

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

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BallardVale, Massachusetts

Spring/Summer 2018

Proposed Tower Stirred Controversy Many in village rose in opposition

The prospect of a wireless communications tower looming over the center of the village sparked opposition, and not only from the proposed site's nearest neighbors.

American Tower had requested a special permit to erect a 125-foot monopole at 212 Andover Street. That permit was denied by the Zoning Board of Appeals at a closed hearing on April 26.

At a prior public hearing on April 5, Ed Pare, an attorney for American Tower, distributed the results of a balloon test held in early March. The test involved erecting a 135-foot crane on the proposed site with balloons marking the actual height of the proposed tower. Photos of the crane were then taken from several vantage points around the village.



Balloon test from BallardVale Playground

Pare explained that the tower is needed to ensure consistent cell phone coverage for customers of T-Mobile, the primary tenant, which experiences significant service gaps in the area. However, a T-Mobile customer and Dale Street resident who opposes the tower reported years of problem-free cell service.

American Tower had hoped that other carriers would also use the tower, and Pare offered up the possibility that the town's emergency services might attach equipment at no charge to enhance their own coverage. The fire chief said the department does have gaps in the area. However, an antenna for emergency services would have raised the tower by another 10 or 15 feet.

Residents present at the meeting asked about other possible sites. Told that towers serve a five-mile radius, one resident asked whether the industrial Lowell Junction Road area, one mile away, had been considered. Company experts responded that the proposed Andover Street site is the only option. Some attendees said they were not satisfied that other sites had been thoroughly researched.

The site itself, which is not town property, is zoned industrial, but opponents pointed out that the tower would not meet the required 375-foot setback from the closest residential property on Dale Street. Several Dale Street neighbors at the hearing expressed concerns. Some were worried about possible health effects of radio frequency emissions, but the town counsel pointed out that the zoning board can't legally consider environmental effects of the tower if it complies with FCC regulations, which the proposed tower did. He explained that the FCC officially encourages construction of communications towers but that

Continued on page 2.

Tower, continued from page 1.

local boards can consider other factors in making permitting decisions.

Several people spoke to “other factors,” raising concerns about how the tower would affect the neighborhood character. Karen Herman, chair of the Andover Preservation Commission, said she would convey her appraisal of the tower’s likely adverse aesthetic effects to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, which is required to rule on proposed projects, including cell towers, that may impact historical resources.

Joanna Reck, chair of the BallardVale Historic District Commission, agreed that the tower would have a significant negative impact on the historic character of Ballardvale. She further pointed out that the Zoning Board is required to weigh the character of the neighborhood in making decisions. And while the proposed tower site itself is outside the Historic District, it would be widely visible and affect the appearance of the entire neighborhood the Historic District was established to preserve.

The board postponed a ruling, giving members an opportunity to study related documents. Residents present at the occasionally contentious April 26 closed hearing could not speak officially, but many held signs in opposition and expressed relief when the permit was denied.

Your BVHDC

BallardVale Historic District Commission (BVHDC) meeting dates and agendas are posted at andover.ma.gov. All are welcome. Members of the BVHDC include Joanna Reck, chair (jlarcht@gmail.com); Diane Derby, vice chair; Gary Rowe, secretary; Ron Abraham; Bob Branca; Remi Machet; and Matt Pimentel.

The BVHDC currently has two vacancies. To express interest in volunteering, please complete a talent bank form at andoverma.gov/621/volunteer. For more information, email Diane Derby at derby01@comcast.net.

FAQs — Ask the BVHDC

Does the Historic District Commission have guidelines on selecting replacement storm doors?

There are guidelines homeowners should consult when it comes to choosing replacement windows, but not for new storm doors. Please make an energy-efficient choice that will complement your home in the Historic District.

Village Stories Old and New

Once named Lowell Street, Clark Road was renamed for the family whose farm was once located at what is now the busy intersection of Clark and Dascomb Roads. The early 19th-century federal style Clark homestead at 72 Dascomb Road replaced earlier structures, including a garrison house built to fend off Indian attacks in what was then an outlying wilderness.

In the 18th century the property was owned by Abijah Clark, who expanded his real estate holdings to more than 80 acres. His son Nathan inherited the farm in 1818, and in turn his son, also named Nathan, came to own the farm. Among the BallardVale properties owned by the younger Nathan Clark is the beautiful Craftsman-style four-square home at 33 Chester Street.

The 1850s classic New England-style barn at 42 Clark Road was part of the Clark farm. It was designated a historically and architecturally significant part of Andover’s agricultural history by the 1988 Andover Barn Survey (conducted by the Andover Historical Society and the Preservation Commission).

The last surviving Clark descendant, Martha Hall, sold the farm in 1882, but the family is remembered in the names of both Clark Road and picturesque Clark Pond, just off 6 Clark Road, in the AVIS Burns Reservation

Meet Your Neighbors

Her official job title is U.S. postal worker, but to her customers and friends in Ballardvale she's always been known as simply as Susan, the friendly post office woman.

Susan Pellerin is certainly a familiar face in Ballardvale. She's worked at the small post office branch at 187 Andover Street, a short walk to the train station, for 10 years now. She says she started her career in the U.S. Postal Service in the main branch in downtown Andover almost 30 years ago.

What does Susan like most about her job? "My customers," the postal worker says. "I have very, very nice customers. I probably know 80 percent of them by their first name."



Susan Pellerin at her post

Susan, who grew up in Methuen and now commutes from her home in Bedford, N.H., is the mother of a 14-year-old son and two stepsons, who are 23 and 25. She works at the retail counter at the Ballardvale Post Office five days a week, Monday–Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (closed for lunch 12:30–2:00).

Mondays are usually the busiest day of the week at the post office, and she says that throughout the week she can see a daily average of a couple hundred letters and about 75 packages. "Christmas is, of course, the busiest time of the year," Susan says. "The volume during that time will triple the amount of letters and packages I see. The slowest time of the year is summer, but I don't get lonely. Someone always come in."

Susan says that her most loyal customers include Amy Glendinning and Elaine Schofield, who live on Center Street. "Almost every day they are mailing a package to Scotland," she says.

And what are some of the stranger packages she has seen Ballardvale customers mail? "I've had baby chicks and crickets mailed from here, along with cookies and ceramics," Susan says. "And then there are the booksellers. Two or three of them come in every day to mail books."

Susan admits that when she was told she was being transferred to the Ballardvale branch from Andover's main post office she wasn't sure how it would work out. But it didn't take very long for the friendly post office woman to realize how lucky she was to make the move. "Ballardvale is great," Susan insists. "The people here are so nice and friendly — I would never want to go back."

BallardVale Historic District Commission

*Andover Town Offices
36 Bartlet Street
Andover, MA 01810*

US POSTAGE
PAID
ANDOVER, MA
PERMIT NO. 41

CALENDAR

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|-----------------|---|
| May 2 | BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| June 8 | BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| July 4 | Townwide Fourth of July Celebration at the Park |
| July 11 | BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |
| August 1 | BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting
Town offices, second floor conference room — 7:00 p.m. |

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To receive the next issue of the BallardVale Gazette via email, send your name, address, and email to Karen English: kfeenglish@gmail.com

Questions? Suggestions? Feedback?

If you have a question for the BVHDC or a suggestion for a future issue of the BallardVale Gazette, please contact the editors: Karen English: kfeenglish@gmail.com or Joe Halpern: joehalp@gmail.com.