

From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Jesseka Rodriguez](#)
Subject: FW: Study Session Request
Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2025 3:26:37 PM
Attachments: [2025 Study Session Request.pdf](#)
[Old & New Code Crosswalk .pdf](#)

From: Julie Cahill [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 7, 2025 5:55 AM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Study Session Request

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Hello

I'd like to request a study session regarding code changes that were of no mention when presented to our board member during the staff summaries at two different meetings. One presented in the cross walk document that summarizes code modification, states the setback had NO CHANGE when it was changed from five times a cell tower height (in my neighboring case, 750 feet) to only 20 feet. This code along with a few others should be revisited to provide our rural residences with equal or greater protections as those in public view and residential neighborhoods in the city. In many areas of the County, RA and RR properties are virtually indistinguishable from R-1 properties and construction of tall towers in those zones are inconsistent with the residential character and existing height restrictions.

Please see attachments.

Thank you,
Julie Cahill

Existing Ordinance	Crosswalk	Proposed Ordinance
13.10.660 Regulations for the siting, design, and construction of wireless communication facilities.	Minor modification of title	13.10.660 Regulations for the siting, aesthetics, construction, and removal of wireless communication facilities
(A) Purpose.	Minor edit	13.10.660(A) Purpose
(B) Findings.	Delete	See 13.10.660(A) for statement of purpose of ordinance and see 13.10.661(C) for permit findings
(C) Applicability.	Delete	See 13.10.660(A) for statement regarding consistency with federal law
(D) Definitions.	Additions and deletions of various definitions as applicable	13.10.660(B) Definitions
(E) Exemptions.	Delete long list of exemptions and simply state that WCFs for personal, non-commercial use, or located on County property, or solely for public use are exempt	13.10.660(D)
13.10.661 General requirements for wireless communications facilities.		
(A) Required Permits.	No change	13.10.661(B)
(B) Prohibited Areas.		
(1) Prohibited Zoning Districts.	No change to zone districts. Add criteria for exceptions for small cell wireless, co-location, modifications, and general exceptions	13.10.660(C)(4)
(2) Prohibited Coastal Areas.	Modify to include additional requirements and criteria for exceptions	13.10.660(C)(5)

Existing Ordinance	Crosswalk	Proposed Ordinance
(3) Prohibited School Grounds.	Delete	All public facilities would be potential sites for WCFs. See 13.10.661(H)(3)
(4) Exceptions to Prohibited Areas Prohibition.	Delete	See 13.10.660(C)(4)(a) and (b)
(C) Restricted Areas.	Delete	See 13.10.660(C)(4)(a) and (b). Streamline ordinance to include prohibited areas with exception criteria
(D) Compliance with FCC Regulations.	No change	13.10.660(C)(1)
(E) Compliance with FAA Regulations.	No change	13.10.660(C)(3)
(F) Site Selection - Visual Impacts.	Clarify criteria for locating with respect to visual resources	13.10.660(E)(3) and (4)
(G) Co-Location.	Simplify and clarify co-location is required unless certain criteria are met	13.10.660(E)(1)
13.10.662 Application requirements for wireless communication facilities.		
(A) Preapplication Meeting.	No change	13.10.661(A)(2)
(B) Submittal Information - All Applications.	Eliminate detailed application requirements. A separate list of required information (LORI) will be prepared by staff	13.10.661(A)(3)
(C) Alternatives Analysis.	Eliminate detailed requirements in ordinance. Separate standards would be adopted by resolution of BOS.	13.10.661(E)
(D) On-Site Visual Demonstration Structures (Mock-Ups).	Simplify by providing discretion to staff regarding time, place, and manner	13.10.661(F)

Existing Ordinance	Crosswalk	Proposed Ordinance
(E) Amendment.	Delete	See 13.10.661(A)(3) for content of application for WCFs
(F) Technical Review.	Simplify by providing discretion to staff	13.10.661(G)
(G) Technical Feasibility.	Delete	Technical feasibility is addressed in various other sections including the LORI required by 13.10.661(A)(3), 13.10.661(E) Alternative Analysis, and 13.10.661(C) Findings
(H) Fees.	Delete	Fee requirements already established in SCCC 18.10.420 Fees
13.10.663 General development/performance standards for wireless communication facilities.		
(A) Site Location.		
(1) Visual Character of Site.	Simplify without diminishing standard	13.10.660(E)(4) and 13.10.660(F)(1)
(2) Co-Location.	Delete, repetitive	13.10.660(E)(1)
(3) Ridgeline Visual Impacts.	No change	13.10.660(E)(3)
(4) Site Disturbance.	Delete	Site disturbance addressed by other code sections including SCCC 16.22 Erosion Control, for example
(5) Exterior Lighting.	No change	See 13.10.660(F)(3)
(6) Aviation Safety.	Delete	Aviation safety is addressed by SCCC 13.12 Airport Combining Zone District
(7) Coastal Zone Considerations.	Modify to include additional requirements	See 13.10.660(C)(5)

Existing Ordinance	Crosswalk	Proposed Ordinance
	and criteria for exceptions	
(8) Consistency with Other County Land Use Regulations.	Delete	See 13.10.661(C)
(9) Visual Impacts to Neighboring Parcels and Public Schools.	Delete	See 13.10.660(E)(3) and (4), 13.10.660(F) and definition of visual impact in 13.10.660(B)
(10) Setbacks.	No change	13.10.660(E)(2)
(B) Design Review Criteria.		
(1) Nonflammable Materials.	No change	13.10.660(F)(2)
(2) Tower Type.	No change	13.10.660(F)(4)
(3) Support Facilities.	No change	13.10.660(F)(5)
(4) Exterior Finish.	No change	13.10.660(F)(2)
(5) Visual Impact Mitigation.	Delete	See 13.10.660(E)(3) and (4), 13.10.660(F)
(6) Height.	New height standards applicable specifically to WCFs including requirement to minimize height and exception criteria	13.10.660(G)(1) and (2)
(7) Lighting.	No change	13.10.660(F)(3)
(8) Roads and Parking.	Delete	Roads and parking address by other sections of the zoning ordinance
(9) Vegetation.	Delete	See 13.10.660(E)(3) and (4), 13.10.660(F)(1)

Existing Ordinance	Crosswalk	Proposed Ordinance
(10) Fire Prevention/Emergency Response.	No change	13.10.660(H)(1)
(11) Noise and Traffic.	No change	13.10.660(H)(2)
(12) Facility and Site Sharing (Co-Location).	Delete repetitive	See 13.10.660(E)(1)
(13) Coastal Zone Design Criteria.	Delete	See 13.10.660(C)(5) and existing SCCC 13.20.130
(14) Signage.	Delete	See 13.10.660(C)(2) requiring compliance with FCC regulations
(15) Existing Facilities.	Delete	See 13.10.663 Modifications to WCFs
(16) Approved Project.	Delete	See 13.10.661(D) Conditions of approval
(17) Ongoing Evaluation.	Delete, not a requirement	N/A
13.10.664 Non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation (NIER) safety and monitoring requirements for wireless communication facilities.		
(A) Public Health and Safety.	Simplify. LORI and conditions of approval would address RF emissions requirements	13.10.660(C)(2)
(B) Non-Ionizing Electromagnetic Radiation (NIER) Measurements.	Simplify. LORI and conditions of approval would address RF emissions requirements	13.10.660(C)(2)
13.10.665 Required findings for wireless communication facilities.		
(A) through (F)	Same findings except delete specific findings regarding compliance with FCC/CPUD and LCP	13.10.661(C)

Existing Ordinance	Crosswalk	Proposed Ordinance
13.10.666 Site restoration upon termination/abandonment of wireless communication facilities.		
(A) and (B)	No change	13.10.660(J)
13.10.667 Indemnification for wireless communication facilities.	No change	13.10.664
13.10.668 Telecommunications Act exception procedure.	Delete	See 13.10.660(C)(4)(a) and (b)
N/A	New section on administration of ordinance	13.10.660(I) Administration
N/A	New section specifically authorizing imposition of conditions of approval	13.10.661(D) Conditions of Approval
N/A	New section specifying WCFs subject to ministerial review (building permit only)	13.10.661(H) Ministerial review
N/A	New section requiring record keeping by permittee	13.10.661(H) Records
N/A	New section requiring permittee to pay attorney fees for County enforcement, if necessary	13.10.661(I) Attorneys Fees
N/A	New section addressing WCFs in the public right-of-way	13.10.662 WCFs in public rights-of-way
N/A	New section addresses Spectrum Act requirements for “eligible facilities requests”	13.10.663 Modifications to WCFs

Julie Cahill

120 Summit Drive
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Email: summitdr2020@gmail.com

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

County Government Center
701 Ocean Street, Room 525
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: Request for Study Session to Address Cell Tower Setback Codes and Related Issues

Dear Members of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

My name is Julie Cahill, and I reside in the Third District at 120 Summit Drive, Santa Cruz, CA 95060, in a rural residential neighborhood south of a proposed 150-foot cell tower site. I am writing to formally request a study session to address critical concerns regarding changes to county codes of the following topics: cell tower setbacks, notification processes, transparency in board decisions, and noise impacts. These issues directly affect the safety, quality of life, and fairness for residents in our county. In reviewing past meetings where these codes were voted on, there was no mention of the setback changing. Additionally the “crosswalk” document which provided a summary of all codes being deleted or changed, the topic of setback states NO CHANGE. This is a massive oversight on part of the county that needs to be addressed in addition to the following.

Key Issues for Study Session:**1. Setback Requirements**

The recent reduction of cell tower setback requirements from 5 times the tower height to only 20 feet. For a 150-foot tower, this reduced a 750 foot setback to only 20 feet. I propose:

- Setback Minimum: Setbacks should be no less than the tower height to ensure structures remain within property boundaries in case of collapse as not to block roads for emergency access. With earthquakes, fires and now tornados, we need to protect our emergency paths in and out of our rural neighborhoods.
- Buffer Zones: Maintain a 300-foot buffer as required in cities to preserve neighborhood character, unless the property owner has 10+ acres to provide adequate separation from man made structures that are commercial grade in scale.

2. Notification of Code Changes

Residents must be informed about code changes by mailers impacting current applications for permits and buildings in their neighborhoods. I recommend:

- Enhanced Notifications: Amend SCCC 18.10.116 to require notifying neighbors within 500 feet (or more if fewer than 10 properties are within range) of proposed changes affecting current applications.

3. Board Transparency

Transparency is essential for public trust. Significant code changes, such as drastic setback reductions, should not be buried in staff reports. I suggest:

- Highlighting Key Changes: Require staff to explicitly present all significant code changes during meetings.
- Recourse for Overlooked Changes: Provide mechanisms for review if there are oversights on substantial changes, such as setback reductions, are discovered post-vote.

4. Noise Impacts

Rural neighborhoods should not endure the ongoing operation of commercial-scale generators for wireless facilities. I propose:

- Noise Ordinance Adherence: Enforce SCCC 8.30 to limit generator operation to normal hours of operation of 7am-10pm.
- Additional Setbacks: Require greater distances for facilities with backup generators to mitigate noise pollution, particularly in areas prone to power outages.

5. Visual Screening Standards

Recent amendments to visual screening requirements raise concerns about adequate concealment. I recommend:

- Immediate Screening Measures: Reassess current standards to ensure new facilities are concealed from the outset, not reliant on vegetation maturing over decades.
- Use of Mature Vegetation: Reinstate requirements for mature trees or other effective methods to minimize visual impacts in residential areas.

Conclusion

The proposed cell tower site and recent code changes jeopardize public safety, equity, and quality of life in our community. Rural residential neighborhoods deserve the same protections as other areas of the county and city. I respectfully urge the Board of Supervisors to hold a study session to address these concerns and ensure county policies align with residents' safety and well-being.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. I am available to discuss further and provide additional documentation or testimony as needed.

Sincerely,

Julie Cahill