

## **Welcome to the Common Sense Courier Newsletter**

We are a group of Douglas County Nevada residents who are interested in growth issues, water issues, prudent financial management of Douglas County, and the quality of our schools. We attend the monthly meetings of the Board of County Commissioners, the Planning Commission, and the School Board and create a free monthly newsletter that offers common sense insights on the key issues discussed at these meeting and how your elected representatives voted. Our goal is to provide useful information on important issues to an educated citizenry who is interested in the governance of our county. Each monthly issue will highlight one vital topic and offer brief summaries of key votes and discussions.

### **Vital Topic: Cell Phone Towers**

#### **Board of County Commissioners dismisses citizen's objections, sides with Verizon in placement of cell phone towers**

In a heated board meeting on April 4, 2025, four members of the Board of County Commissioners voted approval for the placement of cell phone towers in controversial locations despite widespread opposition by residents. It is worth noting that during public comment as a significant number of citizens voiced opposition to the two towers, the Verizon representative frequently made disrespectful faces. Pretty unprofessional.

An 80 ft. Verizon Cell Phone Tower at 1450 Stephanie Way was approved by the Planning Commission last September and challenged legally by residents Brian and Yvonne Stevens and David Magnotta, thus resulting in a review by the Board of County Commissioners. The citizens voicing their objections to the Stephanie tower at the BOCC meeting cited property devaluation, health risks, \$500,000 school funding loss from projected enrollment drops, and Verizon's rejection of other more appropriate sites as reasons to turn the proposal down.

The attorney for the plaintiffs, Scott McCullough, specifically noted that the Planning Commission's decision to approve the Stephanie tower failed to meet county code findings and highlighted the tower's proximity to houses and 800 ft from an elementary school, deeming it incompatible. He disputed Verizon's claim of a coverage gap, insisting it must be "significant" per the Ninth Circuit's Sprint case (969 F.3d at 1042). He also challenged Verizon's rejection of 16(!) alternative sites and proposed upgrading existing towers like Minden North (4.6 miles away).

For the second tower located at the fire station on 1699 County Road, Minden, Verizon was appealing the denial of the Planning Commission which had found that the tower did not meet specific county code findings. Verizon's team, led by Chris Hatch of Epic Wireless, claimed that Verizon reviewed 27 alternative sites, rejecting them for inadequate coverage, lack of space, access, property availability, or zoning conflicts. He argued Fire Station 14 was optimal, citing its PF zoning and minimal visual impact, while alternatives like Minden Gateway, Bentley property, and county-owned sites were dismissed as less effective or more intrusive. Chance McCullough, representing the citizen's group Minden for Safe Technology, offered a sharp rebuke of Verizon's case. Verizon, McCullough noted, only addressed Finding B (community Character) not findings A, E, G, or H and accused Verizon of prioritizing in home internet service over cellular service.

In public comment on the County Road tower, residents challenged gap claims, proposed sheriff's station placement, and exposed Verizon's 101K report emphasizing "in-building" (internet) coverage across multiple pages, accusing Verizon of deception. The owner of a day care center located 250 ft away warned that she would have to close as 85 of 105 parents would not send their child to daycare so close to a tower.

Disappointingly, four weak-kneed commissioners ultimately gave the nod to the Stephanie Way tower and merely placed a one-year hold on the Verizon application for the County Road tower. Regarding the County Road tower, Tolbert supported

continuance, affirming Planning Commission findings but avoiding confrontation with Verizon. Hales criticized aesthetics, suggesting innovative designs, but wavered, justifying a yes vote on the thin argument that Verizon met code. Rice backed continuance to avoid lawsuits, prioritizing cost over principle, while Tarkanian acknowledged gaps but doubted Fire Station 14's necessity and criticized Verizon's biased survey, but voted yes anyway. Only Commissioner Gardner, siding with the residents of Johnson Lane, voted "No" to the placement of the Stephanie tower. He also rejected the Verizon appeal on the County Road Tower citing unmet findings and questionable motives.

The votes on the two towers highlight a disturbing ongoing trend of the BOCC caving to corporate interests and fears of being sued instead of pursuing what is in the best interest of Dougals County residents.

## **Key Votes and Discussions:**

### Board of County Commissioners Meeting - April 3, 2025

- **Cellphone tower approved:** The BOCC approved the Verizon cell phone tower on Stephanie way, denying a residents' appeal of a Planning Commission approval
- **Cellphone tower placed on one year hold:** The BOCC placed a one year hold on the Verizon appeal to place a cell phone tower on County Road in Minden in order to review other sites
- **BOCC approved townhome subdivision behind Gardnerville Elementary:** The Board unanimously approved a proposal to divide a 4.45-acre parcel into 29 individually owned, single-story townhome units and one common space parcel, located directly behind Gardnerville Elementary School.
- **BOCC approves monthly 9-1-1 surcharge:** The BOCC unanimously approved increasing the monthly surcharge for emergency telephone systems, raising the fee from \$0.75 to \$1.00 per access or mobile line, and from \$7.50 to \$10.00 per trunk line. It also approved a reduction of the allowable uncommitted balance in the 9-1-1 Surcharge Special Revenue Fund from \$1,000,000 to \$500,000.

[Read the full report](#)

### Planning Commission Meeting - April 8, 2025

- **Master Plan Amendment Approved for Clear Creek Development** - The Planning Commission approved unanimously a Master Plan Amendment which changed the future land use designation from Recreation to Receiving Area, a Zoning Map Amendment to rezone the area from PR (Private Recreation) to SFR-8,000 (Single-Family Residential, minimum 8,000 square foot lots), a Major Modification to reduce the number of lots in Subdivision Unit 5 from 19 to 6, and a Minor Modification to the Clear Creek Tahoe Specific Plan to reflect these changes and maintain consistency throughout the planning documents.

[Read the full report.](#)

### Douglas County School Board Meeting - April 17, 2025

- **Declining Academic Performance at Minden Elementary Raises Concerns:** Minden Elementary's SBAC proficiency rates dropped to 38% in English Language Arts and 33% in math, down from historical averages in the 50s and 60s.

- **Underreporting of Bullying Incidents Sparks Alarm:** The third-quarter bullying report showed zero cyberbullying incidents and no recorded cases at Carson Valley Middle School despite parental and student reports of ongoing issues. This anomaly raises concerns about the district's ability to accurately track and address student safety.
- **Budget Constraints Threaten Educational Resources:** A projected 200–250 student enrollment decline and a mere \$100 increase in state per-pupil funding, coupled with rising PERS costs, places DCSD in fiscal hardship.
- **Delayed Mental Health Support Program Needs Clarity:** The HEART for Youth Program, aimed at addressing student mental health, was deferred due to concerns over referral processes and parental consent.
- **Shift to Standards-Based Grading May Affect Motivation:** The 1-2-3 grading system, implemented three years ago for upper elementary grades, might be reducing student motivation compared to traditional A-F grades.

[Read the full report.](#)