

Board Approves a Taller Radio Tower

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HARTFORD — A radio tower and antenna could soon be seen above the trees on a hill near the town's Hurricane Forest Park.

The Hartford Zoning Board last night approved a proposal by a pair of amateur radio enthusiasts to increase the height of the existing radio tower and antenna on their Hurricane Drive property from 42 feet to 103 feet in a vote of 3-1, with board member Paul Sunde dissenting.

Robert Jacobson and Gina Watkins,

who live near the top of Hurricane Hill, said they would install the taller tower as soon as their permit was issued.

But at least one of the neighbors at a public hearing prior to the board's decision said he planned to file an appeal of the decision, which could delay the couple's plans.

The higher tower and antenna, which will house a repeater that can be used by any ham radio operator in the area, will ensure that the signal will be able to travel 30 miles in every direction, said Jacobson. Signals can

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then get picked up by other towers and sent around the world.

One of the biggest concerns raised by neighbors and board members was that the signal from the tower would interfere with radios, televisions and cell phones, something that neighbors said happens already.

Tom Rice Sr. said he sometimes hears Jacobson's voice coming through his television.

"It's not what you want to hear in the middle of the Super Bowl," said Rice.

Zoning board member Dennis Brown said his major concern with the project is the interference issue. "I liken it to offsite skyglow or nuisance smells," Brown said.

However, the law does not allow local zoning boards in their deliberations to consider wavelength interference or health effects from microwaves, according to an opinion given by the town's attorney, said board Chairwoman Connie Heiland.

Those issues are left to the Federal

Communications Commission to consider, said Jacobson and Watkins' lawyer.

Other neighbors complained about the aesthetic impact of the higher tower. "I don't think there is one of

One Hartford neighbor says he plans to appeal.

you who would want to look at that from your own home," said Allen Hall, who said the higher tower would stand out in the view from his deck.

Hall also said a tower that high is inappropriate in the vicinity of an area as beloved as the town's park. "This is a very highly respected area," he said. He said he would appeal the board's decision.

Jacobson and Watkins' attorney, Fred Hopengarten of Lincoln, Mass.,

said that under Hartford's zoning regulations, the board must determine that the tower will be "disruptive to its surroundings" in order to deny a permit.

"There is a long distance from visible to disruptive," Hopengarten said.