

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ZONING COMMISSION
Carol Mitten, Chair

Testimony of Mary Rudolph
Greater Washington Board of Trade

At

Hearing on Proposed Zoning Text Amendments
Regarding Antennas, Antenna Towers and Monopoles

Thursday, October 17, 2002

6:30 pm

441 4th Street, N.W., - Suite 220
Washington, D.C.

Chairman Mitten, Members of the Commission, my name is Mary Rudolph and I am Director of Regional Government Affairs at the Greater Washington Board of Trade. The Board of Trade is a regional chamber of commerce with 1100 members from the business and non-profit community. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you this evening regarding the proposed zoning text amendments regarding antennas, antenna towers and monopoles.

I want to convey to you the concerns of members of The Greater Washington Board of Trade about certain aspects of the proposed text amendment before you tonight.

First, it is our understanding from a review of the recommendations and other materials we have obtained, that the initial objective was to address the location, size and impact of *broadcast towers*. While it may also be important to address issues surrounding antenna installations for wireless service, if the current regulations suggest a problem that must be resolved. Nevertheless, the two types of antennae are entirely distinct in character, appearance and impact on adjacent areas, and ought to be addressed separately so that concerns about one are not erroneously attributed to the other.

Second, it is our understanding that the Office of Planning included, at their request, representatives of the telecommunications industry in a review group to consider regulations related to broadcast towers and antenna towers. We are aware of no effort to include in the review group representatives of public safety agencies, regional entities concerned with emergency preparedness, or downtown or neighborhood businesses, many of which rely on wireless communication networks in their daily business. In our view, therefore, a number of critical issues may never have been addressed by those who would be most affected, or offered to this Commission to be weighed against the argument for any additional regulation.

We are concerned that the proposed changes could have an adverse affect on District of Columbia residents, on businesses and on employees who, in dramatically increasing numbers, rely on wireless phones in their everyday lives. Our understanding of the recommendations forwarded to this commission suggests that wireless providers will have to clear significantly higher regulatory

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hurdles to deploy wireless services throughout the city, but the recommendations do not suggest a rational justification for increasing the regulation of wireless antennae.

The Board of Trade, through its Potomac Conference, has participated with regional and federal governments as well as with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government, WMATA, the DC Hospital Association and other entities, to ensure that the full range of business resources and concerns are on the table in the process of emergency preparedness and response planning. Because of our participation with these various entities on this important topic, we are particularly aware of the extent to which the region's first responders and governments rely on wireless communications during and after an emergency. It is critical that this Commission extend to all of those entities an invitation to weigh in on any perceived impact that new regulations concerning wireless antenna might have on their planning and preparations.

We respectfully urge the Zoning Commission to set aside consideration of recommendations regarding wireless antenna until these issues have been cleared up.

I would be happy to try to answer any questions you might have regarding my testimony on behalf of the Board of Trade. And I thank you again for this opportunity to speak with you this evening.

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