

Sugar Hill Planning Board and Zoning Board Special Hearing

January 27, 2026

Members: Secretary Amy Venezia, Patty Robertson, Rusty Talbot (Selectboard Rep), Vice Chairman of the Planning Board Steve Monsein, Arthur Chase, Jim Keefe, Chairman of the Planning Board Rob Hayward, Mike Valentine, Margo Connors, Kyle Kinsey, Chairman of the Zoning Board Carl Hjelm, Evan Carmean, Gary Way, Sarah Pinney, Ed Cenerizio

Absent: John Barth

Guests: Earl Duval (counsel) Martin Lavin, Jesse Moreno (project engineer), Mark Correnti (Fair Market Advisors), Chris Ellms, Rose Ellms, Mike Claflin, Larry Sawyer, Judy Sawyer, Kathleen Jablonski, Brooke O'Day, Susan O'Day, Brian Beaulieu, Joel Lanz, Richard Bielefield

Zoom Guests: Betsy Fraser, Anne-Marie Ryberg, Leon Arazny

Planning Board Chairman Rob Hayward called the meeting to order at 5:30PM on Tuesday, January 27, 2026.

Blue Sky Towers, LLC

Tax Map 216 Lot 4

Preliminary Hearing

Chairman of the Planning Board Rob Hayward called for acceptance of the application for Site Plan Review submitted by Blue Sky Towers, LLC. **Motion passed unanimously**

Chairman of the Zoning Board Carl Hjelm called for acceptance of the application for Variance submitted by Blue Sky Towers, LLC. **Motion passes unanimously**

Earl Duval, counsel for Blue Sky, stated that Blue Sky Towers, LLC submitted applications for a site plan review and variance with the Town of Sugar Hill Planning and Zoning Boards to construct a 150-foot monopole cell tower on a 68-acre parcel off Route 117 in Sugar Hill currently zoned RR1 and owned by Presby Family Irrevocable Trust. Applications submitted included detailed written statements, zoning drawings and radio frequency report.

Jesse Moreno from Terror Design Group presented plans for the tower. The tower will have space for multiple wireless carriers, including Verizon as the anchor tenant. The proposed location of the tower is located at the back end of the lot approximately a half mile from the Sugar Hill/Lisbon town line. It was discussed that there would be no lights on the tower because it is below the FAA regulations for height. The site would be located 1050 feet from the nearest resident, with 15 utility poles and fiber optic connections, and would be "hardened" to provide 48 hours of backup power. The lease agreement for the 100x100 foot site with a 20-foot access easement is for 10 years with 4 /10-year renewal terms. The site will be accessed via an upgraded existing logging road, with a new bridge structure to accommodate a 100-year storm event. Utilizing this existing logging road will mean less clearing will need to be done for access. The project will impact approximately 90,000 square feet, which is below AOT thresholds, with only about an acre of new clearing needed. The meeting discussed the design and approval process for a stream crossing project, where a culvert will be replaced with a wider span crossing to improve stormwater management and wildlife passage. The developer is working with DES and consultants to meet stream crossing standards, with preliminary designs already reviewed and detailed surveys completed to determine exact floodplain extents. The project timeline is estimated at 3-6 months, with the crossing being constructed as a box culvert with wing walls, and the road will remain unpaved except for a small paved section at Route 117. Section 4 of the application includes the report from Red Fish Engineering

The proposal would improve coverage along Route 117, particularly addressing a significant gap in service. Maps were presented by Martin Lavin showing the proposed tower's coverage, highlighting that despite challenging terrain, the site would provide significant coverage, picking up 6.2 square miles of new coverage. It was noted that Blue Sky Towers

evaluated 136 potential locations, with the proposed site being selected after thorough consideration of topography, zoning requirements, and existing structures. A list of these properties is included in the application for variance. The team noted that while some locations showed partial or complete obstruction, the most visible spots were clustered towards the center of town. Satellite-based cell coverage was discussed as a possibility to achieve coverage in the area without constructing a cell tower. Martin explained that satellite-based cell services, like Starlink, are not a viable replacement for terrestrial cell towers due to their limited mobility and high latency. Reviewed balloon test photos to assess visibility of a proposed cell tower in various locations around town. The discussion highlighted that the tower would be galvanized silver-gray in color and explained the technical need for height to ensure signal propagation, particularly in mountainous terrains and valleys. The group discussed color schemes, with a consensus that gray would be more aesthetically pleasing than brown or blue in the North Country setting. Jesse presented a detailed diagram of the structure, which will be 6 feet at the base and capable of housing equipment for multiple wireless carriers. Also discussed were technical details about the proposed cell tower installation, including fiber optic cable routing, power backup systems, and vegetation management practices, with concerns raised about herbicide use and its impact on local beekeepers. They also clarified that while the structure would house Verizon as the primary tenant, it could potentially accommodate other carriers like AT&T and T-Mobile in the future.

Mark Correnti, an appraiser with 28 years of experience, presented a market value analysis comparing properties near existing cell towers in other towns to determine if the presence of a cell tower affects property values. He found that properties with views of cell towers sold at premiums compared to typical market values, but emphasized that personal preferences do not influence appraisals, which are based on data analysis. Question was asked if the power lines from Route 117 to the tower would be underground. It was answered that no the power lines would be above ground. Poles were estimated to be about 35-40 feet in height.

A joint final hearing will be held Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 5:30PM. Zoom option will also be available.

With no further discussion meeting was adjourned at 7:55PM.

Submitted by:

Amy Venezia

Secretary to the Planning and Zoning Boards