

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT
PUBLIC OVERSIGHT HEARING**

District Department of Transportation: Public Space Committee

Friday February 26, 2021

Testimony of Beth Purcell on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society

Good afternoon. My name is Beth Purcell, and I am testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS), the largest civic organization on Capitol Hill. CHRS advocates for the health, welfare, and preservation of the Capitol Hill community.

My testimony concerns DDOT's Public Space Committee and the installation of 5G/small cell technology on street poles in public space. CHRS supports 5G service for Washington.

In developing the guidelines for small cell installations, the Public Space Committee followed an inclusive and open process to involve the community in decision-making. The Committee held at least two hearings as well as neighborhood meetings where residents learned about small cell installations and could question DDOT employees and each of the wireless carriers. The Public Space Committee issued two drafts of its proposed guidelines and issued the final guidelines in March 2019. The final guidelines expressly deferred deciding one important issue – the rules on attaching metal boxes (also called “cabinetry”) to free-standing street poles. The *Small Cell Design Guidelines* (3rd version March 2019) state that:

...except for Small Cell Infrastructure attached to wooden poles, Small Cell infrastructure requiring any cabinetry, including pole mounted or ground level, is not to be installed until the cabinetry design has been reviewed and formally adopted by the PSC as part of these guidelines. *Guidelines*, section 5.3.1.

As far as we can determine, the Public Space Committee has never issued guidance on 5G installations with cabinetry. Nevertheless, a wireless carrier has installed small cell equipment with cabinetry on the 1500 block of T Street, NW (shown in the photographs below) and at 16th Street and Riggs Place, NW. Because the Master License Agreement allows carriers to request installation of additional equipment on the same pole, a relatively small metal box could later grow in size. We understand that in other cities, cabinetry can be as large as a USPS mail box. Carriers may have already installed 5G equipment with cabinetry at other locations, and may be planning such installations in other neighborhoods, including Capitol Hill.

We emailed the chair of the Public Space Committee and asked about guidelines on cabinetry and cabinetry installations and received no response to these questions. We have asked that the Public Space Committee temporarily suspend issuing permits on cabinetry installations on metal poles until cabinetry guidelines are properly developed and finalized. If the Public Space Committee adheres to its own guidelines, cabinetry installations should be functional, uniform, and as attractive as possible. The Public Space Committee got off to a good start with public engagement on the *Small Cell Design Guidelines*. For these reasons we requested that the Public Space Committee begin public engagement on cabinetry installations. We hope that the Council will encourage the Public Space Committee to engage with the community, issue guidance on cabinetry, and in the meantime issue no permits for cabinetry.

Thank you for considering our testimony.

Small cell installation with cabinetry, 1500 block of T Street, NW



Small cell installation with cabinetry, 1500 block of T Street, NW

