



**Zoning Board of Adjustment  
Town of Eaton  
Evans Memorial Building  
Eaton, NH 03832**

---

April 21, 2025

The Zoning Board of Adjustment met on Monday, April 21, 2025, at the Town Hall. Present were Chairman Steve Larson, John Border, Pam Burns, Mark Griffin, and Hoke Wilson. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

**Minutes**

The Board reviewed the Minutes from March 17, 2025. ***Pam Burns made a motion to waive a reading of the Minutes, seconded by John Border. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Chairman Steve Larson made two corrections to the minutes. Chairman Steve Larson made a motion to adopt the corrected Minutes, seconded by Pam Burns. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.***

Chairman Steve Larson read the Public Notice and gave an overview of the procedure for Public Hearings.

**Case #202501 Vertex Cell Tower Proposal**

At 6:25 pm Chairman Larson opened the Public Hearing on an application from Vertex. Vertex is proposing a cell phone tower installation on land owned by John Edge Jr. (R03-009) on Ridge Road. Vertex is seeking relief from the following Variances:

- Article VIII, Section E.A. of the Town of Eaton Zoning Ordinances, which limits the height of a cell phone tower.
- Article VIII, Section F.M.2 of the Town of Eaton Zoning Ordinances, which specifies the type of mount for a cell phone tower installation.

All notices required by statute have been posted, abutters notified, and all fees paid. There were no conflicts of interest. The Board received five letters from residents, one letter from Vertex Towers, and one petition. The letters were read aloud, with three letters expressing support for the cell phone tower, and two letters against the tower. The petition contained forty signatures in support of the tower.

**Public Comment**

Thaire Bryant spoke about his experience serving as Emergency Management Director for the Town, and his observations of the need for cell phone service for the safety of the residents of Eaton. Mr. Bryant stated that he thinks any cell coverage is better than having none. Mr. Bryant also stated that one of the biggest safety concerns to the Town is the transportation of hazardous materials on Route 153, and having cell phone service available is extremely important in the event of an accident.

John Hedden stated there is no doubt Eaton needs cell coverage, and that it is a critical safety tool. Mr. Hedden stated that he is strongly in favor of the cell phone tower.

Betsy Gemmecke stated that she is in favor of the cell phone tower, even though it is in her backyard, and she is one of the people most visually affected by the project.

Jane Gray recounted a severe ice storm of the past and how neighbors had to help each other because there was no way to travel or contact help from outside town. Jane Gray also stated that she was very worried about what would happen to people if they do not have neighbors or anyone to check on them during severe weather events and power outages.

Deborah Callais stated that she lives across from the Eaton Village Store and has seen many near misses involving pedestrians and cars. Deborah Callais stated that she is against the cell phone tower because she feels cell phone service will increase driver and pedestrian distractions and potentially increase accidents.

Stephanie Mathurin stated that she feels the loss of cell phone coverage while driving can be just as distracting, if not more distracting, than having cell phone service.

Francis Parisi, representative for Vertex Towers, stated that the need for a cell phone tower has been proven by the public comments in favor of the project, and that the negative comments were generic and not specific to this application.

John Border asked if the tower could be placed in an area of higher elevation, therefore mitigating the need for the tower to be so tall. John Border stated that the tower height above the tree canopy will decrease as the elevation increases.

Francis Parisi stated that there has been a significant amount of time and resources put into selecting the site in the application, and to move the tower location would mean starting over again. Mr. Parisi stated that Vertex Towers is not proposing any other site for the tower than the one on their application at this time.

Thaire Bryant stated that starting the process over might put off the project indefinitely. Mr. Bryant stated that he has been a resident of Eaton for twenty years and has needed cell phone service for twenty years.

Francis Parisi stated that Vertex Towers is applying for a variance, not to redesign the application. Mr. Parisi stated that the Board's options are to either approve or deny his application, and he feels as though Vertex Towers has satisfied all that is needed to receive the variances.

Betsy Gemmecke stated that if the tower site was moved to Mr. Border's proposed location, that would be even closer to her home and that she would be against that location.

Don Gemmecke stated that he is a direct abutter to the proposed cell tower location, and that during the balloon test, he could barely see it.

Francis Parisi showed a map that details the coverage for Eaton and how it will dovetail with coverage from cell towers in Conway and the surrounding areas.

Chairman Steve Larson stated that his strongest criticism of the tower is the proposed height.

Don Gemmecke asked Chairman Steve Larson if he wanted Vertex Towers to have to completely start the project over again.

Chairman Larson read the information from the third-party radiofrequency engineer, which stated that the tower in Eaton should be at least 160 feet tall to provide sufficient coverage to the town.

Lindsay Kafka stated that her property in Eaton does not have regular cell coverage, and that she feels unsafe when the power goes out and she cannot contact anyone should she need help. Mrs. Kafka stated that as an employee of Visiting Nurses, having no cell phone service was not only dangerous for her patients that may need help, but also made her job difficult or impossible because she was unable to consistently stay in contact with her employers. Mrs. Kafka also stated that the Board could talk to five different consultants and receive five different points of view, and that the Board's job is to approve or deny this application and not ask the applicant to change the plans.

Thaire Bryant stated that radio signals travel by line of sight, and that if the tower is approved at 180 feet, more of the Town will have access to service.

Francis Parisi pointed out that the third-party radiofrequency engineer stated that the tower needed to be "at least" 160 feet, not "only" 160 feet. Mr. Parisi also pointed out that none of the complaints the Town had received had to do with the height of the tower, and that the abutters who were most affected by the visual impact of the tower were in favor of the project.

John Hedden stated that he was a member of the Eaton Planning Board, and that the Zoning Regulations regarding cell phone towers are from 2001, and not up to date with current technology.

The Board began to discuss the finding of facts for the Variance to Article VIII, Section E.A. of the Zoning Ordinance.

- 1) Granting the Variance **would not** be contrary to public interest because:
  - a. Steve Larson stated that the tower will provide service where it does not currently exist, especially when landlines are out of service during a power outage.
  - b. John Border stated that there is overwhelming public support for cell phone service in town, which means approving the tower is not contrary to public interest.
  - c. Mark Griffin agreed and noted that the closest abutters are in favor of the project.
  - d. Pam Burns stated that having access to emergency services is in public

interest.

- e. Hoke Wilson stated that any cell phone tower that would provide useful coverage in Eaton will require a variance. Mr. Wilson also stated that it is impactful that the abutters are in favor of the project.

2) The spirit of the ordinance **would** be observed because:

- a. Steve Larson stated that the 180-foot height request enables four different carriers to mount antennas on one tower, therefore minimizing the impact of installing multiple towers. Steve Larson also stated that he would personally prefer to see a 160-foot tower.
- b. John Border stated that most people want the tower despite the appearance.
- c. Pam Burns stated that the regulations the Board was working with were over twenty years old, and that in 2001 the goal of the Town seemed to be to control the visual impact of a cell phone tower. Pam Burns also stated that based on the Master Plan Questionnaire, there seems to be overwhelming support for cell phone coverage in Eaton.
- d. Hoke Wilson stated that he would be concerned about requiring the tower to be too short and regretting that decision in the future.
- e. Mark Griffin agreed with the other Board Members.

3) Granting the Variance **would** do substantial justice because:

- a. Steve Larson stated that the Board does not want to diminish Public Safety, and the other Board Members unanimously agreed with his statement.

4) For the following reasons, the values of the surrounding properties **would not** be diminished:

- a. John Border referenced a study provided by Vertex Towers stating that property values would not be diminished
- b. Pam Burns stated that the direct abutters approve of the tower.
- c. The other Board members agreed with Pam Burns and John Border.

5) Denial of the Variance would result in unnecessary hardship because:

- a. Steve Larson commented on the difficult topography of the Town of Eaton and stated that the majority of the residents had a desire for coverage. The other Board Members unanimously agreed with his statement.

***Chairman Steve Larson made a motion, seconded by Pam Burns, that based on the above findings of fact, the Variance for Article VIII, Section E.A. of the Zoning Ordinance be granted. The motion passed 4-1.***

The Board began to discuss the next Variance request, Article VIII, Section F.M.2.

Pam Burns asked when the monopole-style cell phone tower became popular.

Francis Parisi stated that the monopole-style tower is more visually popular with most people, and that he is only requesting a variance for the style of cell phone tower out of caution, as he feels as though Eaton's Zoning Ordinance is confusing on this topic.

John Border asked what the diameter of the monopole tower would be.

Francis Parisi stated that the base of the tower will be approximately 6-7 feet in diameter and taper up to 3 feet.

***Chairman Steve Larson made a motion, seconded by Mark Griffin, to declare that a monopole is a mast-type of antenna, and that this specific application does not need a variance for antenna type. The motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote.***

***Chairman Steve Larson made a motion, seconded by Pam Burns, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.*** The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Bethany Hicks*

Bethany Hicks