



TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON

159 Pantigo Road
East Hampton, New York 11937

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Emergency Communications Upgrade in Springs

Better coverage in Springs for emergency fire and police communications, as well as for private wireless (cell phone) service, is a pressing need, and one that the East Hampton Town Board is working to address.

The installation of new emergency communications equipment in Springs is part of a \$12.5 million townwide emergency system update to replace an analog system with a new digital system. A pole holding the town's emergency communications equipment could provide the added benefit of allowing up to four personal wireless service carriers, such as Verizon or AT&T, to "co-locate" their equipment, helping to improve cell service in Springs.

After a thorough analysis of all town-owned properties in Springs, as well as other sites, an approximately 7-acre town property off Crandall and Norfolk Streets in Springs has been identified as a possible site for the town to erect an emergency communications pole and equipment.

Between legal restrictions on the use of properties that were purchased solely for preservation, technical requirements as far as location and the ability to link with other emergency communications towers to provide seamless coverage, and the like, the Crandall/ Norfolk Street property emerged as the viable site.

The 150-foot tower that currently stands at the Springs Fire Department is not adequate to hold the town's police and fire department emergency equipment, and does not have emergency communications equipment installed.

In addition, the fire district erected the tower without obtaining the required town site plan approval from the town Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, and there is a Supreme Court order declaring that it was erected illegally.

(A lawsuit filed by nearby residents concerned about the tower fall zone, which overshadows adjacent houses, resulted in a decision by the Town Zoning Board of Appeals to revoke the building permit for the tower. The fire district then sued the ZBA and the town over that decision. In May, 2020, a Supreme Court judge upheld the ZBA decision, finding that the tower was built without proper approvals.)

The Fire District tower cannot simply be “turned on,” both because it does not hold the emergency equipment, and because it is not legal to use -- and again, it cannot fulfill the need for better emergency communications as it cannot house the emergency system equipment. The fire district has submitted a new plan, for a higher, more substantial, 185-foot tower on another part of its property, to the Planning Board for approval and that is undergoing review, which could be a lengthy process.

However, even if approved, that tower would require some 30 variances from town regulations from the Zoning Board of Appeals in order to accommodate personal wireless service carriers.

The community has been calling for both reliable emergency communications and for improved cell phone service, which can also be crucial in emergencies. Immediate action is needed, and the Town has been searching for a way to move forward without delay

An exhaustive review was undertaken to identify potential locations for the pole and equipment that would provide coverage in Springs. Other properties were found to be unusable, either because of their location too far from the area where coverage is needed, as the tower needs to be situated in north-central Springs, or because of size constraints.

The proposed temporary, 100-foot pole, and 185-foot permanent pole and associated equipment would be placed in an area of approximately 100 X 100 feet (1/4 acre) on the 6.9 acres being considered, and the rest of the land would remain essentially untouched except for an access road.

As this proposal was only recently presented at a Town Board work session, public discussion on the proposal will continue, and the Board will continue to engage with residents while working toward a solution to this pressing communications need.

For more information, please see the other links provided – to an overview of the town emergency communications upgrade project; a timeline of actions to date, particularly in Springs and regarding the Springs Fire District; and to the detailed draft environmental assessment form (EAF) on the project, which includes information about the various alternatives that were considered, and more details about the current proposal.