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To: Sonoma County Planning Agency
From: Doug Bush, Planner
Date: 1/23/2026
Subject: Telecommunications Ad-Hoc Completion

Purpose

Provide the Planning Agency with a report out from the Telecommunications Ad Hoc Committee.

Background

On April 10, 2025, the Planning Agency created the Telecommunications Ad-Hoc Committee to:

- identify challenges and opportunities with the current telecommunications ordinance and permitting process,
- provide input on priorities and goals, and
- review general updates prepared by staff before presentation to the Planning Commission.

The Ad-Hoc Committee met six times between August and December 2025 to review the existing ordinance, application materials, and federal law considerations. This item presents and concludes the work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Summary of Ad-Hoc Work

These points summarize key priorities and objectives that came out of the Ad-Hoc's work:

- **More structured alternatives and visual analysis:** A clearer, standardized framework requiring applicants to compare multiple siting, design, and height alternatives supported by coverage maps and visual simulations.
- **Defined minimum alternatives:** Generally three site alternatives, two design alternatives, and two height alternatives per design.
- **Expanded design and height comparisons:** More explicit evaluation of structure type, form factor, concealment, and multiple feasible heights supported by technical documentation.
- **Strengthened collocation analysis:** Documentation of feasible collocation opportunities, including evidence of outreach and negotiation.

- Clearer trade-off analysis: More explicit comparison of reliability, height, number of structures, visual impact, environmental considerations, and compatibility with surrounding land uses.
- Decommissioning and removal standards: New procedures for identifying abandoned facilities, requiring their removal, and ensuring proper site restoration; includes financial assurance and enforcement tools.
- Updated definitions and cleanup: Modernized terminology and clearer language addressing Eligible Facilities Requests and exempt activities.

Staff has prepared proposed revisions to the Telecommunications Ordinance. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing in February for formal review of the proposed revisions to the Telecommunications Ordinance. The Planning Commission will provide direction to staff and, if recommended, staff will bring the Ordinance for final consideration to the Board of Supervisors.

Requested Action

Receive this report for information only.

Attachments

Attachment A: Telecommunications Ad-Hoc Charter adopted by Planning Agency