

## Milestone Monopole Project at The Madeira School

### January 15<sup>th</sup> Community Meeting Summary

Milestone Towers (Milestone) hosted a community meeting at 6:30 pm on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at the McLean Community Center to discuss its proposed monopole at The Madeira School. Milestone sent five rounds of notices of the meeting on November 19<sup>th</sup>, November 28<sup>th</sup>, December 17<sup>th</sup>, January 5<sup>th</sup>, and January 10<sup>th</sup> to 294 Fairfax County property owners within an approximately 0.5-mile radius of the proposed location. 29 people signed-in at the meeting, notably including four representatives of the Madeira School; Nathalie Degraff of Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development; Robert Perito with the McLean Citizens Association; and Ben Wiles, Chief of Staff for the Dranesville District Supervisor's Office.

The project team included Matt Penning, Director of Development with Milestone; Andrew Petersohn, Radio Frequency Consulting Engineer with DBM Engineering; and Aaron Frank, Senior Land Use Planner with Cooley.

Milestone representatives gave a presentation that included topics such as the project objective, existing coverage gap, overview of proposed coverage improvement and coverage that would be provided with an alternative location, community outreach, regulatory review, updated photo simulations from the December balloon fly (limited visibility), and mitigation options (e.g., tree pole, paint application).

A summary of the comments discussed at the meeting and the responses provided by the project team are provided below. This summary is not intended to be a verbatim transcript or a chronological retelling of the meeting. For clarity and conciseness, similar questions and topics have been consolidated under common headings.

- Availability of Presentation Materials – An attendee asked if the notes and slides will be posted to the website.
  - Yes.
- Balloon Appearance – An attendee asked how much wider is the monopole than the balloon?
  - *The monopole structure tapers from six feet at the base to two feet in diameter at the top. The balloon is approximately five feet in diameter. Each carrier equipment antenna array is approximately 15 feet wide (equal to three balloons) and 8-10 feet tall.*
- Carriers on Monopole – An attendee asked if it is just Verizon on the monopole at this time? Can the monopole accommodate different carriers?
  - *Yes, although T-Mobile has already expressed interest in co-locating.*
  - *The monopole can accommodate up to four carriers.*

- Location – An attendee asked why the monopole is proposed at this location.
  - *This is based upon a variety of conditions including, overall coverage objectives, nearby terrain, site access and visibility from nearby communities and scenic byways. The monopole cannot be located on the northern portion of the Madeira School because it will no longer achieve the coverage objective (both for a rooftop and new monopole), as the northern location is near the Potomac River but separated far from Georgetown Pike and surrounding residential areas.*
- Mitigation – An attendee asked how the visibility of the monopole may be mitigated.
  - *In response to the comments at the prior community meeting, Milestone has offered to paint the monopole and antennas brown (this was discussed and shown in the presentation), such that it blends in with the tree branches during the few months of the year when it will be visible through the forest; or the monopole could be designed as a ‘monopine’ with faux branches atop the monopole to blend in with the forest. Milestone has previously reduced the height to 175’ from 195’. Any further reduction in height may not be achievable, as this will reduce the network performance of the monopole.*
  - *The proposed location is advantageous because it allows the monopole to be screened by surrounding tall trees. Reducing the height of the monopole further could compromise network performance due to tree obstructions.*
- Maryland/C&O Canal – An attendee asked if Milestone has spoken with representatives of Maryland, and whether the pole may be sited in Maryland.
  - *No. The distance is too far to meet the coverage objective for this to be located in Maryland.*
- DAS – An attendee asked if Verizon could add facilities onto the existing DAS (Distributed Antenna System) facilities along Georgetown Pike to supplement service.
  - *No, Verizon is already on the closest DAS facilities; the limiting factor is height, which necessitates a taller facility like the monopole proposed. The coverage map was reviewed and illustrates the limited coverage propagating from the DAS facilities.*
- An attendee asked if monopoles contain backup power, noting that the existing DAS facilities do not have backup power, causing service disruptions when there are power outages.

- *DAS facilities do not contain backup power whereas monopoles do contain backup power, providing an advantage of service reliability in the case of a power outage.*
- Satellite Cellular Service (Starlink) – An attendee asked if satellite-based cellular service would suffice in lieu of a monopole.
  - *Starlink is an emerging technology to transmit signal but it is not good at receiving signal and has capacity constraints; additionally service strength from Starlink is not robust enough to achieve the coverage objective and that technology will not be for the foreseeable future.*
- Wireless Coverage in surrounding area – Attendees offered differing opinions about the need for coverage; one attendee noted that they don't have a coverage issue, whereas others acknowledged that there is a coverage issue not only for Verizon but also for T-Mobile and AT&T.
  - *Andrew Petersohn reviewed the coverage map showing the existing coverage gaps and how an alternative location would not achieve carriers' coverage objectives which would include the Madeira School, surrounding neighborhoods and Georgetown Pike.*
- Coverage at Madeira – An attendee who resides in the area and also is a Madeira parent noted the lack of coverage at Madeira and the surrounding area.
- Alternative Sites – An attendee asked about consideration of alternative sites outside of Madeira.
  - *Given the desired coverage objective, there are no other properties within the search area surrounding Madeira of comparable size and with the amount of mature tree cover, only properties containing single family homes. Given that the coverage area includes Madeira and areas along Georgetown Pike east and west of Madeira, a monopole on Madeira best fit the coverage objective and is the best option in the area to screen the proposed tower facility from off-site properties.*
  - *Andrew Petersohn reviewed the slides showing the location of existing towers and DAS nodes in the surrounding area, noting that Verizon is already co-located on the closest facilities and adding additional equipment to existing infrastructure will not substantially improve or resolve existing coverage deficiencies in the desired area.*
- Alternative Sites – Multiple attendees commented that additional analysis was needed to demonstrate that this was the best location compared to other locations on the Madeira School property, with a few residents of Potomac Knolls Drive specifically noting they would prefer a location that was not visible from their street. They urged Milestone and Madeira to consider alternative locations

on the property and consider any future input from community members regarding the same.

- *The current location was chosen based on several factors including terrain, availability of access and utilities, campus compatibility, distance from the scenic byway and Potomac River, and the limited visibility from campus and off-site properties. The monopole cannot be located on the northern portion of the Madeira School because it will no longer achieve the coverage objective (both for a rooftop and new monopole), as the northern location is near the Potomac River but a greater distance from key coverage objectives.*
- *Madeira personnel noted that much of the campus is precluded from development due to steep slopes and challenging terrain*
- *Madeira and the applicant team committed to further review and consideration of potential alternatives on the Madeira property, and that interested residents could contact the applicant team to further review alternative sites and request access to the subject property if necessary for evaluation.*
- Public Use – An attendee thanked Madeira for accommodating a public use on its site, given the need for improved service and limited locations where to install infrastructure.
- FAA Determination - An attendee asked if the FAA is able to change its determination, and the likelihood of that occurring to require the monopole to be lit or reduced in height.
  - *FAA issued a determination of no-hazard for this project, noting that marking/lighting is not required to maintain safe airspace navigation. The applicant team has not experienced the FAA changing its determination and is it not expected to occur based on experience in the industry unless there is a change in location/height (which will require a new application filing with FAA). In general, once a determination is issued the FAA works around existing/proposed infrastructure when planning for aviation safety.*
- Georgetown Pike – An attendee commented that maybe the tower should be more visible from Georgetown Pike than from Potomac Knolls.
  - *The intent of the monopole siting is to limit visibility from all areas, including surrounding residential uses (both in Potomac Knolls and south of Georgetown Pike) and the general public on and across from Georgetown Pike.*
- Photosims from Private Property - An attendee showed photographs that he took from his property of the balloon fly (with the cell tower simulated) and asked if

these could be uploaded to the project website. Another attendee noted that they believed the provided renderings and photos did not provide an accurate representation of the balloon and proposed structure.

- *Yes, the photos will be added to the project website.*
- Next Steps – An attendee asked what are the next steps. Another asked for the approximate timeframe for the project.
  - *The feedback from the meeting will be reviewed and considered; Milestone will remain open and available to discuss the project with any interested parties. A copy of the meeting summary and presentation will be made available on the project website and emailed to attendees who left their contact information. The website will remain current with any future meeting dates and application information once an application is filed.*
  - *The development timeline was estimated at around 16 months, accounting for about 8 months for zoning and another 6 months for the site plan/permitting process. Construction typically takes around 2 months.*