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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC MEETING ON
PROPOSED SOUTH COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS TOWER
May 19, 2010**

My name is Eric Whitenton and I live at Knoxville (Sandy Hook) Maryland. I am writing this letter representing CPPV, Citizens for the Preservation of Pleasant Valley.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input regarding the proposed South County Emergency Tower. In addition to the testimony given at the May 10 meeting (attached), we would like to add the following.

1) According to Google Earth, the initial proposed 190 foot tower at Keep Tryst is 495 feet above sea level while the current proposed 190 foot tower at Miller Avenue is about 755 feet above sea level. With the new site over 200 feet higher than the old site, surely the height of the tower could be SIGNIFICANTLY reduced in size. Even if mild trimming of the trees directly in front of the dish is needed so that it may “see” the Lambs Knoll microwave dish, this will likely be less intrusive.

2) The lattice should be painted a color that will enable it to blend into the background. In addition, the microwave dishes must be disguised to blend into the background by what ever means possible, such as netting, fabric covering, etc.

3) If the County feels unable to do items 1 and 2 above, after signing an appropriate non-disclosure agreement, a representative from CPPV and a consultant of CPPV's choice should be given enough information to enable independent verification that it is not possible to do items 1 and 2. For example, CPPV may wish to consider alternatives such as the use of two towers, the use of “base stations”, or the use of a patch between the wider Washington County system and a system similar to Colorado's.

4) We recognize that life is a learning experience for us all. We hope that any future Request For Proposals (RFPs) for large infrastructure projects include language which favors consideration for visual impact, as this should be a consideration for any construction project. In addition, future RFPs should include language which favors the use of non-proprietary technologies. As it has with the First Responder Communications system, proprietary systems often interfere with the openness of government.

Thank You

Eric Whitenton, President
CPPV



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**TESTIMONY GIVEN IN PUBLIC MEETING ON PROPOSED SOUTH COUNTY
EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS TOWER
May 10, 2010**

My name is Eric Whitenton and I live in Sandy Hook Maryland. I am speaking tonight representing CPPV, Citizens for the Preservation of Pleasant Valley. CPPV's goal is to help protect the environment, quality of life, and preserve the historic character of Pleasant Valley and surrounding area, as well as educate its citizens on environmental and historic matters on a non-profit, non-partisan basis through scientific, literary and educational activities and public events.

CPPV hopes that our County Commissioners recognize the love that citizens have for the Valley's beauty and history, as well as the tourism value this area holds. If these are to be compromised, it should be for solid reasons citizens can verify for themselves. Based on the information currently available to us, we insist the County Commissioners find an alternative to the 19 story truss structure covered with microwave and pole antennas. A mutually acceptable solution, where our first responders have adequate equipment and we preserve the character of our community, should be found.

Attached are the results of an on-line survey we sent to the 190 citizens who have given us their email addresses. Of the 33 who responded, the overwhelming majority feel the less invasive options must be properly explored. In fact, over 70% feel that the tower, at least as proposed, should not be built in the Valley. Given the impacts on the views from the homes of citizens, this is not surprising (<http://upshotmd.org/20100317.html>).

For time reasons, I will only briefly touch on just a few of CPPV's concerns next.

At the September 2009 public safety meeting held by CPPV, the sheriff was asked how we can support efforts to provide staff who could be assigned to the Valley. It currently takes about 40 minutes for the Sheriff's staff to travel to the Valley. Assistance often comes from Frederick County, which takes only 20 minutes. We have been told that the Valley does not have enough crime to justify a regular patrol. Constructing the proposed tower will have no impact on the amount of time we have to wait for officers to respond to our calls. Also, these towers will do nothing to improve our inter-jurisdictional situation. With several park service and County jurisdictions in the Valley, responders are often hamstrung because they have limited authority on someone else jurisdiction. It is the people who are our first responders, working together, who protect us and make us safe, not communication towers.

This paragraph was answered in the Counties presentation, so I did not give this paragraph in my testimony: We have seen maps of coverage areas once the tower is built, but how does this contrast with current coverage areas? In short, what is the actual improvement in coverage as a result of the tower? The reason we ask is that we have learned of a recent test in Valley to check the Sheriff Department's communication equipment. Apparently, the deputy reported to nearby citizens that there was no problem communicating with the other jurisdictions, including linking up with nearby state communications.

This so called “free” tower is not free if we pay the price of unnecessary degradation to Valley, or if we pay the price of having this placed upon us with out a full, verifiable accounting that alternatives such as Short Hill or multiple short towers actually can not work. Simply saying that information is proprietary, and citizens should just take the County's word, is not acceptable. The proposed 19 story truss tower will adversely impact the visual beauty of the area for tourists and residents alike. It is incumbent upon those who insist that the proposed tower is the only solution to provide citizens a way to independently verify that this assertion is true.

Thank You

Eric Whitenton, President
CPPV

CPPV First Responders Tower Survey

Please indicate your opinion about the First Responder Communication tower.						
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion	Response Count
The tower is important to public safety & I don't care where it is built.	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	23.3% (7)	76.7% (23)	0.0% (0)	30
The tower should be built but should blend into the landscape to preserve the historic beauty of the area.	32.0% (8)	40.0% (10)	12.0% (3)	8.0% (2)	8.0% (2)	25
The proposed 190 foot tower will overwhelm the landscape of Elk Ridge and a shorter tower should be built.	36.4% (8)	45.5% (10)	9.1% (2)	9.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	22
The tower should be located on Short Hill with the other large towers rather than in the Pleasant Valley.	56.0% (14)	28.0% (7)	8.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	8.0% (2)	25
The tower should not be built in the Pleasant Valley.	64.3% (18)	17.9% (5)	7.1% (2)	3.6% (1)	7.1% (2)	28
Comments						16
answered question						33
skipped question						0

Comments		
1	If the tower were placed on the crest of Elk Ridge could not the height of the tower be at a minimum??? The height of the Ridge would would project the signal instead of a 190 foot tower at a lower point.	May 3, 2010 11:14 AM
2	There is no need for a tower. The county/state should spend money for other options. Also, Motorola radios are failing around the country daily. Why will it be different here? Don't make the same mistakes as nearby states.	May 3, 2010 11:54 AM
3	A tower is important to the emergency response capabilities, particularly rescuer safety, in the South County. The site with the least objectionable local impact should be selected, but it must be located where it will provide adequate communications for coverage in the South County area - I don't know if a Short Hill location meets that critical requirement.	May 3, 2010 12:51 PM
4	To put this tower below Elk Ridge is so wrong. Why ruin the whole vista from MdHts all along 67 to Boonsboro is so insanely stupid. The huge power of gov rolling over the landscape. It boggles my mind the proposed location. Ruin the whole side of the mt. side? Who are these people that do this?	May 3, 2010 2:14 PM

Comments		
5	If not at Short Hill, the tower should be built to blend and preserve the historic viewsheds of the area.	May 3, 2010 2:24 PM
6	Not only am I concerned about the tower obstructing the historical beauty of the Pleasant Valley area, but the health concerns of a large tower being placed in a residential area.	May 3, 2010 3:28 PM
7	Many people who live on Brown Road or nearby, including myself, hike along Old Brown Road to the Harper's Ferry Overlook. The towers are not something we wish to see, particularly since there are homes in the area. I cannot believe the Park Service would even allow this to happen. Why aren't they in on this? Dolores Smith	May 3, 2010 9:00 PM
8	I'd like to see the RFP for this system.	May 4, 2010 12:44 AM
9	We just can't fathom why the Short Hill tower can't be used for better coverage for southern Washington County. Perhaps you need to consult with a different engineer. We live on Valley Road and the tower would devastate this beautiful historic area.	May 4, 2010 4:21 PM
10	I believe anything built in this area should be carefully blended into the historic and environmental surroundings. I believe that citizens don't always understand how ugly structures and out-of-character development will eventually impact their own property until it is too late. I question that this technology is the most current and effective possible, as this project has been in process for a decade. At this time with technology growing in option because the technology will so soon become outdated. I believe Washington County may have needed only 9 towers for its own uses and that this 10th is more about connections between Washington and Frederick County and providing coverage to the uncovered Frederick County areas between here and Mar-Lu Ridge.	May 5, 2010 5:50 PM
11	The county has not taken advantage of the communications expertise of the National Park Service and its technical contractors. If they can provide emergency communications in Yosemite and Grand Canyon without marring the values of the parks, they can show Washington County how to do this right.	May 7, 2010 7:20 PM
12	While I understand and agree with the importance of the First Responders Communication Tower, it is my thought that the tower should be placed on Short Hill with the other existing towers. Heather S. Keedysville, MD	May 7, 2010 9:48 PM
13	The tower is important to public safety, but it should be built with sensitivity toward the natural surroundings it will be found in. Residents and tourists love our area for its natural beauty. When we have to build, we have to---but let's do so in a way that doesn't spoil the natural beauty that makes our area great.	May 7, 2010 11:14 PM
14	Why put a tower down here when it takes law enforcement 45 minutes to respond - if they do!	May 8, 2010 7:23 AM
15	In the absence of local deputies the response time will not change. Tower or no tower response to emergencies still will take forty minutes or MORE. The cost of the tower might end up costing more than a deputy who would be familiar with the area and the people who live in Pleasant Valley.	May 8, 2010 10:28 AM
16	I would be interested in knowing why Short Hill could not accommodate this tower since it would have the least impact on the area.	May 9, 2010 12:29 PM