

## James City

## Residents might appeal cell towers decision

*The Kingsmill opponents agree reception is spotty but don't want the "monopines."*

BY NICOLAS ZIMMERMAN

nzimmerman@dailypress.com | 247-4760

**JAMES are** — A group of Kingsmill residents say they're likely to appeal a review board's decision this week to allow two 120-foot cell towers to be built on property adjacent to the upscale subdivision.

A 3-0 vote Wednesday by the James City County Development Review Committee cleared the way for the towers, which representatives of Verizon Wireless and AT&T say they need to improve Kingsmill's spotty →  
Shone reception.

Nearby homeowners argue that erecting the towers would tarnish their views, devalue their properties and violate the county's own zoning code.

"We recognize that Kingsmill needs better phone service," said David Neiman, a member of a Kingsmill residents group that opposes the current plan for cell towers.

"All we're saying is we should evenhandedly consider alternatives before deciding on cell phone towers," Neiman said. And we would very much like towers, if they are constructed, to not be in the middle of a residential area, especially when they do not, in our mind, meet the county's criteria to be considered camouflaged."

A crowd of roughly 50 packed a county conference room for Wednesday's meeting, with both sides represented in roughly equal measure.

According to the county's zoning ordinance, the cell towers may be built "by right" as long as the county planning director de-

termines them to be adequately camouflaged. County Planning Director Marvin Sowers determined earlier this year that Verizon's and AT&T's proposed towers met the county's guidelines, and Wednesday's hearing — which continued a hearing held May 28 — was held in response to a citizen challenge to Sowers' determination.

The proposed towers, called "monopines," are built to resemble evergreen trees. Representatives of the wireless companies Wednesday displayed photo simulations of the final product, which they say will blend in with the surrounding vegetation and be unnoticeable to "the casual observer." Opponents countered with their own photo

in wintertime, towering above neighboring deciduous trees benefit of leaves.

Kingsmill resident Bob Weber derided the notion the towers will look like anything besides what they actually are.

"If it looks like a duck, it probably is," he told the review board.

Other members of the group opposing the tower said they would look into challenging the board's decision to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Planning Commission Chairman Jack Fraley, who also sits on the Development Review Board, acknowledged homeowners' concerns about the cell towers but deferred to the wording of the county ordinance.

"It comes down to the technical definitions of the ordinance having been met with respect to setbacks, buffer and landscapes," he said.

The James City County Citizens' Coalition will host a meeting Wednesday with an Atlanta engineering firm that has installed wireless systems that do not rely on stand-alone cell towers.