathy Steckle – District manager for EMS, sere miles & have never had great radio service for the last 15 years. We are on our own in those dead spots. Also the cell phone service is not great so you don't have that for a backup. We serve all the way to mile marker. We are very supportive & connect to the North Fork & can't wait to have good communications

Connie Johnson – 911 Dispatcher Also Dan miller, president of the emergency management.

Mark Taylor – Delta County Sherriff – Officer & first responder safety. These spots particular in Crawford, it is a first responder/officer safety & appreciate the work that's been done.

Very supportive. The communications at Crawford Park are terrible. There has been many incidents that we've needed it & this has been going on for a long time. A land line is usually needed & this will help us tremendously

Ralph Clark – I've been bugging people for years to get this done. Occasionally you can get out but you really can't get out, it's patchy & it is very much a dead spot & the radios just don't work. They will be going through my land to do it & I'm happy to let them through.

Opponents: none

Public Comment Closed

Deliberations of the Planning Commission:

Motion: Steve Shea moves to recommend approval as presented with staff recommendations

**Second: Brett Hilling seconds the motion
Unanimous Ayes
8 votes**

To BoCC: July 15, 2020 @ 10:00 a.m.,

Item #2: Land Use Code update

Tomorrow night @5:30 there will be a virtual open house, being recorded & pushed out to social media. A walk through of the plan. Monday @ Delta, in our new conference room, Tuesday Hotchkiss @ Heritage Hall & Wednesday @ Cedaredge at the civic center.

There is a forum on the website to share a thread or comment, to track, organize & start discussions.

– There is a specific email for this deltacountylanduse@deltacounty.com

There will be a presentation, not Q&A. We can add to it if you see something that should be added.

For the next few meeting this will be on the agenda. Plan on what you think the key things to consider or change. So that when we bring it to you we can proactively bring it to light. I just want to make sure we have time at our meetings to go over this.

Item #3: New Business – n/a

Item #4: Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at: 6:22 pm

Respectfully submitted by:
Vivian Archuleta