TOWN of COCHECTON PLANNING BOARD
September 3, 2026

The monthly meeting of the Town of Cochecton Planning Board was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Robert Smith.

Everyone in attendance recited the Pledge to the American Flag at the request of Chairman Robert Smith

A quorum was established. Planning Board members in attendance included Robert Smith, Jason Kraack, Jeff Neidert, Jeff Nober, Frank Kratz, and George Blaso. Brenda Farmiloe was absent. Attendees included: Gary Maas Town Supervisor, Darren Doetsch Town Engineer, Mike Attianese Chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals, Scott Olson, Allen Rolison, Chester Skiba, Pat Skiba, Jake Johnson, Frank Michalski, Barbara Jane Attianese, Michael Allison, Michael Pomes, Pete Grosser, Randall J. Lane, Rick Buddenhagen, and Peggy Richardson.

Jeff Nediert motioned to approve the minutes with changes. Seconded by Jeff Nober. The motion passed unanimously.

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PUBLIC HEARING Cell Co Verizon Application for the Cell Tower

The Chair asked all attendees to clearly state their name, established a 3-minute limit on all public speaking. The Chair asked the applicant to summarize the application. Scott Olsen representing Verizon explained that they have submitted an application for a special use permit and site plan for a monotower with a 12' access driveway which will lead to a 50 x 50 compound which will house their equipment. They do not use shelter for equipment anymore. Olsen is happy to review any details of the application, noting that service in the area is woefully insufficient. Provided certification from licensed engineer, confirming that the project will be less than 1% of the total allowed emissions. The limiting factor in the service is your cell phone; you can have an antennae but if the phone is not strong enough. As a courtesy, always provide use of the tower for emergency services rent free. Noted in the application are site projections for what will and will not be visible.

The Chair asked the board if they had any questions for the applicant. There being none, he opened the floor to the public.

Ryan Person posed a question for the applicant: "would you want a 150' tower across the street from your family?

Pat Skiba being a person who lives with medical implants, would like to know what effect this has on medical devices. Olsen replied that those implants and the towers are both regulated by the FCC. He does not know what frequencies the medical devices utilize but they will not be on frequencies near those used by the cell towers. Olsen noted that power lines are dramatically different from wireless signals from cell towers.

Jenna Sayers asked when does a conflict of interest arise when one entity denies an application and then for the benefit of the town, when you have members sitting on the boards and it will benefit the members of the town

Craig Fine stated that the tower was proposed to be on the fire company's property, it didn't meet the zoning and was denied. The town decided to contact Verizon and move the tower to their property. Jacob Billig, the Planning Board's attorney replied. Billig asked Craig to finish his points. Craig asked if a variance is needed here. Billig stated that each piece of property has its own limitations. Craig turned the question to the board, is there a variance needed. The Board stated yes and Craig asked how this is not a conflict of interest.

Gary Maas Supervisor, stated that the reason why the fire department site was not applicable, it was in the wrong district, didn't meet the setbacks in three of the four sides. The only variance on the property under consideration is 18' on one side. There is a significant difference between the two sites.

Mike Attianese, Chair of the Cochecton Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), stated that the initial application is still active. The applicant has another shot clock extension. That application was not denied but they have identified another property that has fewer conflicts.

Peggy Richardson, asked what is the elevation compared from the fire company property to Nearing Road, is there an advantage. Olsen replied that he doesn't know that off hand, my client just wants to provide service to an area that needs it. The prior application is still pending because we didn't want to give that up until this application had been considered. Our radio frequency engineer looked closely at all of the environmental factors but this site works perfectly fine for our engineer.

Billig, noted that the ZBA paperwork indicates that it would only be a 3% variance. The ZBA will have to analyze whether they meet the test for an area variance. He stated that he would guess that the ZBA may have granted a variance for other projects of that scale.

Frank Michalski, lives on Nearing Road, it will be right in my backyard. I would like to know if you could put a balloon test so that I can see how this will impact me. Michalski also asked if this will impact the value of his property. Olsen stated that court approved appraisers have evaluated multiple instances, in each instance the data says that after the installation the value does not reduce property values.

Billig stated that the Planning Board could supplement the visual test with a balloon test.

Ryan Hearston on Nearing Road. I have heard of cell phone towers can look like fake trees. Is that being considered? The problem is that it would look very out of place and would require it to be another 10 feet at least. Usually, they work if you are at 80-90 feet, really depends on your surrounding trees.

Frank Kratz noted that there is one looking like a tree at the Parksville Exit and he thinks a plain tower is preferable.

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Jeff Nober asked is 155' the height that you actually need. Olsen said yes and they can provide supplemental information from the RF Engineer

The Chair noted that this is very early in the process. The board has only just received this application. The public can come to the town hall and review the application during the town clerk's standard hours. The Planning Board discussed the possibility of a balloon test. Neidert asked what the time frame would be for that. Billig asked Olsen to describe how the test is conducted. Olsen stated they will provide a map with about a 2-mile radius and a view shed map. Olsen will propose angles to take pictures of and will float the balloon to the 159' height, people will drive around and take pictures within that 2-mile radius. Olsen would propose those locations. The board would have an opportunity to comment on those locations, so the board and the town engineer could review the proposal and add as you see fit to make whatever record you would make. Olsen stated they would welcome any recommendations from the board since the board will have keen insight. The applicant provides one set of pictures and a simulation using the balloon to superimpose the tower. Billig noted that the board would want to be thorough. Olsen would request being on the agenda for the next month, then would notify the town when the test is being scheduled.

Jeff Nober stated that with the balloon test, what it looks like in September will not be the same that it would look like in November or December. Olsen stated that assuming they will be before the board in October and would likely do the test in November. The town's code doesn't require it. Billig stated that the board could require it via SEQRA. Olsen noted that if its windy 10 miles or more or raining then it is rescheduled. They conduct the balloon test in the morning around 8:30 and it is usually up for 2-3 hours. The Chair asked the applicant to send all information to both the board and the town engineer.

Billig asked if the applicant can make the studies regarding property values part of the record.

George Blaso motioned to recess the public meeting until November. Jeff Nober seconded, there being no objections the meeting was recessed.

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GENERAL BUSINESS

BOYD LOT IMPROVEMENT

Mike Packer representing Vinny Boyd who is buying 14 acres from Alissa Salvato. She is selling all of the property behind her house, never reaches New Turnpike A. She will keep 4 acres. Both properties have a house, a septic and a driveway. The Chair noted that he had reviewed the map and the notes; asked if any of the board members wanted to review the notes. There are trails on the property; any time there is a trail on the property you need to include it in the event that there is an old easement. The Chair asked if the board had any objections. There being no objections, Jeff Neidert made a motion to approve. Frank Kratz seconded. The board supported the motion unanimously

COCHECTON PUMPHOUSE

Jack Johnson represents the landowner and is presenting on behalf of the applicant. The Chair stated that they have reviewed the site plan applicant. This enables the Planning Board the opportunity to

declare itself lead agency for the SEQRA review. Neidert made a motion to serve as the lead agency for the SEQRA review. Jason Kraack seconded. Nober asked for discussion, asked how long this process will take and wanted clarification as to why the ZBA would request the Planning Board to serve in this capacity. Billig explained the process, that the Planning Board can serve in this capacity for the Site Plan Review and then the Zoning Board can adopt the SEQRA review. Johnson noted that they have gone before the ZBA, had a public hearing. Billig stated that the only issue is that the site plan should meet the criteria of the code. Once that site plan meets the code, the board can act to approve the site plan and then the first step would be to conduct the SEQRA review. Billig noted that if the 35 items were done, then it could be presented for SEQRA review. The Chair noted that they would consider this a preliminary site plan review.

Billig summarized the process:

1. The applicant submits a complete site plan by Friday September 11
2. The Planning board can conduct SEQRA at the September 24th meeting. At that meeting the Planning Board could issue an approval for the site plan conditional on the variance.
3. The Zoning Board would then be able to accept its determination.

The motion to serve as lead agency was approved unanimously.

REMINDER: The next regular Planning Board Meeting will be held in conjunction with the public hearing on September 24, 2026.

There being no further business, the Planning Board Meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m. on motion made by George Blaso and seconded by Jeff Neidert. The board supported the motion unanimously without exception.

Respectfully submitted,
Tracy Broyles
Tracy Broyles, Clerk

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