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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: September 10, 2015  
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of a proposed data node in Byrd Park, 1401 Pump House Drive; UDC No. 2015-24**

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**I. APPLICANTS**

Barry Russell, Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities  
Jennifer Mullen, Roth Doner Jackson, PLC

**II. LOCATION**

Byrd Park, 1401 Pump House Drive

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of a proposed Verizon data node to be installed in Byrd Park.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This project is one in a series of five requests from Verizon Wireless to install data nodes in City parks. The City park sites were determined based on the high number of users of the sites. Data nodes are small antennas designed to increase data capacity in areas where people gather. They work with traditional cell towers to improve data and voice capacity and enhance the overall network.

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendation of the Urban Design Guidelines that “new telecommunication devices shall be located on existing infrastructure”, which is intended to reduce the proliferation of stand-alone telecommunications devices. In addition, Staff does not find the proposed antenna to be appreciably more intrusive than the light pole and equipment frame on which it is to be mounted. Staff notes that the City’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities have reviewed and approved the location and design. Therefore, it is Staff’s position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

**Staff Contact:**

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

Byrd Park is roughly bounded by the Downtown Expressway to the north, Hampton Street to the east, the James River and Kanawha Canal to the south and Blanton Avenue/Pump House Drive to the west. The 200 acre park is zoned R-2 (Single-family residential) and contains open spaces, three lakes, walking trails, tennis courts and baseball fields, gathering spaces and an amphitheater.

The amphitheater, known as Dogwood Dell, is the subject of this proposal, and hosts concert and theatrical events, the annual "Arts in the Park" festival, and a summer Festival of Arts. Byrd Park is listed on the Virginia and National Historic Registers.

The surrounding areas to the west and east are developed primarily with a mix of single-family detached and attached residential dwellings with some multi-family dwellings as well. Zoning designations include R-4 and R-5 (both Single-family residential), R-6 (Single-family attached residential) and R-53 (Multifamily residential).

**b. Scope of Review**

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as a "park".

**c. UDC Review History**

The Urban Design Committee has reviewed, and the Planning Commission approved, a number of projects in various locations in the park, including a concessions stand, improvements to the boat lake, and tennis courts.

**d. Project Description**

This project is one in a series of five requests from Verizon Wireless to install data nodes in City parks. The City park sites were determined based on the high number of users of the sites. Data nodes are small antennas designed to increase data capacity in areas where people gather. Per the applicant's report, data demand has increased exponentially over the last few years, doubling from 2012 to 2013; and is expected to increase 650% by 2018 as the number of uses for mobile devices and the number of devices increases. Data nodes work with traditional cell towers to improve data and voice capacity and enhance the overall network.

The proposed data node in Byrd Park is to be located on an existing metal light pole and equipment frame in the Dogwood Dell amphitheater. The existing light pole has a total height of 21' and the antenna, which would be mounted to the rear (non-stage) side of the pole would bring the overall height to 24.2'. The equipment will be located within the existing equipment frame on the pole. An electrical meter will be placed on an existing utility pole to the east of the amphitheater. An easement would need to be granted from the pole in the amphitheater to the utility pole, and then back to Park Drive (approximately 800') to allow for underground utilities and access. Wires from the road to the utility pole and from the utility pole to the light pole will be placed underground. Once they reach the light pole they will be routed up the outside of the pole, concealed in a collar that will be painted to match the existing pole. No existing vegetation will be removed in this configuration and no landscaping or screening is proposed.

All improvements will be paid for by Verizon Wireless, which will enter into a lease agreement with the City, to be approved by Council. Verizon will also provide a one-time fee of \$5,000 per site to the City Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities.

**e. Master Plan**

The park is located in the Near West Planning District, as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan places the subject area in the Public and Open Space use category, with primary uses including publicly owned and operated parks, recreation areas, open spaces, schools, libraries and other government facilities. There is no language in the Plan specific to the subject area.

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Urban Design Guidelines note that “whenever possible, new telecommunication devices shall be located on existing infrastructure” and that “telecommunication devices that are able to be co-located on existing towers are encouraged” (page 16). The Guidelines also state that “Impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements” (page 9). The Guidelines also note that “active parks should have adequate facilities (i.e. sports fields, trash receptacles, benches, running paths, etc.) to accommodate intended users” (page 9).

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**