

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** APRIL 17, 2020

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE  
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

**FROM:** HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF

**SUBJECT:** REVISIONS TO BAR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL POLICY FOR  
SMALL CELL WIRELESS FACILITIES

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At the April 22, 2020 virtual hearing staff will present a revised BAR administrative approval policy for *Small Cell Wireless Facilities on Utility Poles in the Right-Of-Way*, which was originally adopted in June 2019. Since the approval of the Board policy, state and federal laws have changed with respect to small cells and the policy must be updated to reflect current ordinance requirements. Staff's experiences applying the existing policy has also informed the proposed revisions. As with all administrative approval policies, failure to meet the requirements does not result in denial but rather requires that the applicant seek BAR approval at a public hearing.

Some aspects of the existing policy will be maintained, specifically related to color matching the small cell materials with the attached poles, the requirement that trees not be damaged and that the ground stays clear of encroachments, and that any unused poles are removed.

The following elements of the existing policy are proposed to change:

Pole height (formerly limited to a 10-foot increase from the current pole height)

For consistency with Federal, State and City laws and regulations, the maximum height of any replacement pole is 50 feet, and in certain limited locations that can be increased to 55 feet.

Antenna and small cell equipment volume (formerly 6 cubic feet for antennas)

For consistency with Federal, State and City laws and regulations the maximum volume of a small cell antenna is 3 cubic feet. All other equipment on the pole cannot exceed 28 cubic feet.

Pole material (formerly applied to wood poles only)

In addition to wood poles, metal and composite replacement poles may also be approved administratively, if they are replacing poles of the same or similar material.

Siting in front of important historic buildings

This requirement for administrative approval is intended to discourage the installation of small cell facilities in front of the City's most important historic buildings. Following the approval of this policy, staff will work on producing a Design Guideline for Small Cell Antennas. This document will help the wireless carriers make appropriate siting locations and will contain many of the same recommendations contained in the administrative approval policy. Staff will also produce a list of the City's most important historic resources so that their historic viewsheds can be maintained to the greatest extent possible. Most of these buildings are located within the portion of the Old & Historic Alexandria District where the utilities have been undergrounded and to date no new or modified fixtures in the right-of-way have been proposed.

Staff looks forward to any questions and feedback from the Board, as well as the public. Following that discussion staff looks forward to the Board's approval of the proposed revisions.