

TO: Board of Architectural Review, Alexandria, VA

DATE: February 15, 2021

REF: Board of Architectural Review (BAR) February 17, 2021:

Agenda Item #3: BAR #2020-00598 OHAD

Request to install small cell facility on a new standalone pole adjacent to 500 South Royal Street.

Applicant: Cellco Partnership dba Verizon Wireless

FROM: Paul R De Lay, MD, representing residents in the 500 Block of South Royal Street.

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SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED NEW SOUTH ROYAL UTILITY POLE

- We, the residents of 500 block S Royal Street, wish to acknowledge the changes that have recently been made in the proposed installation of a new utility pole on the north east corner of the 500 block of S Royal. These changes include replacing a proposed wooden utility pole with a decorative, black, metal pole, which is aesthetically more appealing and appropriate for the Old Town environment. We do note that in the first two pages of the supporting document, there is still mention of a wooden utility pole, rather than the metal decorative pole. We assume that this is an error due to the recently updated version of the proposal.
- However, we still question why there is a need for a new utility pole at this location. There is an existing utility pole on the north-east corner of Wilkes and S Royal that is approximately 40 feet away. There is also an existing utility pole approximately 300 feet south on the west side of S Royal, in front of the Departmental Progressive Club, that has already been approved for the mounting of a 5G Verizon antenna. It is unclear why we would need two Verizon 5G poles which are approximately 300 feet apart on the same block of S Royal St.
- In the latest version of the plans, it now appears that the proposed new utility pole and antenna array will access power and a communications connection through an underground source. Is this an accurate interpretation of the current plans?

BROADER QUESTIONS ON THE CITY-WIDE 5G CELLULAR SERVICE ROLL-OUT

- For the past 40 years, the City of Alexandria and the Old Town and Historic Districts have been trying to decrease the number of overhead lines and utility poles, in order to provide more reliable services during inclement weather and for overall aesthetics in a designated historical area. Why should this new 5G technology be allowed to violate

the longstanding City policy for decreasing utility poles and overhead lines? The new 5G technology seems regressive. 4G technology antennae have a range of 10 miles. The 5G antenna has a range of only 1000 feet and require “line of sight,” and close proximity between antennae, and high altitude positioning of the antenna.

- We have also been informed that the listed user of the new pole and antenna is Verizon and that no other providers (e.g. ATT) can use this pole. This would lead to an ongoing proliferation of utility poles, as each new provider enters the marketplace and needs a separate pole.
- We would recommend that the Board reconsider multiple aspects of this roll out plan for the new 5G technology. Has there been an estimation of the number of new poles that would likely be needed over the next three years. What is the likely longevity of this 5G technology? Wont follow-on technical upgrades (6G?) render this pole obsolete? Will the city then remove all of these poles? The negative outcomes of this plan far outweigh the proposed improvements of cellular service, which primarily is faster download speeds.