Council Direction:

On February 16, 2010, the Economic Development and Planning Committee directed:

“That Public Works staff be directed to bring a report back to the Economic Development and Planning Committee, respecting the following items; (10) Economic Development & Planning Minutes 10-004 Committee

- negotiate a more substantial monthly rate for the installation of cell antennas on water towers;
- make arrangements for appropriate insurance certificate to hold City harmless for Health and Safety and other claims;
- draft agreement that City staff attend water tower locations with cell provider and the cell provider pay the costs of City staff person”.

Information:

Background

Since this direction, staff met with representatives from the Telecommunications industry and more specifically Bell, Telus and Rogers to discuss the aforementioned direction. While there currently is no desire to enter into an agreement that satisfies the committee direction there has been significant progress with respect to opportunities for the cellular companies to work more proactively with the City respecting future tower sites. Staff believe this more proactive approach will allow the City to exercise more influence with respect to locating these facilities in future.
A number of meetings were convened with staff and representatives from the industry and as a result of these discussions City staff have provided the relevant stakeholders with the locations of municipal properties that may be candidates for future tower sites. There is a strong belief that making City facilities available for future tower sites that the need for the cell providers to locate elsewhere will be significantly reduced. Additionally the City is anxious to explore what revenue opportunities exist with this approach. As a result of being the “landlord of choice” for these facilities there exists an opportunity to work more collaboratively with the telecommunications companies to ensure a successful relationship ensues.

Technology that supports the use of cellular phones and other wireless devices is changing rapidly as is the demographic of wireless customers. Generally the industry is seeing a growing need for shorter towers in more locations. In an effort to support the growth of this industry in a manner acceptable to residents the City will continue to work with the telecommunications companies to find candidate sites that are City owned. As a result of ongoing meetings with staff and the cellular providers new opportunities have emerged with respect to placement of towers and the use of less invasive, unsightly structures. To ensure that the City is well served by future involvement with the cellular industry this issue has been directed to the Portfolio Management Committee for carriage.

Portfolio Management Committee will provide the direction through a corporate working group in order that all vested interests throughout the Corporation are covered. The working group will deal with various issues, such as the health risk associated with cell phone towers as outlined in Information Report BOH08013, as well as operating concerns, which include security risks, cost recovery of energy used to power up and operate the towers, legal requirements and finally establishing a revenue value that makes this venture viable and profitable to the City of Hamilton.