

STATE OF CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
IN RE: SB-461 Siting Council Proceedings and Decisions
March 18, 2010

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 461

My name is June Lee, of the Easton Conservancy Trust.

The passage of Raised Bill 461 which significantly adds to "the considerations that the Siting Council must make before issuing a certificate of public need" would serve to prevent the siting of a cellular tower on Snow's Farm in Easton. Snow's Farm is a 19th century dairy farm with an application for State Registry for Historic Preservation pending. It is located in the heart of Easton's farming community on our main road.

Section 1, 2B of Raised Bill 461 states that "the councils decision shall be rendered in accordance...with a specification of every significant adverse effect...of the facilities impact on the natural environment, ecological balance, public health and safety, scenic, historic values and recreational values." It offers protection for areas that possess "scenic quality of local, regional or state-wide significance" and requires the council to "consider the latest technological options designed to minimize aesthetic and environmental effects." Easton is an excellent example of why this bill should be passed.

Easton is unique in that we have 5,000 people, 22 farms and no commercial zoning or development. We have one general store. We sell more Xmas trees than any town in Connecticut. The Xmas tree at Rockefeller Center was from Easton this year. A second generation apple orchard and farm, and a petting zoo, almost across the street from the proposed tower, receives over 200,000 thousand visitors each year. Our farms depend on tourist business for their survival and these farm businesses provide the only income for the town of Easton and its farmers. Easton is a watershed town with over one third of its land protected by the State of Connecticut, and is home to 2 reservoirs providing water to Fairfield County. We have no industrial areas and already have 2 cell towers.

We are a town fixated on preserving its rural, agricultural and historic heritage. It makes all its land use decisions taking these factors into consideration. We fear that the Siting Council process will leave Easton defaced by a structure that has no place in the dead center of our rural town, on our main thoroughfare. One site places the tower hanging over a 1912 barn built with a rare gambrel roof, looking like a gigantic and grotesque steel hat and in the backyard of a young family with a 2 year old child.

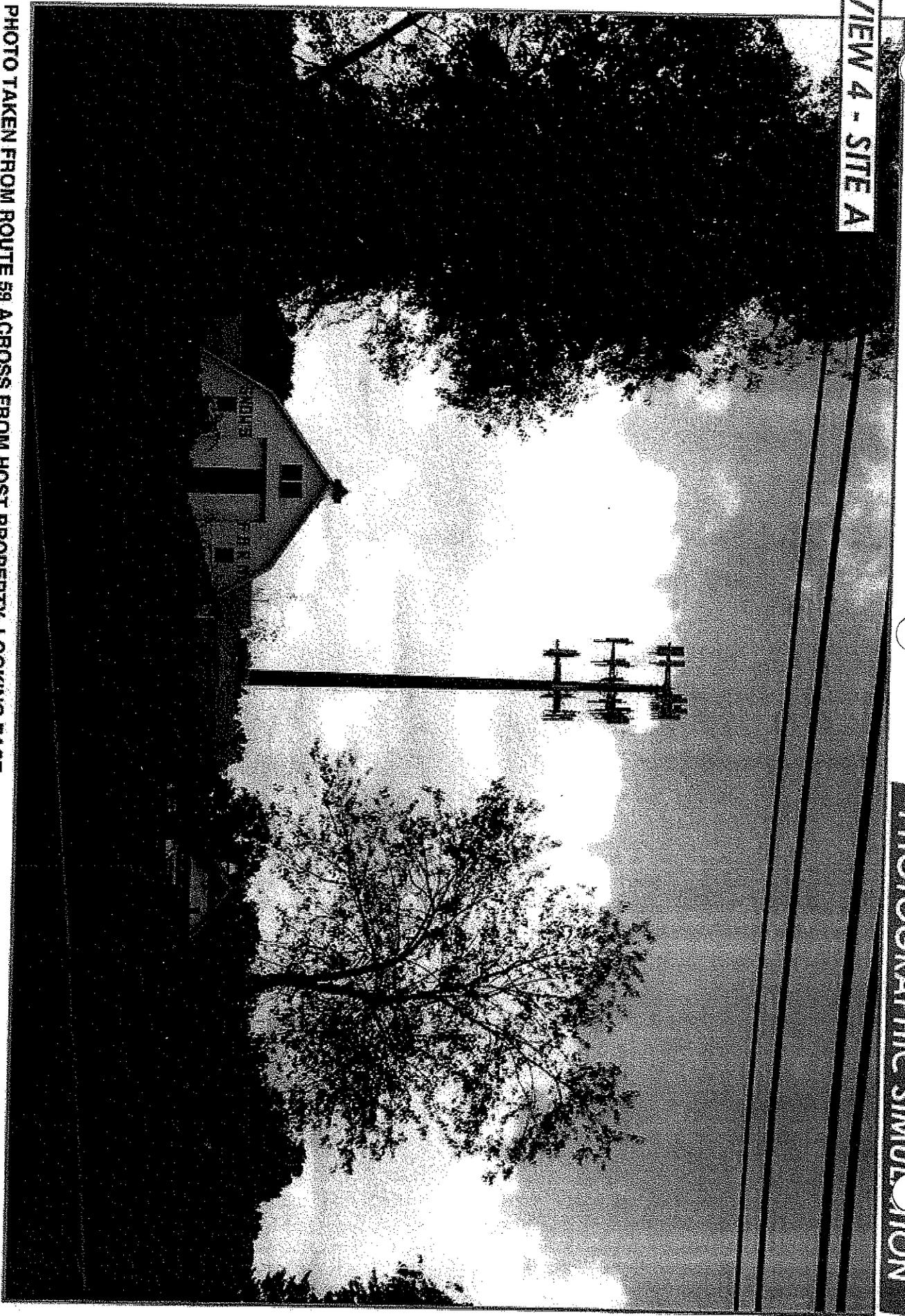
What is happening in Easton is wrong. As a result, townspeople are sacrificing their time, spending retirement funds, college funds and disposable income to pay for legal battles at the Connecticut Siting Council. We hope for a fair hearing, but the Siting Council appears not to appreciate the impact that towers have on the expectations of homeowners, who have come to believe that industrial facilities not be placed in residential neighborhoods. We have hired expensive lawyers and experts, taking extreme measures as intervenors because we fear an arbitrary, heartless, and binding decision by the Siting Council. That fear is based on our knowledge of the antagonistic nature of the Siting Council towards intervenors, and its decision record: for every 300 applications only 4 are denied. That record implies that cell tower companies are correct in the placement of these towers in 296 out of 300 cases.

I would like to thank the legislators who drafted this bill. You have demonstrated that you are listening to the people of Connecticut who are angry because there is nothing more basic and personal than the choice of one's neighborhood and town. Our right to live in the neighborhoods we chose is in jeopardy because of the nature of the present Siting Council process. Raised Bill 461, if enacted, will serve to require the Siting Council to protect that right. This bill will curtail the negative effects caused by the telecommunications industry acting in their own interests rather than those of Connecticut citizens, your constituents. The authority of a council whose unchecked power can alter our town irrevocably, to potentially destroy our agribusinesses, to devalue our homes and the social life of our town center deprives us of the rights reserved to us by Congress in the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

This problem in small towns in Connecticut is epidemic in nature. As legislators, you must know that Connecticut citizens are alarmed because they have no voice in this issue that most affects their lives. We want legislators who will speak for us to change the offensive laws, and specifically, the Siting Council process.

VIEW 4 - SITE A

PHOTOGRAPHIC SIMULATION



**PHOTO TAKEN FROM ROUTE 59 ACROSS FROM HOST PROPERTY, LOOKING EAST
DISTANCE FROM THE PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION TO SITE A IS 0.09 MILE +/-**