

# TOWN OF WASHINGTON

BRYAN MEMORIAL TOWN HALL  
POST OFFICE BOX 383  
WASHINGTON DEPOT, CONNECTICUT 06794

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## Pre-File Testimony

CONNECTICUT  
SITING COUNCIL

Susan Payne, Chairman, Conservation Commission of Town of Washington, Party to Docket 378

### **Personal Background of Susan Payne**

1. I reside at 35 South Street, Washington, CT, where I have lived since 1966.
2. I have been active in cultural resource preservation since the early 1970s:
  - a. I was the first chairperson (1976-1981) of the Town's Historic District Commission, established in 1976.
  - b. I was employed by the Institute of American Indian Studies (formerly named the American Indian Archaeological Institute) from 1976-1991; I served as its Executive Director for a number of years.
3. I have been an active land preservationist in Washington and the region for almost twenty years:
  - a. Board member of Steep Rock Land Trust 1991-2007; chairperson of its Land Acquisition Committee until 2007 and now serving as a committee member
  - b. Co-chairman of the Ad Hoc Conservation Committee (1995-2000) who produced the Town of Washington's Natural Resource Inventory Report and Recommendations (2000) and the Town's Open Space Plan (2003)
  - c. A member of the Town of Washington's Conservation Commission since its establishment in 2000 and chairperson since 2002
  - d. Board member of Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust since 2001; currently chairperson of its Land Acquisition Committee
  - e. Active participant in the Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative, a partnership of land trusts and community leaders committed to strengthening local conservation efforts and protecting more land of regional significance across Northwest Connecticut.
  - f. Development Director of the Roxbury Land Trust since 2002 where I guided the highly successful *Save Our Farms Campaign* that purchased 3 historic farms (800 acres) with matching grants from the State's Open Space Acquisition Fund.
4. **The Conservation Commission (CC) has had a Cell Tower Committee since 2001.**
  - a.. Since last fall CC has sought accurate technical information from SBA regarding the two proposed cell tower sites on the historic Tanner Farm, which is contiguous to the Washington town line on the town-designated scenic Rabbit Hill Road in a densely settled neighborhood.
  - b. At its April 1, 2009 regularly scheduled monthly meeting, the CC unanimously adopted the resolution to oppose Docket 387.
5. **Resolution of the Conservation Commission of the Town of Washington to oppose the Connecticut Siting Council application under Docket 378 on the grounds that the proposed facilities will have severe adverse environmental, agricultural and scenic impacts on an extensive natural and rural landscape of local, regional and State significance. Among the areas that will be impacted are:**
  - a. The 470-acre Meeker Swamp/Macricostas Preserve Ecosystem
  - b. Migratory paths, stopovers and habitats of state listed species
  - c. Headwaters of Bee Brook and Shepaug River located on Rabbit Hill, which flow into Meeker Swamp and the Macricostas Preserve.
  - d. The Town of Washington's largest aquifer is located below these proposed facilities

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- e. Critical habitat area as listed in the Town of Washington's Natural Resource Inventory.
- f. Site A is on 422a farmland on which the development rights have been sold and on which the construction of this type of structure and related outbuildings has been deemed to be a prohibited, commercial non-agricultural use by the Department of Agriculture.
- h. Connecticut Office of Policy and Management Preservation Area of Conservation Priority 2.
- i. Areas of Archaeological sensitivity researched by the Institute for American Indian Studies in 1986-1987.

## **6. Impact on the 370-acre Macricostas Preserve on RT 202 in Town of Washington:**

- a. In 1999 238 acres of Meeker Swamp were purchased in partnership with the Town (\$500,000/taxpayers' dollars), the State's Open Space Acquisition Fund (\$500,000 matching grant) +\$500,000 in private donations. It was determined that Steep Rock Land Trust should own the property because it had the staff and expertise to manage the property in conjunction with its contiguous permanently protected holdings.
- b. The 470-acre Macricostas Preserve that is highly visible on RT 202.
- c. The conservation values of the Macricostas Preserve include
  - o Protecting the Town's largest aquifer and wetlands which form the headwaters of Bee Brook, a tributary of the Shepaug River
  - o Protecting an extensive diversity of flora and fauna and state-listed species
  - o Protecting a sweeping natural, wild and traditional New England landscape
  - o Protecting a rural landscape with numerous historic houses and archaeological resources
  - o Protecting the rural character of the area (which is the top priority in the Town's 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development )
  - o Protecting Waramaug's Rock (elevation 1250 feet that provides 360 degree, uninterrupted, natural viewscape over Lake Waramaug, Washington, Warren, Kent and beyond)
  - o Providing some four miles of hiking trails open to the public

## **7. Summary – Request Denial of Docket 378**

Since the mandate of the Connecticut Siting Council is “balancing the need for adequate and reliable public utility services at the lowest reasonable cost to consumers with the need to protect the environment and ecology of the state and to minimize damage to scenic, historic, and recreational values” and to act in the best interests of the citizens of the State, the Conservation Commission maintains that either of the proposed sites will have a tremendous and far-reaching, negative impact on a. the environment and the rural, scenic and historic character of the area, b. the active, historic agricultural farmland, c. the grand and sweeping, scenic views from Macricostas Preserve on RT 202 (Pending application by the Conservation Commission with DOT for scenic road designation; DOT will attend the June 3 meeting of the Commission), d. from Jack's Corner and Rabbit Hill Roads in Warren, e. and from the magnificent Waramaug's Rock and the Pinnacle in Washington Depot to mention only a few, and on property values.

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Although we know that the FCC and, hence, the CSC are not concerned with adverse health impacts, there is an extensive body of scientific research that attests to the dangers of RF emissions. The proposed sites are in a densely settled neighborhood and not far from the Washington Montessori School on RT 202, to say nothing of the Tanner dairy farm. Therefore, on that basis alone, the Siting Council should deny the applications on the basis of the need for precaution.

Last but not least, we are not convinced that either of these proposed towers would improve cell tower service on RT 202 which is quite seamless at this time. In fact, the last tower site that was approved (2007) on Mountain Road in Washington seemed unnecessary at the time it was proposed because the chairman of the Siting Council was talking on his cell phone during the *site visit* of the Council. Therefore, we urge the Council to thoroughly investigate the claim that there is any gap in coverage on this application.

In conclusion, the Conservation Commission of the Town of Washington respectfully requests that the CT Siting Council deny Docket 378 and uphold its mandate *to protect the environment and ecology of the state and to minimize damage to scenic, historic, and recreational values* since the Commission believes there is adequate cell coverage along RT 202 with the existing 3 tower sites.

Signed,



Susan Payne, Chairperson  
Conservation Commission

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this day, an original and fifteen copies of the foregoing Susan Payne Pre-Filed Testimony on Docket 378 was served on the Connecticut Siting Council by first class mail, and a copy of same was sent postage prepaid to:

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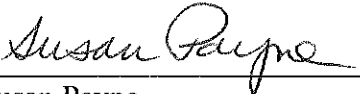
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Susan Payne

Date: May 14, 2009