

STATE OF CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
IN RE: SB-6250 an Act Concerning the Siting Council  
February 3, 2011

Testimony Against SB-6250

I am June Lee, Chairperson of the Easton Conservancy Trust. We believe that SB-6250 will not effectively prevent the siting of a cellular tower on Snow's Farm in Easton, and furthermore, we believe that it will not serve to prevent inappropriate cellular tower sitings throughout Connecticut.

Easton is unique in that we have 8,000 residents, 22 farms and no commercial zoning or development. We have one general store. We sell more Christmas trees than any town in Connecticut and the Christmas tree selected for display at Rockefeller Center was grown in Easton last year. A second generation apple orchard and farm, and a petting zoo, adjacent to 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. **The historic and agrarian ambiance is essential for our farms tourist appeal and success.** Easton is a watershed town with over 1/3 of its land protected by the State of Connecticut, and is home to two reservoirs providing water to Fairfield County. We have no industrial areas.

Message Center Management (MCM), a cellular tower builder in Hartford, will apply to build a tower on four sites in Easton. Two of the proposed sites are at Snow's Farm, a 100-year old Dairy Farm with a Dairy Barn listed on the Connecticut Register for Historic Preservation in January of 2011. These sites are located in the heart of Easton's farming community on our main road. This rare and iconic barn is unique in that it is built within feet of our main thoroughfare and can be seen by tourists and residents alike. The second site applied for is on Snow's Farm as well. The tower would be sited between a private home and a church. In either location, the 165 ft. tower will stand with minimal cover on flat farmland along Sport Hill Road. If the tower were to be built on the second site it would be in full view of the historic Barn.

Knowing the potentially devastating effects of the construction of a cell tower at Snow's Dairy Farm financially, culturally, and environmentally, the Town of Easton proposed another parcel. Easton's Planning and Zoning Commission formally offered two sites on town owned property. These two sites at Veteran's field are located in a wooded, undeveloped area which would be mostly unseen by visitors to Easton. **Despite its damaging effects to Easton and the fact that the town owned sites would have a less significant impact, MCM will apply for four sites, specifically requesting to build a tower at Snow's Dairy Farm.**

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 Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) (Council) process will leave Easton defaced by a structure that will despoil a historic landmark and our town center, damage our agri-businesses, and diminish our tourism revenues and economy. As it stands, there is absolutely nothing Easton can do to prevent this. The Council has shown little regard for the well-being of residents and towns. SB-2650 is not the instrument to assist us in protecting our town from the faulty decisions of a centralized body unfamiliar and unyielding to the towns and cities of Connecticut.

## Discussion:

- **Setback:** A 750 foot setback stated in SB-6250 will not prevent the CT Siting Council (CSC) from placing cellular towers damagingly close to schools, residences and houses of worship.
- **The term “CONSIDER”:** The use of this term is not sufficient language to ensure that the CSC **abides by** critical factors in decision making. That body has been shown to ignore environmental, scenic, financial, cultural, and historic concerns by residents, schools, houses of worship, towns and cities. They have stated that they already “consider” these factors.
- **Town Siting Choice:** Give towns and cities the freedom and choice to control the siting of wireless communications towers within their borders, or allow the CSC to regulate if they choose not to. **We should use the available energy and local knowledge of 169 towns to personalize the tower siting process, not to obstruct the process, but to apply the depth of local knowledge the Connecticut Siting Council can never have to allow Connecticut citizens to choose how they want to provide for wireless service.** Local land use agencies are uniquely suited to site necessary towers. In Easton, the families of these officials have often resided in town for generations. They are expert at town geography, structures and issues affecting environmental needs. **Compare that knowledge with the CSC that visits tower locations for one hour and sites towers in towns totally unfamiliar to them.**
- **Uneven Playing Field:** Residents are not given adequate notice of proposed applications. Town hearings produce little or no helpful results to dissenters. Citizens, intervenors and their lawyers have a diminished role in the CSC process. Intervenors may not speak at CSC hearings. They describe bureaucratic and exclusionary treatment. Carriers use expensive lawyers skilled and practiced at dealing with the CSC. They have professional consultants with large staffs to prove their cases at the CSC. Individual citizens and intervenors are forced to pay with their time, large sums of hard-earned money and emotional reserves, using their limited resources to match wits and energy with Telecommunications giants. They must deal with a well-oiled machine at the Council. Carriers produce statistics with regard to tower needs that may or not be true and that ordinary citizens cannot dispute.
- **Site Selection:** Carriers select a local person in a selected town who will receive leasing income and chooses to infringe upon their neighborhoods, businesses, schools, houses of worship and towns in order lease their land for tower building. Telecom consultants ensure the sites are approvable. All too often, state agencies line-up with the findings of the carriers against intervenors. Local officials and whole neighborhoods are at the mercy of a system that ignores local zoning and wetlands regulations. AT&T or Verizon may pick a site that is harmful to the environment and the financial welfare of a small neighborhood. The people who will be most affected have neither the money nor the authority to dispute the experts or their conclusions.
- **Connecticut should conform to the procedures of the other 49 states:** Every other state in the country locates such towers in an equitable manner. We must bring Connecticut in line with the 49 other states. Local control of communications facilities is appropriate and may be accomplished in a sensible fashion. The Siting Council is overburdened with power plants such as Kleen Energy and electric utility transmission lines. There is no need to have them oversee the placement of cellular towers.
- **The Council does not appreciate the impact of towers on towns:** Townspeople and homeowners have come to reasonably expect that industrial facilities will not be placed in residential neighborhoods or scenic rural areas. Despite strenuous citizen and official opposition, the statistic that of 300 applications for towers, the CT Siting Council rejects only 4 (despite claims of structural modifications) indicates that they do not recognize the powerful and lasting impact of these decisions on CT citizens. **Conclusion: The Connecticut Siting Council has become so pro-utility infrastructure that they have simply overemphasized expediency over care for the rights of neighborhood homeowners.**