

Neighbors oppose placement of cell tower in Rancho

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / February 14, 2024

Cancer, wildfire and plummeting property value concerns were raised during discussion at Thursday's meeting before the Calaveras County Planning Commission about placing a tele-communications tower in Rancho Calaveras.

Vertical Bridge, the largest private owner and operator of communications infrastructure in the United States, wants to erect a 90-foot tower at 5992 Clements Place. Calaveras County Planning Director Gabriel Elliott approved the application.

A neighbor next to the proposed tower location filed an appeal, which prompted the public hearing Thursday before the planning panel.

Nearly a dozen people spoke against the proposed cell tower and an overriding concern was the potential risk of cancer linked to such towers. However, Federal Communications commission regulations dating back to the 1990s prohibit the county from only considering the cancer risk in denying such a permit.

An alternative school, Acorns to Oaks, which serves more than two dozen children, is located near the proposed tower site.

One mother of children attending the school said the overriding health and cancer concerns of parents would probably force closure of the school if the tower were placed next door.

Another nearby homeowner said studies show the vast majority of people would not purchase a home near a cell tower and home values in the area will likely plummet by 20 percent with construction of such a tower.

The potential risk of wildfires was brought up by another resident, citing three such fires recently attributed to cell towers.

The planning commission's decision and public hearing on the matter was continued to a March 14 meeting when the entire panel would be present.