

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007**

**SESSION LAW 2007-526
SENATE BILL 831**

AN ACT STREAMLINING LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGULATION OF
WIRELESS FACILITIES AND WIRELESS SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND THE
COLLOCATION OF WIRELESS FACILITIES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Article 19 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 3E. Wireless Telecommunications Facilities.

"§ 160A-400.50. Purpose and compliance with federal law.

(a) The purpose of this section is to ensure the safe and efficient integration of facilities necessary for the provision of advanced wireless telecommunications services throughout the community and to ensure the ready availability of reliable wireless service to the public, government agencies, and first responders, with the intention of furthering the public safety and general welfare. The following standards shall apply to a city's actions, as a regulatory body, in the regulation of the placement, construction, or modification of a wireless communications facility.

(b) The placement, construction, or modification of wireless communications facilities shall be in conformity with the Federal Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. § 332 as amended, and in accordance with the rules promulgated by the Federal Communications Commission.

"§ 160A-400.51. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Part.

- (1) Antenna. – Communications equipment that transmits and receives electromagnetic radio signals used in the provision of all types of wireless communications services.
- (2) Application. – A formal request submitted to the city to construct or modify a wireless support structure or a wireless facility.
- (3) Building permit. – An official administrative authorization issued by the city prior to beginning construction consistent with the provisions of G.S. 160A-417.
- (4) Collocation. – The installation of new wireless facilities on previously-approved structures, including towers, buildings, utility poles, and water tanks.
- (5) Equipment enclosure. – An enclosed structure, cabinet, or shelter used to contain radio or other equipment necessary for the transmission or reception of wireless communication signals.

- (5a) Fall zone. – The area in which a wireless support structure may be expected to fall in the event of a structural failure, as measured by engineering standards.
- (6) Land development regulation. – Any ordinance enacted pursuant to this Part.
- (7) Search ring. – The area within which a wireless facility must be located in order to meet service objectives of the wireless service provider using the wireless facility or wireless support structure.
- (8) Utility pole. – A structure that is designed for and used to carry lines, cables, or wires for telephone, cable television, or electricity, or to provide lighting.
- (9) Wireless facility. – The set of equipment and network components, exclusive of the underlying support structure or tower, including antennas, transmitters, receivers base stations, power supplies, cabling, and associated equipment necessary to provide wireless data and telecommunications services to a discrete geographic area.
- (10) Wireless support structure. – A new or existing structure, such as a monopole, lattice tower, or guyed tower that is designed to support or capable of supporting wireless facilities. A utility pole is not a wireless support structure.

"§ 160A-400.52. Construction of wireless facilities and wireless support structures.

(a) A city may plan for and regulate the siting or modification of wireless support structures and wireless facilities in accordance with land development regulations and in conformity with this Part. Except as expressly stated, nothing in this Part shall limit a city from regulating applications to construct, modify, or maintain wireless support structures, or construct, modify, maintain, or collocate wireless facilities on a wireless support structure based on consideration of land use, public safety, and zoning considerations, including aesthetics, landscaping, structural design, setbacks, and fall zones, or State and local building code requirements, consistent with the provisions of federal law provided in G.S. 160A-400.50. For purposes of this Part, public safety shall not include requirements relating to radio frequency emissions of wireless facilities.

(b) Any person that proposes to construct or modify a wireless support structure or wireless facility within the planning and land-use jurisdiction of a city must do both of the following:

- (1) Submit a completed application with the necessary copies and attachments to the appropriate planning authority.
- (2) Comply with any local ordinances concerning land use and any applicable permitting processes.

(c) A city's review of an application for the placement, construction, or modification of a wireless facility or wireless support structure shall only address public safety, land development, or zoning issues. In reviewing an application, the city may not require information on or evaluate an applicant's business decisions about its designed service, customer demand for its service, or quality of its service to or from a particular area or site. In reviewing an application, the city may review the following:

- (1) Applicable public safety, land use, or zoning issues addressed in its adopted regulations, including aesthetics, landscaping, land-use based location priorities, structural design, setbacks, and fall zones.
- (2) Information or materials directly related to an identified public safety, land development, or zoning issue including evidence that no existing or previously approved structure can reasonably be used for the antenna placement instead of the construction of a new tower, that residential, historic, and designated scenic areas cannot be served from outside the area, or that the proposed height of a new tower or initial antenna placement or a proposed height increase of a modified tower, replacement tower, or collocation is necessary to provide the applicant's designed service.
- (3) A city may require applicants for new wireless facilities to evaluate the reasonable feasibility of collocating new antennas and equipment on an existing structure or structures within the applicant's search ring. Collocation on an existing structure is not reasonably feasible if collocation is technically or commercially impractical or the owner of the tower is unwilling to enter into a contract for such use at fair market value. Cities may require information necessary to determine whether collocation on existing structures is reasonably feasible.

(d) A collocation application entitled to streamlined processing under G.S. 160A-400.53 shall be deemed complete unless the city provides notice in writing to the applicant within 45 days of submission or within some other mutually agreed upon timeframe. The notice shall identify the deficiencies in the application which, if cured, would make the application complete. The application shall be deemed complete on resubmission if the additional materials cure the deficiencies identified.

(e) The city shall issue a written decision approving or denying an application within 45 days in the case of collocation applications entitled to streamlined processing under G.S. 160A-400.53 and within a reasonable period of time consistent with the issuance of other land-use permits in the case of other applications, each as measured from the time the application is deemed complete.

(f) A city may fix and charge an application fee, consulting fee, or other fee associated with the submission, review, processing, and approval of an application to site or modify wireless support structures or wireless facilities that is based on the costs of the services provided and does not exceed what is usual and customary for such services. Any charges or fees assessed by a city on account of an outside consultant shall be fixed in advance and incorporated into a permit or application fee and shall be based on the reasonable costs to be incurred by the city in connection with the regulatory review authorized under this section. The foregoing does not prohibit a city from imposing additional reasonable and cost based fees for costs incurred should an applicant amend its application. On request, the amount of the consultant charges incorporated into the permit or application fee shall be separately identified and disclosed to the applicant.

(g) The city may condition approval of an application for a new wireless support structure on the provision of documentation prior to the issuance of a building permit establishing the existence of one or more parties, including the owner of the wireless support structure, who intend to locate wireless facilities on the wireless support structure. A city shall not deny an initial land-use or zoning permit based on such documentation. A city may condition a permit on a requirement to construct facilities within a reasonable period of time, which shall be no less than 24 months.

(h) The city may not require the placement of wireless support structures or wireless facilities on city owned or leased property, but may develop a process to encourage the placement of wireless support structures or facilities on city owned or leased property, including an expedited approval process.

(i) This section shall not be construed to limit the provisions or requirements of any historic district or landmark regulation adopted pursuant to Part 3C of this Article.

"§ 160A-400.53. Collocation of wireless facilities.

(a) Applications for collocation entitled to streamlined processing under this section shall be reviewed for conformance with applicable site plan and building permit requirements but shall not otherwise be subject to zoning requirements, including design or placement requirements, or public hearing review.

(b) Applications for collocation of wireless facilities are entitled to streamlined processing if the addition of the additional wireless facility does not exceed the number of wireless facilities previously approved for the wireless support structure on which the collocation is proposed and meets all the requirements and conditions of the original approval. This provision applies to wireless support structures which are approved on or after December 1, 2007.

(c) The streamlined process set forth in subsection (a) of this section shall apply to all collocations, in addition to collocations qualified for streamlined processing under subsection (b) of this section, that meet the following requirements:

- (1) The collocation does not increase the overall height and width of the tower or wireless support structure to which the wireless facilities are to be attached.
- (2) The collocation does not increase the ground space area approved in the site plan for equipment enclosures and ancillary facilities.
- (3) The wireless facilities in the proposed collocation comply with applicable regulations, restrictions, or conditions, if any, applied to the initial wireless facilities placed on the tower or other wireless support structure.
- (4) The additional wireless facilities comply with all federal, State and local safety requirements.
- (5) The collocation does not exceed the applicable weight limits for the wireless support structure.

SECTION 2. Article 18 of Chapter 153A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 3B. Wireless Telecommunications Facilities.

"§ 153A-349.50. Purpose and compliance with federal law.

(a) Purpose. – The purpose of this section is to ensure the safe and efficient integration of facilities necessary for the provision of advanced wireless telecommunications services throughout the community and to ensure the ready availability of reliable wireless service to the public, government agencies, and first responders, with the intention of furthering the public safety and general welfare. The following standards shall apply to a county's actions, as a regulatory body, in the regulation of the placement, construction, or modification of a wireless communications facility.

(b) Compliance with the Federal Communications Act. – The placement, construction, or modification of wireless communications facilities shall be in conformity with the Federal Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. § 332 as amended, and in accordance with the rules promulgated by the Federal Communications Commission.

"§ 153A-349.51. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Part.

- (1) Antenna. – Communications equipment that transmits and receives electromagnetic radio signals used in the provision of all types of wireless communications services.
- (2) Application. – A formal request submitted to the county to construct or modify a wireless support structure or a wireless facility.
- (3) Building permit. – An official administrative authorization issued by the county prior to beginning construction consistent with the provisions of G.S. 153A-357.
- (4) Collocation. – The installation of new wireless facilities on previously-approved structures, including towers, buildings, utility poles, and water tanks.
- (5) Equipment enclosure. – An enclosed structure, cabinet, or shelter used to contain radio or other equipment necessary for the transmission or reception of wireless communication signals.
- (5a) Fall zone. – The area in which a wireless support structure may be expected to fall in the event of a structural failure, as measured by engineering standards.
- (6) Land development regulation. – Any ordinance enacted pursuant to this Part.
- (7) Search ring. – The area within which a wireless facility must be located in order to meet service objectives of the wireless service provider using the wireless facility or wireless support structure.
- (8) Utility pole. – A structure that is designed for and used to carry lines, cables, or wires for telephone, cable television, or electricity, or to provide lighting.
- (9) Wireless facility. – The set of equipment and network components, exclusive of the underlying support structure or tower, including antennas, transmitters, receivers base stations, power supplies, cabling, and associated equipment necessary to provide wireless data and telecommunications services to a discrete geographic area.

- (10) Wireless support structure. – A new or existing structure, such as a monopole, lattice tower, or guyed tower that is designed to support or capable of supporting wireless facilities. A utility pole is not a wireless support structure.

"§ 153A-349.52. Construction of wireless facilities and wireless support structures.

(a) A county may plan for and regulate the siting or modification of wireless support structures and wireless facilities in accordance with land development regulations and in conformity with this Part. Except as expressly stated, nothing in this Part shall limit a county from regulating applications to construct, modify, or maintain wireless support structures, or construct, modify, maintain, or collocate wireless facilities on a wireless support structure based on consideration of land use, public safety, and zoning considerations, including aesthetics, landscaping, structural design, setbacks, and fall zones, or State and local building code requirements, consistent with the provisions of federal law provided in G.S. 153A-349.50. For purposes of this Part, public safety shall not include requirements relating to radio frequency emissions of wireless facilities.

(b) Any person that proposes to construct or modify a wireless support structure or wireless facility within the planning and land-use jurisdiction of a county must do both of the following:

- (1) Submit a completed application with the necessary copies and attachments to the appropriate planning authority.
- (2) Comply with any local ordinances concerning land use and any applicable permitting processes.

(c) A county's review of an application for the placement, construction, or modification of a wireless facility or wireless support structure shall only address public safety, land development, or zoning issues. In reviewing an application, the county may not require information on or evaluate an applicant's business decisions about its designed service, customer demand for its service, or quality of its service to or from a particular area or site. In reviewing an application the county may review the following:

- (1) Applicable public safety, land use, or zoning issues addressed in its adopted regulations, including aesthetics, landscaping, land-use based location priorities, structural design, setbacks, and fall zones.
- (2) Information or materials directly related to an identified public safety, land development or zoning issue including evidence that no existing or previously approved structure can reasonably be used for the antenna placement instead of the construction of a new tower, that residential, historic, and designated scenic areas cannot be served from outside the area, or that the proposed height of a new tower or initial antenna placement or a proposed height increase of a modified tower, replacement tower, or collocation is necessary to provide the applicant's designed service.
- (3) A county may require applicants for new wireless facilities to evaluate the reasonable feasibility of collocating new antennas and equipment on an existing structure or structures within the applicant's search ring.

Collocation on an existing structure is not reasonably feasible if collocation is technically or commercially impractical or the owner of the tower is unwilling to enter into a contract for such use at fair market value. Counties may require information necessary to determine whether collocation on existing structures is reasonably feasible.

(d) A collocation application entitled to streamlined processing under G.S. 153A-349.53 shall be deemed complete unless the city provides notice in writing to the applicant within 45 days of submission or within some other mutually agreed upon timeframe. The notice shall identify the deficiencies in the application which, if cured, would make the application complete. The application shall be deemed complete on resubmission if the additional materials cure the deficiencies identified.

(e) The county shall issue a written decision approving or denying an application within 45 days in the case of collocation applications entitled to streamlined processing under G.S. 153A-349.53 and within a reasonable period of time consistent with the issuance of other land-use permits in the case of other applications, each as measured from the time the application is deemed complete.

(f) A county may fix and charge an application fee, consulting fee, or other fee associated with the submission, review, processing, and approval of an application to site or modify wireless support structures or wireless facilities that is based on the costs of the services provided and does not exceed what is usual and customary for such services. Any charges or fees assessed by a county on account of an outside consultant shall be fixed in advance and incorporated into a permit or application fee and shall be based on the reasonable costs to be incurred by the county in connection with the regulatory review authorized under this section. The foregoing does not prohibit a county from imposing additional reasonable and cost based fees for costs incurred should an applicant amend its application. On request, the amount of the consultant charges incorporated into the permit or application fee shall be separately identified and disclosed to the applicant.

(g) The county may condition approval of an application for a new wireless support structure on the provision of documentation prior to the issuance of a building permit establishing the existence of one or more parties, including the owner of the wireless support structure, who intend to locate wireless facilities on the wireless support structure. A county shall not deny an initial land-use or zoning permit based on such documentation. A county may condition a permit on a requirement to construct facilities within a reasonable period of time, which shall be no less than 24 months.

(h) The county may not require the placement of wireless support structures or wireless facilities on county owned or leased property, but may develop a process to encourage the placement of wireless support structures or facilities on county owned or leased property, including an expedited approval process.

(i) This section shall not be construed to limit the provisions or requirements of any historic district or landmark regulation adopted pursuant to Part 3C of this Article.

"§ 153A-349.53. Collocation of wireless facilities.

(a) Applications for collocation entitled to streamlined processing under this section shall be reviewed for conformance with applicable site plan and building permit requirements but shall not otherwise be subject to zoning requirements, including design or placement requirements, or public hearing review.

(b) Applications for collocation of wireless facilities are entitled to streamlined processing if the addition of the additional wireless facility does not exceed the number of wireless facilities previously approved for the wireless support structure on which the collocation is proposed and meets all the requirements and conditions of the original approval. This provision applies to wireless support structures which are approved on or after December 1, 2007.

(c) The streamlined process set forth in subsection (a) of this section shall apply to all collocations, in addition to collocations qualified for streamlined processing under subsection (b) of this section, that meet the following requirements:

- (1) The collocation does not increase the overall height and width of the tower or wireless support structure to which the wireless facilities are to be attached.
- (2) The collocation does not increase the ground space area approved in the site plan for equipment enclosures and ancillary facilities.
- (3) The wireless facilities in the proposed collocation comply with applicable regulations, restrictions, or conditions, if any, applied to the initial wireless facilities placed on the tower or other wireless support structure.
- (4) The additional wireless facilities comply with all federal, State, and local safety requirements.
- (5) The collocation does not exceed the applicable weight limits for the wireless support structure.

SECTION 3. If any provision of this act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the act which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to that end the provisions of this act are declared to be severable.

SECTION 4. This act becomes effective December 1, 2007.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 2nd day of August, 2007.

s/ Beverly E. Perdue
President of the Senate

s/ Joe Hackney
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley

Governor

Approved 11:35 a.m. this 31st day of August, 2007