

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deirdre Courtney-Batson, Chairman
Members of the Planning Board

FROM: John Stockbridge, HBPC Chairman

DATE: February 8, 2021

The Historic Building Preservation Commission would like to add to the ongoing discussions of cell tower plans our views concerning the optional location on Stone Hill Road.

In 2003, the Town enacted a Historic Building Preservation Law and created the Historic Building Preservation Commission to identify and protect historic structures in the Town of Bedford which are located outside the historic districts of Bedford Village and Katonah. Recognizing the vital contribution these structures make to the Town's historic character and cultural landscape, the law states: "The historical, archeological, architectural and cultural heritage of the Town is among the most important assets of the Town and that it should be preserved. Historic preservation offers residents of the Town a sense of orientation and civic identity, is fundamental to localized concern for the quality of life, and that produces numerous economic benefits to the Town." (Section 70-20). Furthermore, the Town's Comprehensive Plan, which preceded the creation of the Historic Preservation Law, notes that "The preservation of existing tree growth, stone walls, large horse farms and other features along main roads will be particularly important, since in driving through a town, one's impression of it is largely based on the appearances of its roadsides."

Historic properties located outside the Town's two historic districts are listed in the Town's Survey of Historic Buildings and have been classified into two categories according to historic and architectural significance: Tier 1 (Individually Significant) and Tier 2 (Contributing).

As a well-traveled passageway from Pound Ridge to Bedford since the 18th century, Stone Hill Road retains a special character for residents of both towns. 68 Stone Hill Road is situated in the heart of a highly historic and scenic neighborhood, with six Tier I properties on Stone Hill Road in close proximity (numbers 24, 89, 121, 169, 183 and 197 Stone Hill Road), as well as two Tier II properties nearby (81 and 136 Stone Hill Road). A number of Tier I and Tier II properties are located just around the corner on Old Post Road, as well.

It is the view of the Commission that a 150 foot tall cell tower and its associated infrastructure to be built in such a highly visible location, only fifty feet from the road and in the middle of a neighborhood with so many protected properties should not be approved. We understand that the Town is required by law to explore viable options to expand cell service coverage in this area and ultimately to find an acceptable location. We would prefer to not see a tall tower anywhere in the vicinity of Bedford Village, and respectfully request, that this particular option be given careful review. A cell tower in this location would clearly adversely impact a historically significant neighborhood with numerous properties that the Town and our Commission has worked very hard to protect. Given the relative intactness of Bedford's historic landscape in and around Bedford Village, we would also urge the Planning Board to vigorously explore alternative methods to tall cell towers for improving coverage in that area.