



Madison Parks Division

210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Room 104
Madison, WI 53703
608-266-4711 • cityofmadison.com/parks



Date: April 11, 2022

To: Plan Commission

From: Eric Knepp, Parks Superintendent *EMK*

CC: Board of Park Commissioners
Finance Committee
Common Council

Subject: **Authorizing the execution of a Lease with Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless, for premises at McPike Park located at 1130 E. Wilson Street. (Leg File #70109)**

Greetings Plan Commission Members:

The Plan Commission was scheduled to review a Lease Agreement Renewal with CellCo Partnership ([Legislative File #70109](#)) on March 7, 2022. Following concerns raised through public, I requested that the item be referred to a future meeting to allow appropriate time for Parks staff to provide additional information pertinent to your consideration of this item.

The cell tower located at 1130 E. Wilson Street has existed since 1997 when the property was privately owned and managed. The property has served as a site for telecommunications tower as well as served similar purposes for ATC since that time through various lease agreements. In 2017, the City acquired the property through adverse possession and has continued to lease the property for a defined fee to the private parties involved. While ATC is no longer looking to continue under the lease that would provide them access to the site through March 26, 2040, CellCo is requesting to renew the lease

While long-term, this land will be incorporated into McPike Park, there are multiple considerations that should be made, including advantages to the City and its residents, to continue this lease at least for the initial renewal term through May 29, 2032. It is important to note here that there is a City option of renewal beyond this point in time. Those considerations are as follows:

- Financial resources across the City continue to be a real challenge. Due to competing demands, the McPike Park Master Plan revision to incorporate the expansion planning for the southeast portion of the park was moved to 2025, and there is no funding for construction included in the [Adopted 2022-27 Capital Budget](#). We do not expect the budgetary situation to change substantially in the next few years.
- The Lease Agreement will provide fixed revenue of at least \$30,000 annually to the City during the term of the lease. If the City chooses to end the lease, it will forego approximately \$343,000 in revenue over the next 10 years, while also not having the financial resources to develop or maintain the land.

- The tower provides telecommunications services to residents, businesses and visitors of the isthmus area. Options for placement of such infrastructure within a heavily populated area is very difficult considering competing needs for land use and green space, and is also very likely to be highly controversial. The result of not allowing such infrastructure will negatively impact the community and hinder the ability of companies to adequately provide these services in an era of heavy reliance on cellphones and other information technology needs.
- The site in question consists of 1,550 square feet and offers no real recreational value in its current state without the resources to further develop that portion of the park.

The Parks Division is committed to continuing to improve upon the existing McPike Park, but we must be realistic about the timeline in which any additional development will move forward. It is essential that we balance the needs of Parks system as well as other various needs of the community and be responsible financial stewards of the City's resources. Due to the fact that there are no financial resources allocated to McPike Park, the value of this space in its current state for any recreational purposes is extremely limited, there would be a negative impact to telecommunications infrastructure within this central part of the City and there would be a loss in known revenue of approximately \$343,000 to the City if the lease is not renewed, I recommend that the Plan Commission, along with Finance Committee and Board of Park Commissioners recommend approval of the lease to Common Council.