

WESTON FIRST SELECTWOMAN SAMANTHA NESTOR COMMENTS ON T-MOBILE AND THE 56 NORFIELD ROAD CELL TOWER

Many of you have reached out to me over the past few days with questions about T-Mobile service here in Weston. I want to take a moment to share with you exactly what's going on, since I know how important reliable cell coverage is for our families, schools, and businesses.

As you may know, the Town now owns the cell tower at 56 Norfield Road, where Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile all have equipment. Recently, T-Mobile made the decision to reduce the power of its signal from the tower, and understandably, this has caused concern. Below I've put together some clear answers to the most common questions I've been hearing.

1. QUESTION: When and how did the Town acquire the tower?

ANSWER: The tower sits on Town property. For years, a company called Crown Castle leased part of the property, owned the tower itself, and rented space on it to the carriers. When Crown Castle's lease ended in December 2024, the Town took over ownership of the tower directly.

2. QUESTION: Has the Town obtained professional advice on managing the tower?

ANSWER: Yes—we wanted to be sure we had solid guidance. The Town retained Bench Strength Partners (BSP), a consulting firm that specializes in representing local governments in the management of their portfolios of cell antenna leases. BSP provided an assessment of fair market rent for the tower. The Town also consulted Attorney Douglas LoMonte of Berchem Moses PC, who has extensive experience advising Connecticut municipalities — including Westport, Wilton, New Canaan, Easton, Trumbull, Guilford and Madison — on cell tower matters.

3. QUESTION: What was the Town's approach to the three carriers when the Crown Castle lease expired?

ANSWER: The Town reached out to Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile, informed them of the lease expiration, and invited each carrier to negotiate a new lease directly with the Town.

4. QUESTION: What was the response of Verizon and AT&T?

ANSWER: Both companies entered into straightforward negotiations with BSP and agreed to fair leases. They'll be paying the Town \$94,000 and \$85,000 a year, with modest annual increases. Importantly, they also agreed to make those payments retroactive to when the Town took ownership of the tower.

5. QUESTION: What was T-Mobile's response?

ANSWER: T-Mobile negotiated with the Town, through BSP, but the Town and T-Mobile have not come to an agreement on fair rental value. The Town has proposed rent of \$88,200 for the first year of the lease. That figure is between the dollar amounts agreed-to by Verizon and AT&T. T-Mobile countered with a rent of \$30,251.76. So far, they have been unwilling to move from that offer.

6. QUESTION: What is T-Mobile's negotiating position?

ANSWER: T-Mobile has maintained its original rental offer and has not indicated a willingness to increase it. T-Mobile currently occupies the highest position on the tower—a typically desirable location. Rather than increase its offer, T-Mobile notified the Town that it intends to decommission its equipment (i. e., remove its equipment from the tower and equipment building and cease providing cell service).

7. QUESTION: Why has T-Mobile threatened to decommission its equipment?

ANSWER: T-Mobile claims that it's about money. Yet, T-Mobile has repeatedly refused to share with the Town how much revenue the tower generates. Further, the cost to decommission the site is not insignificant for them either. T-Mobile's strategy looks like an attempt to create fear and anxiety among Weston residents in order to create pressure on the Town to capitulate in the negotiations and to intimidate a small town.

According to public filings, for the calendar year ended 12/31/2024, T-Mobile USA's gross revenues were \$81.4 billion with a gross profit of \$51.747 billion. A rent increase of \$57,948 per year does not appear to be excessive for a huge publicly-traded conglomerate.

8. QUESTION: Why has the Town not conceded to T-Mobile's rent offer?

ANSWER: Put simply, we need to be responsible with our residents' resources. This tower is a Town-owned asset, and it's only fair that the companies using it pay something that reflects its value. Accepting significantly less would not be in the best interest of Weston taxpayers.

9. QUESTION: Is the Town open to mediation or arbitration?

ANSWER: Yes. State law provides a mechanism to deal with rent disputes. T-Mobile's response has been to power-down and threaten to decommission its equipment rather than use this tool.

10. QUESTION: Has the Town interfered with T-Mobile's service or equipment?

ANSWER: No. Any service reductions or interruptions are being implemented solely by T-Mobile and are being done remotely without the Town's involvement. T-Mobile has the ability to reduce its transmitting power remotely, and that's what it has chosen to do.

11. QUESTION: Has T-Mobile paid any rent to the Town since the Town acquired the tower on December 14, 2024?

ANSWER: No. T-Mobile has been using the Town's tower since December 14, 2024 without paying any rent whatsoever.

12. QUESTION: Is the interruption of T-Mobile service temporary or permanent?

ANSWER: That's entirely up to T-Mobile. They could restore full strength at any time, or they could decide to remove their equipment altogether. If they continue using the tower without payment, the Town may eventually need to go to court. The Town remains open to continued discussions and resolution.

13. QUESTION: If I have service through T-Mobile, should I consider switching to another carrier?

ANSWER: That's a very personal decision. Verizon and AT&T currently have agreements with the Town and are providing service from the tower. Some residents have already asked those carriers about switching, especially to find out if they'll help cover cancellation fees. If you're a T-Mobile customer, you may want to do the same.

14. QUESTION: Can T-Mobile customers still call 911?

ANSWER: Yes—always. By law, 911 calls must be connected no matter which carrier you have. So long as Verizon and AT&T are providing service from the tower, T-Mobile subscribers will be able to use their cell phones to make 911 calls.

15. QUESTION: What can I do to help my Town?

ANSWER: If you'd like, you can reach out to T-Mobile directly and let them know how important service is to you as a Weston resident. Sometimes, hearing from the community helps move negotiations forward in a constructive way.

I know this situation has created frustration and uncertainty, and I share your concerns. Please know that Weston is standing firm on behalf of taxpayers, while keeping open the door for a fair resolution. My priority is making sure we protect Town assets without sacrificing the quality of service our residents deserve.