

Castle Valley Fire Protection District
Castle Valley Fire Commission
February REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, February 19, 2026 6:00 pm
Station 1, M.P. 4.2 Castleton Road, Castle Valley, Utah 84532

Attending:

Maggie Peikon

Mitch Stock

Jazmine Duncan

Ron Drake

Carol Drake

Michael Wakeley

Greg Halliday

Five community members for public comment on the cell tower.

Regular Meeting:

Call to Order:

1. Public Comment:

- a. A group of Castle Valley residents are in attendance to speak on the Cell Tower, and asking for those with knowledge of the cell tower to speak and share more information.

Mitch shared that Verizon approached us asking to have the tower at our station. Approached Jazmine first for a site on Rimshadow, which was deemed a bad idea. They asked about town owned property, and Jazmine shared she didn't believe anything we had would be feasible (either we didn't have the connectivity they needed or being directly in the center of the neighborhood). Ron shared that we had one meeting with Dan Thurgood and walked him around the property to explore the layout and that's about as far as it has gone. Dan has not reached out since.

Ron noted that there was a particular spot that Dan was seemingly most interested in that was up higher. Ron shared that there would be a town meeting

before anything progressed where the community would come together and Dan could share more insight. Dan also mentioned that he could put a balloon up to have a visual of how high it would be so that we could see the impact visually. Mitch shared with Dan that the visual was essential to be able to see the impact it would have on the view.

If it ended up here at the station they would pay \$1000/mo for the base rate, and if other companies joined (i.e., TMobile, ATT) would add additional income to that \$1,000/mo. Dan did note that they can only offer those services if the tower is of a certain height.

Ron shared that they were interested in Rimshadow because they may be in negotiations to buy Frontier out, and that Dan is also looking at Castle Valley Academy as an option.

Bob shared community wide implications of the cell tower, and the growing opposition. Bob shared some questions and concerns:

“Is there a proposal?”

Bob shared that this is an extreme hazard for both fire and rescue.

Bob’s biggest personal concern is the biological and health impacts — from the International Association of Fire Fighters which is unanimously opposed to cell towers at stations because of the impacts on firefighters and neighbors. Bob noted they are updating their communications for the digital age to satellite, noting that towers will be obsolete pretty soon. Our mission here is public safety, and that should be given great consideration. Grand County has seemed to reject further applications for such towers. Bob shared other more lucrative fundraising options for the fire district and department — grants, tax moneys from the state, local donations (some from those not in favor of the cell tower).

Pam reiterated much of what Bob said. The #1 thing that people do not want is impairing their viewscape. 80ft minimum tower is going to have a huge impact, not just on the neighbors closest (on Shafer), it will be seen across the entire valley. Some residents have spent thousands of dollars to take down poles and this would feel like a slap in the face to them. Pam noted this feels unnecessary and like old technology — phone companies are becoming obsolete, and towers are becoming obsolete. Satellites are everywhere. Pam shared the amount of money is something we can raise ourselves, and if the fire department needs it the community has (and will) step up. Moab is turning down cell towers in Spanish Valley. This type of commercial enterprise is not appropriate. What we

have in Castle Valley is very special, and it wouldn't take much to mess it up and possibly not be able to fix it after the fact.

Terry affirms what has already been said and wanted to bring up a new point about the mortality of birds by cell towers. Pinyon Jays are not being seen like we used to, and they're very vulnerable. It's a consideration that needs to be addressed. She noted that we are vulnerable here in Castle Valley in ways we haven't been before — a nod to our recent floods — and that this makes us more vulnerable. Terry shared she knows of a rural community with a cell tower in Maine and it is within a migratory path, and the bird mortality has been severe. There has also been a rise of cancers in that area over time (though there have not been specific studies, people are suspecting this could be a cause). We have this refuge and sanctuary in Castle Valley and that this view tower — at any height — will greatly impact that. Terry shared that she and many other neighbors would donate to the fire department.

Brooke spoke to others outside the community about their personal choice in cell company (Verizon), and heard that they are not as progressive, and not looking to invest in satellites. If this is just a business decision that they've made to keep their customers happy as opposed to buying into the new technology, that's worth looking at.

Mitch shared that Dan let them know they do plan to acquire Frontier and that they will *definitely* have a presence here whether we have a tower at the station or not.

Bob said many things in our ordinances (Dark Sky) are violated by this cell tower, even if the tower isn't "technically" within the town of Castle Valley. Bob reiterated Terry's concern about the birds and added that pollinators are greatly impacted by cell towers. Terry asks a question about the lights on the tower that might impact the Dark Sky, and Mitch noted that we wouldn't be required to put one at 80ft, but for safety reasons if we had one here (because of search and rescue) we would need one. This was brought up to Dan who said they could point it in a particular direction to potentially mitigate the impact. Bob is compiling a list of links of the health impacts to circulate within the next few days.

Carol wants to put on the record that she agrees with everything that has been said. Her initial reason was the aesthetic, and that we will wreck Castle Valley with this. She hears the comments on the health implications, and also doubles down on the fact that this technology will be obsolete.

Emergency management communications are spotty, community members suggest setting up repeaters rather than relying on the cell tower. Proposal to look into a repeater system. There may be lightning problems (Mitch shared that a previous repeater installed at Station 1 was struck and taken out), but there are ways to work with that, and the repeater system can be tied together through fiber. Ron shared that we are applying for a 10k grant to buy 2 new handheld radios — expressing how highly priced they are (the state mandates that we all have the same radios to communicate with one another). A repeater should work as well as a cell tower for the radios to fill in dead spots for the emergency communication.

Mike asked what wavelength are we concerned about as far as health implications — what comes from the repeater vs. what comes from the cell tower.

Greg expresses that he doesn't see any health issues. The main issue is aesthetics. Bob reiterates that the health impacts are documented and the evidence is out there that shows all of the studies, specifically of firefighters who had health implications from being near the cell towers. Mike noted that many of the research papers were inconclusive on whether or not health was impacted by cell phone towers. Mike has many years of experience in radiation protection. Bob will circulate literature that makes those conclusions. The advantage of repeaters is that they are not broadcasting all of the time.

Public comment closed at 6:54pm

See below for email submissions from Castle Valley Community Members.

2. Approval of Minutes from January:
 - a. Unanimously approved
3. Administration Issues:
 - a. Using the Town Council's equipment for hybrid meetings
 - i. Mitch spoke with Jocelyn and we can try it for next month and need to coordinate a time to learn how to use the equipment when she's there.

4. Chief's Report: Ron Drake
 - a. No fires since our last meeting. One EMS assist. One meeting with Dan Thurgood for the cell tower. Did several controlled burns of large piles of tumbleweeds. Engine 1 had a major oil leak and had to be fixed (bill was over \$1,300). Took Engine 40 from Station 2 and brought it up to Station 1. Thought it good to have a better engine up here for any incidents on this side of the creek. Had to buy a new tire for Engine 1 (hole in side wall) — bill hasn't come yet, but likely around \$300-\$350. Worked with Bill on getting a grant for the radios (~\$4,400 a piece). We have about 6 or 7 hand held radios at Station 2 and 4 mobile radios as well.
 - b. Jazmine asked about burning on Pace Lane – permits are required for the property that they own not for town right of ways and sharing about the risk factors of burns outside of property.
 - c. Engine 37 trip up to Springville delayed due to weather, will likely go up on Tuesday.
5. Treasurer's Report: Carol Drake, Mike Wakeley
 - a. Page 1 PTIF Funds came at \$442,329.33 26% higher than last year at this point
 - b. Profit Loss Detail - In Jan \$2,700 in donations. Engine maintenance \$1,883.22 — much needed and in budget.
 - c. Revenue and expense we are at 5.8% at our repairs and maintenance budget. We're in good shape.
6. Discussion and Possible Action: Updates on Engine 37
 - a. Going up on Tuesday to Springville
7. Discussion and Possible Action: Updates on Water Tender
 - a. No new news. Engine 38 is working and is back online again. We don't want to spend all of our money on this. Jazmine raises the concern that relying on donations to reach loan amounts each year is risky. The hope is to find a grant, or a good used one that we feel comfortable with. Carol asked if there's the opportunity for tax money to be put towards the loan needed for this. Mitch shared fundraising is a strong option, and a low interest loan through the CIB though that's not something to count on either. Our current tender should hold out for a while (still has a water leak), and is pretty reliable right now. It's a 1991 model. BLM has some very old water tenders for free - but is that a worthwhile choice if they need recurring maintenance?
8. Discussion and Possible Action: Updates on Cell Tower
 - a. No updated beyond what was discussed in our Public comment
 - b. It would be interesting to hear from everyone if we had a Public Meeting
 - c. If the Fire Department doesn't take them up on the offer, they will bring it somewhere else — it is coming, whether it's to Station 1 or another location.

Putting it up above the cow pond was a suggestion from a neighbor (but that's on BLM Land).

- d. Confirmed that Verizon has acquired Frontier as of Jan 2026.
- 9. Discussion and Possible Action: Items for inclusion in the state fire grant
 - a. Fire Shelters, Wildland Fire Eye Protection, Wildland Backpacks, Wildland boots
- 10. Discussion and possible action on long term planning, fire dept. needs, priorities, vision and policies: development of standard operating guidelines, policies and procedures.
 - a. Jazmine mentioned updating our MOU.
- 11. Closed Session (if necessary): personnel matters, awards; recognition program, etc.

Adjourn:

8:07pm

—

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the CV Fire Department's consideration to lease property at the end of Shafer Lane to Verizon for a cell tower.

I am just finishing construction on a new custom home at 193 Shafer Lane. I made a significant investment in this property, specifically choosing this location to live in a rural setting away from the noise and pollution often found elsewhere.

The proposed tower would be located less than a third of a mile from my home. The tower will be located directly in front of my view of Castleton Tower. I am deeply concerned about the health risks associated with being bombarded by EMF radiation at such close proximity, as there is evidence linking residence this close to cell towers to higher cancer rates.

Furthermore, the residents at the east end of Shafer Lane have recently invested a significant amount of time and money to have the power lines buried across our properties to preserve the area. A new cell tower would undermine these efforts.

I can't imagine any residents of Castle Valley would support a cell tower in their "backyard".

I urge you to oppose this proposal.

Best regards,

Stephen M.

—

First, thanks for your service as Fire Commissioners for Castle Valley. I appreciate the important work that you do.

I'd like to chime in as one Castle Valley resident (part-time physically, full-time in my heart) who **opposes a cell tower in Castle Valley.**

I'm old enough to not be fully attached to my phone, and find it relaxing that my cell phone doesn't have reception beyond my home's wi-fi in this valley.

That Castle Valley has clean air, clean water, dark skies and good neighbors is priceless to me. I can't express in words how much it means to me. I feel strongly about this valley also being clean of cell phone radiation.

Thanks for listening!

Cheers,
Kinde

—

Hi all,

I see that the cell tower is on the Fire Commission agenda for tonight. Sorry for the last-minute email.

I wanted to pass along some information that I've been sent from various people in the valley—their concerns range from health effects to viewshed to establishing a commercial use in the valley.

On a positive note, they've also talked about the possibility of getting together to raise funds for the Fire District to equal or exceed what could be raised from a lease with Verizon.

Here are some of the links that people have sent about the health effects.

Children's Health Defense

<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/EMR-Q1-Flyer1-FactSheet-013124.pdf>

International Association of Firefighters:

<https://www.iaff.org/cell-tower-radiation/>

Also, attached is a mockup someone (AI) did of an 80 foot tower near the loop road.

Have a good meeting.

Harry