



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS  
**PLANNING BOARD**

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No.: #52 Major Amendment #1

Premises: 75-83 Cambridge Parkway

Zoning District: Residence C-3A/PUD-2

Petitioner: Cellular One/Christopher Ciolfi, 100 Lowder Brook Drive, Westwood, MA 02090

Owner: Charterhouse of Cambridge Trust, c/o Sonesta International Hotels Corporation, 200 Clarendon Street, Boston, MA 02116

Application Date: September 4, 1985

Date of Planning Board Determination: September 17, 1985

Final Development Plan Public Hearing: October 15, 1985

Date of Final Decision: November 12, 1985

Date of filing Final Decision: December 12, 1985

Date of Minor Amendment #1: April 3, 1990

**Date of Major Amendment #1: December 6, 1994**

Petition: Major Amendment to allow a variation in the PUD-2 height limit and to allow a telephone exchange use, (Section 4.23 g of the Table of Use Regulations).

Documents Submitted:

1. Application dated November 9, 1994, submitted by Cellular One, including a letter to Lester Barber dated November 7, 1994.

2. Plans A-3 & A-8, dated August 18, 1962 by Curtis and Davis outlining the proposed computer room structure.

### Public Hearing

At a public hearing held on December 6, 1994, the applicant, Christopher Ciolfi, Cellular One representative, presented the proposal to locate a computer room, 24 feet x 12 feet x 12 feet high, on the roof of the Sonesta Hotel between the existing sign structures; the structure would be set on top of the steel frame which supports the signs. This room would not be visible from the street or from nearby residences or other property. The sign panels are 20 feet tall, fully capable of screening the room which is proposed to be 12 feet tall. The associated antennas will be mounted on the face of the sign panels in clusters of four and will be painted the same color as the panels so as to render them all but invisible from off the property.

The Board inquired as to whether this use would be accessory to the hotel use; Mr. Ciolfi indicated that while the service will be used by occupants and employees of the hotel their use will be only a small portion of the total use of the facility. In response to a Board question Mr. Ciolfi said that the applicant has recently completed similar facilities at the YMCA building on Huntington Avenue in Boston and on the roof of an 18 story residential building in Brighton/Allston on Commonwealth Avenue. The value of a location for such facilities lies with the local need for transmission capacity (the heavy commuter traffic in the O'Brien Highway and Land Boulevard area is taxing the capacity of the existing system); the height of the location is not necessarily a determining factor. Full service in the service area authorized by the FCC will require location of many more of these facilities in the future. In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Ciolfi indicated that it was not a requirement that the computer facility be located outside the building or on top of the roof; that location was most appropriate here as it is desirable to have the cable connections between the computer and the antennas as short as possible.

Two residents from Grave's Landing expressed a number of reservations: the establishment of a precedent for future increases in the height of buildings in the district, the locking-in of the existing sign, the potential visibility of the equipment, and possible interference with operation of electronic devices. Mr. Ciolfi and Board members responded to each issue in turn: there will be no precedent as each case is unique; the sign panels would likely remain even if the sign letters were removed, as the panels serve as screening for the mechanical equipment behind; the structure will not be higher than the sign panels and will be placed on the interior supports, which will permit sight lines to continue beneath the structure; there should be no interference with other equipment as the reserved bands for cellular communication are not shared with other equipment.

## Findings

1. The additional structure on the roof, to be used as a computer room, will be completely screened from view from the ground as well as from nearby residences and office buildings by the existing sign panels. The small size of the antennas will permit them to be mounted without visible impact beyond the site.
2. The facility is in the nature of the kinds of mechanical equipment normally exempt from the height limit; and whereas existing exempt mechanical equipment is already present on the roof and the addition of this proposed facility will not materially affect the impact of the existing buildings on adjacent properties because it will not be visible beyond the site, there are therefore special circumstances which might reasonably permit the issuance of a variance for height without substantial detriment to adjacent properties or the public good generally and without substantial derogation from the intent of the zoning ordinance and this PUD district in establishing the maximum height limit of 120 feet.
3. The telecommunication service that will be provided is a benefit to the community as a whole and is reasonably accommodated if other values are not compromised.
4. The additional gross floor area of 288 square feet is permitted within the floor area ratio limits imposed in the PUD-2 district.
5. The location of the equipment at this location above the roof allows an installation at a reasonable cost, which might not be possible should the computer room be separated at a great distance from the antennas.

## Decision

The Planning Board **GRANTS** a variation in the requirements of the PUD-2 District to permit the construction of a computer room related to the installation of a telephone exchange facility above the maximum permitted height of 120 feet in the PUD-2 District and permits the telephone exchange use within the development authorized by Special Permit #52, in a manner describe in the application documents, provided the new structure is not higher than the existing sign panels mounted on the roof of the building.

Voting to grant the Permit were: P. Dietrich, H. Russell, A. Cohn, W. Tibbs, H. Sallemme, A. Callaghan and C. Mieth, the full membership of the Planning Board.

For the Planning Board,



Paul Dietrich, Chairman

Special Permit #52, Major Amendment #2

5 Cambridge Parkway, Sonesta Hotel

A copy of this decision shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals if any shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws and shall be filed within twenty (20) days of such filing in the Office of the City Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on December 8, 1994 by *Elizabeth J. Malenfant* authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referenced in the decision have likewise been filed with the City Clerk on such date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of this decision.

No Appeal has been filed.

Appeal has been filed and dismissed or denied

City Clerk, City of Cambridge

Date