



Sarah Kenney &lt;skenny@barringtonhills-il.gov&gt;

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## VBH BOT FYI Zoning

1 message

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**Robert Kosin** <rkosin@barringtonhills-il.gov>  
To: Dolores Trandel <clerk@barringtonhills-il.gov>  
Cc: Sarah Kenney <skenny@barringtonhills-il.gov>

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County has little authority over cell towers  
By BRETT ROWLAND - [browland@nwherald.com](mailto:browland@nwherald.com)  
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[PHOTO] Marie Brand of Crystal Lake walks her dog Gizmo in her neighborhood near Wastewater Treatment Plant No. 2 where a 139-foot cellular tower that flies a 30 by 60-foot American flag Friday April 8, 2011. The tower will help lower Crystal Lake's water and sewer rates by nearly \$1 million over the next two decades. "It's a beautiful flag. I really love it," said Brand. (Hollyn Johnson - [hjohnson@nwherald.com](mailto:hjohnson@nwherald.com))

CRYSTAL LAKE – Complaints about a 200-foot-tall cellular tower right outside city limits prompted Crystal Lake leaders to request a temporary halt to building such towers in McHenry County.

The Crystal Lake City Council adopted a resolution last week asking the McHenry County Board to put a moratorium on cell tower construction until regulations can be added to protect neighboring property owners.

County officials have little control over cell tower placement but said they would consider the city's request.

The resolution came after a tower was built near the intersection of Walkup and Hillside roads in unincorporated McHenry County near the city's border, Crystal Lake Mayor Aaron Shepley said.

"Our goal is to encourage the county to take another look at its ordinance and see what they can do to include some type of vetting procedure," he said.

Nearby property owners weren't notified that the tower was going to be built and had no chance to voice their concerns, they said.

"I opened my door one day, and there was this monstrous tower," said Kevin Sarnwick, a professional photographer who lives near the tower. "There was no notice; it was just there."

The tower, he added, was an unsightly backdrop for outdoor photographs.

Oakwood Hills residents had similar complaints last year when a 192-foot cell tower was built on North Park Road just outside village limits in unincorporated McHenry County.

With increasing demand for the cell-phone service that such towers

provide, Crystal Lake City Council member Brett Hopkins said, the regulations should be addressed quickly.

The tower near the intersection of Walkup and Hillside roads is a "glaring example" of the kind that cause problems for the county and others, McHenry County Administrator Peter Austin said. He said the county would look into Crystal Lake's request.

Just how much the county will be able to do remains to be seen. McHenry County's ordinance governing cell towers closely mirrors state law. The law gives counties limited ability to regulate them, McHenry County Planning Director Dennis Sandquist said.

Municipalities, on the other hand, have much greater control. Had the tower been built within Crystal Lake, neighbors would have been notified and given a chance to weigh in on the proposal at a public hearing. And the property owner would have been required to obtain a special use permit from the city before building, Crystal Lake Planner Elizabeth Maxwell said.

Cell towers are allowed in all county zoning districts. The ordinance limits the height of the towers and how far they must be from other structures, Sandquist said.

The county might be able to add requirements alerting nearby property owners about plans to build cell towers. But even then, those who object wouldn't have any recourse to stop it, Sandquist said.

The Hillside tower stands in contrast to another one recently put up in Crystal Lake.

This 139-foot cellular tower disguised as a flagpole will help lower Crystal Lake's water and sewer rates by nearly \$1 million over the next two decades.

T-Mobile erected a tower earlier this year at Wastewater Treatment Plant No. 2, at the intersection of Dartmoor Drive and McHenry Avenue, with permission from the City Council. A 30-foot-by-60-foot American flag was added last week.

The city's lease agreement with the cellular service provider is expected to generate \$991,978.72 over the course of the 20-year deal to help offset costs at Crystal Lake's Water and Sewer Department. This, in turn, keeps the city's water and sewer rates low.

In Crystal Lake, the average monthly water and sewer bill – based on using 6,000 gallons a month – is \$37.14. That puts it among the lowest in McHenry County and the state, Deputy City Manager George Koczwara said.

The T-Mobile lease and 11 others are projected to bring Crystal Lake \$375,654 this fiscal year, Koczwara said.

In general, most cell-phone service providers looking to improve coverage within Crystal Lake are encouraged to use existing towers, Maxwell said.

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