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Bradley D. Belt

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:
Stephanie Tillerson

TOWN ATTORNEY:
Stafford J. McQuillin III



MAYOR PRO TEMPORE:
Russell A. Berner

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
E. Luke Farrell
Madeleine Kaye
Lance Spencer

**Town of Kiawah Island
INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
Council Chambers Meeting Room
May 1, 2025; 10:00 am**

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order:**
- II. Roll Call:**
- III. Citizens' Comments (Agenda Items Only):**
- IV. Approval of Minutes:**
 - A.** Minutes of the Infrastructure and Public Works meeting of April 3, 2025
- V. Old Business:**
 - A.** Cellular and Fiber to the Home Improvements Update
 - B.** Consideration of Hiring a Consultant to Explore the Purchase of Kiawah Island Utility
 - C.** Discussion on Franchise Fees
 - D.** Update on Mayor's List of Initiatives, Prioritize, and Assign Actions
- VI. New Business:**
 - A.** Recap of Meeting with Kiawah Island Utility
 - B.** Discussion on inviting Berkeley Electric to present at Jun I&PWC
 - C.** Bridge inspection and recommendations
 - D.** Vote on recommendation to Town Council and Planning Commission on zoning changes to allow improved cellular coverage
 - E.** Franchise fees update
- VII. Chairman's Updates:**
- VIII. Committee Members' Comments:**
- IX. Citizens' Comments:**
- X. Adjournment:**

Proposed Infrastructure & Public Works Committee Recommendation to Planning Commission and Town Council on Cellular Communications Coverage Improvements

Background/Problem Statement: There are issues affecting Kiawah cellular coverage for all three major national wireless communications providers. These issues include:

- Coverage gaps resulting in dropped calls or no signal
- Poor signal strength resulting coverage gaps and poor indoor coverage
- Slow data speeds making it difficult to download web pages and use more robust apps

These issues are both quality of life as well as public safety issues. Examples of public safety issues are potential inability to dial 911 in emergencies and that many public safety tools operate across cellular networks. Critical infrastructure such as power, water, and sewer communicate over cellular networks as well.

Discussion:

Members of the I&PWC committee along with Town Staff conducted a series of meetings over the last several months with the three major national wireless communications providers and the two primary tower companies on Kiawah to understand the current coverage provided, what if any limitations constrained them from providing better coverage, and possible solutions to improving coverage (the current Planning Commission Chair and a KICA rep also participated on many of those meetings).

All the providers and tower companies stated the primary limitations to coverage improvement are insufficient tower height to get all their radios above the tree canopy and the requirement for stealth radios which attenuate signal strength.

The I&PWC considered possible concerns about tower height and more visible non-stealth radios. Staff, the I&PWC Chair, and Planning Commission Chair also conducted site visits to evaluate increased height and non-stealth radios. One cell site (Sora Rail) is already 160' and does not seem to adversely affect the aesthetics. It is likely Kiawah will require three additional 150' towers at existing sites to provide needed coverage. The I&PWC believes the need for modern cellular communications for quality of life and public safety supercedes possible aesthetics concerns. The cell tower sites are primarily in remote locations and even the current towers above the tree canopy are not overly noticeable.

Recommendations:

- Amend Town zoning ordinances to allow up to three new 150' cellular towers
 - This was the unanimous recommendation from the wireless and tower providers
 - This allows up to 4 cellular providers on a tower at 120', 130', 140' and 150' levels. 10' vertical separation is required between provider radios. This also allows for a 4th emerging provider to be hosted and provider coverage.

- Note: cellular service is sold to consumers not only directly from the wireless provider but also through 3rd parties. Examples: Xfinity cellular uses the Verizon network, Cricket uses the AT&T network, and Mint Mobile uses the T-Mobile network. Dish is the emerging 4th national carrier and it is reasonable to expect them to need tower placement in the next several years. Allowing for this 4th carrier is an important capital consideration for the tower companies in determining willingness to invest in the new, taller towers.
- Amend Town zoning ordinances to no longer require stealth radios
 - Removing this constraint allows for stronger signals which increases coverage and data speed

Copy to:

Town Administrator
Public Works Director
Planning Director
Clerk