

ORIGINAL

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AN APPLICATION OF CENTURY CABLE
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION FOR A
CERTIFICATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL
COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC NEED
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A
COMMUNITY ANTENNA TELEVISION
TOWER IN THE TOWN OF EAST HADDAM,
CONNECTICUT.

CONNECTICUT SITING
COUNCIL

August 4, 1987

OPINION

Century Cable Management Corporation (Century), applied to the Connecticut Siting Council on March 26, 1987, for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the construction, maintenance, and operation of a community antenna television (CATV) head-end in the Town of East Haddam, Connecticut. The proposed head-end site would enable Century to provide CATV service to the towns of Old Lyme, Lyme, East Haddam, Salem, and that portion of Haddam situated east of the Connecticut River. The Town of Old Lyme and a portion of Lyme are the only towns in this franchise presently receiving CATV service. In addition to expanding the CATV service area, the proposed head-end would improve television picture quality and service reliability to Century Cable subscribers.

In its search for a head-end site in the East Haddam area, Century contacted five property owners; only one responded to the inquiry. An investigation of the property of the interested owner revealed the site to be one-half mile into the woods. Extensive tree removal would be required to facilitate satellite reception at this site, at considerable expense. Century therefore rejected this potential site.

The second highest point in East Haddam, Century's proposed site on Parker Road has an elevation of 590 feet above mean sea level. The proposed site is a 480-acre parcel containing two residences and a barn. Much of the property is used for cattle grazing and hay crops. The proposed site is zoned Two Acre Residential. Five other homes are located on Parker Road one-quarter to one-half mile to the north. The proposed site contains no wetlands or sensitive wildlife habitat. No rare or endangered species are known to inhabit the area.

Century's proposed head-end would consist of a tower, satellite dish, and equipment building. The proposed tower would be 300 feet in height, guyed, and marked and lighted under Federal Aviation Administration regulations. Twenty television and FM receive-only antennas would be mounted on the proposed tower. No transmitting antennas are planned.

At the location proposed by the applicant, the tower would be 440 feet from property owner's home (the nearest occupied residence), and within 300 feet of the property owner's barn. Due to the relative isolation of the site, no fencing around the tower base is planned.

Since the proposed 300-foot tower would match the highest ever approved by the Council, the Council had serious concerns as to whether this is the minimum height necessary. Century indicated that lowering the height of the tower to 250 feet would result in the loss of three television signals and a decrease in signal quality of three others. Century maintains 300 feet is the minimum tower height to provide the proposed CATV service quality.

A five-meter satellite dish, needed to receive signals from satellites, would be constructed near the base of the proposed tower. A 20-foot by 20-foot by 10-foot head-end building would be constructed nearby. This building would contain electronic signal processing equipment.

The upper portion of the proposed tower may be visible, through the trees, from some homes along Parker Road. However, the proposed tower would not be visible from most roads in the area, due to tree screening along these roads and their lower elevation and distance in relation to the proposed tower site.

At the location proposed by the applicant, however, the tower would be a significant feature of the view of the house of the property owner. This house, constructed in 1790, appears to possess local architectural and historical significance, according to the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The SHPO suggested that Century consider the feasibility of locating the proposed tower farther away from the house to lessen the tower's visual intrusion on the house. Century maintained that such a move is not possible, citing unspecified interference with use of the property for livestock and hay and with an access road for the tower.

Based on the record, there is a need for CATV service in the towns the proposed tower would serve, and members of the public who addressed the Council at its hearing expressed a keen desire for the extension of cable service. At the same time, the Council has serious concerns regarding the proximity of the proposed tower to the property owner's 197-year old house, and regrets the applicant's unresponsiveness to the concerns of the SHPO. The Council believes that consultations among the applicant, the property owner, and the SHPO might well identify a tower position that would reduce its visual intrusion on the house while avoiding interference with other

uses of the property. Because of the need for the CATV service the tower facility would provide, the Council concludes that its adverse impacts are not sufficient to deny the certificate. However, the Council will condition the Certificate on a requirement that the applicant provide the SHPO an opportunity to review and comment on the applicant's development and management plan. The Council trusts that this condition will cause the applicant to enter into consultations with the SHPO, and that all parties to the consultations will adopt a constructive attitude.

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