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## TOWN OF SOMERSET

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Rich Charnovich  
Town Manager/Clerk-Treasurer

Testimony on Draft Zoning Text Amendment 18-02, Telecommunications Towers – Limited Use  
Submitted to the County Council for Montgomery Maryland  
On behalf of the Somerset Town Council  
April 3, 2018

My name is Susannah Goodman. I am testifying today to bring the concerns of the Somerset Town Council to your attention. As you know, Somerset is a municipality within Chevy Chase, governed by a town council and mayor. As a municipal entity we take great pride in the stewardship of our community and are actively engaged in many aspects of its safety and aesthetics. The town employs a town manager and fulltime landscape crew. We actively manage the care of the town trees. We monitor traffic patterns and deploy part time police to ease burdens and add protection as needed.

We are concerned about the impact ZTA 18-02 would have on our community and hope we can work with everyone on the Council to address these concerns and become an active partner in this process.

On February 2, 2018 the County Executive issued the new ZTA and also wrote a cover memo to Council President Hans Riemer characterizing the proposed changes. In his cover memo County Executive Ike Leggett wrote, “because of concerns expressed by our residents, this ZTA will propose very limited changes in residential zones.” He also wrote that (the ZTA) “does *not change, and leaves for further discussion, changes to deployments in residential areas.*” Unfortunately, as we read the ZTA we have discovered that it does in fact quite substantially change deployments in residential areas like ours.

Currently, a 60-foot setback from a house is required for the attachment of a wireless facility onto an existing structure such as a utility pole or lamp post in the public right of way. Many homes in our communities are set back close to the right-of-way — i.e., located within that 60-foot setback. Beginning on line 299, **this ZTA substantially reduces the setback for those attachments from a 60-foot setback to only a 20-foot setback.**

This is a **major change** that will alter our communities in a large way. It opens the door for telecommunications companies to immediately embark on peppering our community with antennas attached to our utility poles. These wireless facilities include obtrusive equipment, too, which either is attached to the poles themselves or is ground mounted. Either way, the altered standards in the ZTA authorize the attachment of wireless facilities that would indeed change the character and aesthetic of our neighborhoods. The equipment could also impede pedestrian access and impact traffic.

*“Where People and Trees Have Deep Roots and Grow Strong”*

In addition, as these antennas would be reviewed and issued permits with no notice to affected residents and no input from neighbors, unforeseen safety issues and other detrimental effects to our community could result.

These issues are not “very limited” changes to the deployments in our community. They are major changes that will occur in contradiction to the County Executive’s assurances in his cover memo, in which he indicated that this ZTA would not impact deployments in residential areas. We strongly urge you to strike this setback reduction, and to retain the 60-foot residential setback.

We understand that much time and thought and research went into this ZTA. We also understand the demands placed on you. We look forward to working with you on this draft to address our concerns. We hope that this ZTA will reflect the goals of the County Executive as articulated in his memo to minimally impact residential communities.