

Plan for cell tower draws ire

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middletown

Cell phone towers will go up anyway, so they might as well go on township land so the township can get the rents and hold down property tax increases, officials reasoned.

George Washington is still fighting battles, and he didn't have to cross the Delaware River for this one.

Middletown resident John Godzieba, a Bristol Township police lieutenant who portrays Washington in the annual re-enactment of the river crossing, skirmished with Middletown supervisors at a recent meeting about a proposed cell phone tower to be erected near his house.

The 100-foot tower is planned for a 5 acre piece of township-owned land just off Langhorne-Yardley Road. It will be on the same property where a new fire-rescue substation is nearing completion.

Middletown has contracted with a company called Tower One to find suitable sites within the township for cell phone towers, and the land off Langhorne-Yardley road was deemed a suitable site. Township officials would like the cell phone towers on township land "whenever appropriate," said Supervisors Chairman Chuck Thompson. That way, the township gets the rental fees from the tower.

The more revenue Middletown can get from sources like this, the more it can hold down property taxes for residents, even if just slightly, said Thompson and Supervisor Robert McMonagle. The township will get about \$50,000 a year in rent from the tower near Godzieba's house, said Thompson.

But the tower didn't sit well with Godzieba, who felt the township could have found a better place, like the Middletown Community Park about two miles north on Langhorne-Yardley Road.

"I knew about the agreement [with Tower One] but I didn't get any notice about this tower going up and I found out just before the meeting," said Godzieba. "Who wants to walk out of their house and see a 100-foot tower? This will decrease the value of my property from 12 to 20 percent."

Thompson said Tower One determined the land was the best place to provide reception for users of various cell phone carriers.

"I can understand John's concern, but it's a suitable location and if the tower is not built here, it will go somewhere else close by and the township won't get the money," said Thompson.

"The use of cell phones just keeps getting larger and larger and in my opinion, towers will go up everywhere," said McMonagle.

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