

1 THE TOWN OF COVENTRY
2
3

4 **ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

5
6 IN AMENDMENT OF THE TOWN OF COVENTRY CODE OF ORDINANCES,
7 2008 PART II – GENERAL LEGISLATION,
8 CHAPTER 255, ARTICLE IX – Supplementary Regulations
9

10 **Ordinance No. 2026-11**

11
12 *The Town Council of the Town of Coventry hereby ordains as follows:*

13
14 **Section 1.** The Town of Coventry Code of Ordinance, Part II General Legislation is hereby
15 amended by amending the following Chapter and Sections of Article IX:

16
17 **Article IX, Chapter 255 — Zoning (Supplementary Regulations)**

18
19 **§ 255-970 Telecommunication towers.**

20
21 A. Purpose. The intent of this section is to regulate the placement of new telecommunication
22 towers, telephone and cable television equipment and related equipment and addition of
23 communication equipment to existing structures. The regulations serve to establish a procedure
24 for application and variance from the regulations; establish development standards and locational
25 requirements and to encourage the co-location of equipment onto existing structures.

26
27 (1) The purpose of this section is to establish general guidelines for the siting of communication
28 towers and antennas. The goals of this section are to:

29
30 (a) Encourage the location of towers for telecommunication equipment and cable television
31 equipment in nonresidential areas and minimize the total number of towers throughout the
32 community;

33
34 (b) Strongly encourage the joint use of new and existing tower sites;

35
36 (c) Encourage users of towers and antennas to locate them, to the greatest extent possible, in areas
37 where any adverse impacts on the community are minimized;

38
39 (d) Encourage applicants and users of towers, antennas and equipment to configure them in a way
40 that minimizes the adverse visual impact of the towers, antennas and equipment;

41
42 (e) Enhance the ability of the providers of telecommunications services to provide such services
43 to the community quickly, effectively and efficiently.

44
45 B. Definitions. As used in this section, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

46 ACCESSORY STRUCTURE
47 Addition(s) to existing tower(s) or nonresidential structure including the mechanical building,
48 mounting equipment or additional antenna not to exceed 20 feet above the original structure.
49

50 ALTERNATIVE TOWER STRUCTURE
51 Man-made trees, clock towers, bell steeples, light poles and similar alternative-design mounting
52 structures that camouflage or conceal the presence of antennas or towers.
53

54 ANTENNA
55 Any exterior apparatus designed for telephonic, radio, or television communications through the
56 sending and/or receiving of electromagnetic waves.
57

58 FAA
59 The Federal Aviation Administration.
60

61 FCC
62 The Federal Communications Commission.
63

64 GOVERNING AUTHORITY
65 Either the Buildings Official or the Zoning Board of Review.
66

67 HEIGHT
68 When referring to a tower or other structure, the distance measured from ground level to the highest
69 point on the tower or other structure, even if said highest point is an antenna.
70

71 PRE-EXISTING TOWERS AND ANTENNAS
72 Have the meaning set forth in Subsection C(3) of this section.
73

74 PUBLIC OFFICER
75 The Zoning Enforcement Officer or Building Official of the Town of Coventry.
76

77 RELATED EQUIPMENT
78 Equipment and/or structures which is/are an integral part of the system or any structures used to
79 house such equipment.
80

81 TOWER
82 Any structure that is designed and constructed primarily for the purpose of supporting one or more
83 antennas, including self-supporting lattice towers, guy towers, or monopole towers. The term
84 includes radio and television transmission towers, microwave towers, common-carrier towers,
85 cellular telephone towers, alternative tower structures, and the like.
86

87 C. Applicability.
88

89 (1) New towers and facilities. The requirements set forth in this section shall govern the location
90 of all new towers, facilities and related equipment that exceed, and antennas that are installed at a

91 height in excess of, the height limitations specified for each zoning district. The height limitations
92 applicable to buildings and structures shall not apply to towers and antennas.

93
94 (2) Amateur radio; receive-only antennas. This section shall not govern any tower, or the
95 installation of any antenna, that is under 70 feet in height and is owned and operated by a federally
96 licensed amateur radio station operator or is used exclusively for receive-only antennas.

97
98 (3) Preexisting towers and antennas. Any tower or antenna for which a permit has been properly
99 issued prior to the effective date of this section shall not be required to meet the requirements of
100 this section, other than the requirements of Subsection D(3) and (4). Any such towers or antennas
101 shall be referred to in this section as "preexisting towers" or "preexisting antennas."

102
103 D. General guidelines and requirements.

104
105 (1) Principal or accessory use. Antennas and towers may be considered either principal or
106 accessory uses. A different existing use or an existing structure on the same lot shall not preclude
107 the installation of an antenna or tower on such lot. For purposes of determining whether the
108 installation of a tower or antenna complies with district development regulations, including but
109 not limited to setback requirements, lot coverage requirements, and other such requirements, the
110 dimensions of the entire lot shall control, even though the antennas or towers may be located on
111 leased parcels within such lots. Towers that are constructed, and antennas that are installed, in
112 accordance with the provisions of this section shall not be deemed to constitute the expansion of a
113 nonconforming use or structure. Towers and base facilities may not take away required parking
114 spaces of an existing building.

115
116 (2) Inventory of existing sites. Each applicant for an antenna and/or tower shall provide to the
117 Building Department an inventory of its existing towers that are either within the Town of
118 Coventry and within 10 miles of the border thereof, including specific information about the
119 location, height, design and capacity of each tower. The Building Department may share such
120 information with other applicants applying for administrative approvals or special use permits
121 under this section or other organizations seeking to locate antennas within the Town; provided,
122 however, that the Building Department is not, by sharing such information, in any way
123 representing or warranting that such sites are available or suitable.

124
125 (3) Federal requirements. All towers must meet or exceed current standards and regulations of the
126 Rhode Island State Building Code, FAA, the FCC, and any other agency of the federal government
127 with the authority to regulate towers and antennas. Failure to bring towers and antennas into
128 compliance with such revised standards and regulations shall constitute grounds for the removal
129 of the tower or antenna at the owner's expense.

130
131 (4) Building codes: safety standards. To ensure the structural integrity of towers, the owner of a
132 tower shall ensure that it is maintained in compliance with standards contained in the State
133 Building Codes as amended from time to time. If, upon inspection, the Building Official concludes
134 that a tower fails to comply with such codes and standards, and constitutes a danger to persons or
135 property, then the Building Official shall proceed in accordance with Chapter 27.3 of Title 23 of
136 the R.I.G.L., entitled "State Building Code."

137
138 (5) Notification. All applicants shall send certified mail announcements to all other users locating
139 in Coventry, declaring their sharing capabilities and siting needs. Except in cases where
140 mechanical, structural or regulatory factors prevent them from sharing, applicants cannot be denied
141 or deny space on a tower.
142

143 (6) ANSI Standards. Upon completion of construction, the applicant shall submit an annual report
144 to the Town Engineer which provides quantified electromagnetic field (EMF) measurements and
145 compares these measurements to current Federal and American National Standards Institute
146 (ANSI) standards or subsequent standards. If the project does not meet federal and ANSI
147 standards, the permit may be modified or revoked.
148

149 E. Procedures.

150
151 (1) General.

152
153 (a) A preapplication conference with the Planning Department is required before any building
154 permit is sought. The conference will serve to familiarize the applicant with the Town's
155 regulations. The Planning Department shall approve the site plan prior to the issuance of any
156 building permit.
157

158 (b) Building permits are required for all telecommunications towers, related equipment and similar
159 facilities.
160

161 (c) Each applicant for such building permit shall apply to the Building Department, providing the
162 information set forth in Subsection G(2) below.
163

164 (d) The Building Department shall respond to each such application within 30 days after receiving
165 it by either approving or denying the application. If the Building Department fails to respond to
166 the applicant within said 30 days, then the application shall be deemed to be approved.
167

168 (e) In connection with any such administrative approval, the Zoning Enforcement Officer may, in
169 order to encourage shared use, administratively waive any zoning district setback requirement by
170 up to 10%.
171

172 (f) If an administrative approval is denied, the applicant may appeal said denial in accordance with
173 the provisions of the zoning article concerning appeals of administrative decisions.
174

175 F. Permitted uses.

176
177 (1) General. The uses listed in this subsection are deemed to be permitted uses and shall not require
178 a special use permit. Nevertheless, all such uses shall comply with Subsection D(3) and (4) above,
179 and Subsection H and all other applicable statutes and articles.
180

181 (2) Specific permitted uses. The following uses are specifically permitted:
182

183 (a) Locating a tower or antenna, including the placement of additional buildings or other
184 supporting equipment used in connection with said tower or antenna, in an I1 Industrial or Business
185 Park Zoning District; provided, however, that such tower shall be set back from any existing off-
186 site residence a distance equal to the height of the tower or in the case of an unoccupied lot, set
187 back a distance equal to the height of the tower less the residential yard setback for the adjacent
188 residential lot;

189
190 (b) Installing an antenna on an existing structure other than a tower (such as a building, sign, light
191 pole, water tower, or other freestanding nonresidential structure) that is 50 feet in height or greater,
192 so long as said additional antenna adds no more than 20 feet to the height of said existing structure;

193
194 (c) Installing an antenna on any existing tower of any height, so long as the addition of said antenna
195 adds no more than 20 feet to the height of said existing tower; provided, however, that such specific
196 permitted use shall not include the placement of additional buildings or other supporting equipment
197 used in connection with said antenna;

198
199 (d) Location of communication towers, cable television equipment and related equipment on
200 municipal property, i.e., Town or school property, shall be allowed by right, provided that a site
201 plan, approved by the Director of Planning, is provided before a building permit may be issued.

202
203 G. Special use permits.

204
205 (1) General. The following conditions shall require the issuance of special use permits:

206
207 (a) If the tower or antenna is not a permitted use under Subsection F of this section or permitted to
208 be approved administratively pursuant to Subsection E of this section, then a special use permit
209 shall be required for the construction of a tower or the placement of an antenna in all zoning
210 districts.

211
212 (b) In granting a special use permit, the Zoning Board of Review may impose conditions, to the
213 extent the Board concludes such conditions are necessary, to minimize any adverse effect of the
214 proposed tower on adjoining properties.

215
216 (c) Any information of an engineering nature that the applicant submits, whether civil, mechanical,
217 or electrical, shall be certified by a licensed professional engineer.

218
219 (2) Information required. Each applicant requesting a special use permit under this section shall
220 submit a scaled site plan and a scaled elevation view and other supporting drawings, calculations,
221 and other documentation, signed and sealed by appropriate licensed professionals, showing the
222 location and dimensions of all improvements, including information concerning topography, radio
223 frequency coverage, tower height requirements, setbacks, drives, parking, fencing,
224 buffering/landscaping, adjacent uses, and other information deemed by the Zoning Board of
225 Review to be necessary to assess compliance with this section.

226
227 (3) Factors considered in granting special use permits. The Zoning Board shall consider the
228 following factors in determining whether to issue a special use permit, although the Board may

229 waive or reduce the burden on the applicant of one or more of these criteria if they find that the
230 goals of this section are better served thereby.

231

232 (a) Height of the proposed tower;

233

234 (b) Proximity of the tower to residential structures and residential district boundaries;

235

236 (c) Nature of uses on adjacent and nearby properties;

237

238 (d) Surrounding topography;

239

240 (e) Surrounding tree coverage and foliage;

241

242 (f) Design of the tower, with particular reference to design characteristics that have the effect of
243 reducing or eliminating visual obtrusiveness;

244

245 (g) Proposed ingress and egress; and

246

247 (h) Availability of suitable existing towers and other structures as discussed in Subsection F(2)(6)
248 of this section.

249

250 (4) Availability of suitable existing towers or other structures. No new tower shall be permitted
251 unless the applicant demonstrates to the reasonable satisfaction of the Zoning Board that no
252 existing tower or structure can accommodate the applicant's proposed antenna. Evidence submitted
253 to demonstrate that no existing tower or structure can accommodate the applicant's proposed
254 antenna may consist of any of the following:

255

256 (a) No existing towers or structures are located within the geographic area required to meet
257 applicant's engineering requirements.

258

259 (b) Existing towers or structures are not of sufficient height to meet applicant's engineering
260 requirements.

261

262 (c) Existing towers or structures do not have sufficient structural strength to support applicant's
263 proposed antenna and related equipment.

264

265 (d) The fees, costs, or contractual provisions required by the owner in order to share an existing
266 tower or structure or to adapt an existing tower or structure for sharing are unreasonable. Costs
267 exceeding new tower development are presumed to be unreasonable.

268

269 (e) The applicant demonstrates that there are other limiting factors that render existing towers and
270 structures unsuitable.

271

272 H. Design standards. The following design standards shall apply to all towers and antennas
273 approved by right or for which a special use permit is required; provided, however, that the Zoning

274 Officer or the Zoning Board of Review, as is applicable, may reduce the standard setbacks and
275 separation requirements if the goals of this section would be better served thereby.

276

277 (1) Setbacks and separation.

278

279 (a) Towers must be set back a distance equal to the height of the tower from any residential
280 structure or lot line, whichever is closer.

281

282 (b) Guys and accessory facilities must satisfy the minimum zoning district setback requirements
283 for accessory structures.

284

285 (c) In zoning districts other than Industrial or Business Park Zoning Districts, towers over 90 feet
286 in height shall not be located within one-quarter of a mile from any existing tower that is over 90
287 feet in height.

288

289 (2) Aesthetics: lighting.

290

291 (a) Towers shall either maintain a galvanized steel finish or, subject to any applicable standards of
292 the FAA, be painted a neutral color, so as to reduce visual obtrusiveness.

293

294 (b) At a tower site, the design of the buildings and related structures shall, to the extent possible,
295 use materials, colors, textures, screening, and landscaping that will blend the tower facilities into
296 the natural setting and built environment.

297

298 (c) If an antenna is installed on a structure other than a tower, the antenna and supporting electrical
299 and mechanical equipment must be of a neutral color that is identical to, or closely compatible
300 with, the color of the supporting structure so as to make the antenna and related equipment as
301 visually unobtrusive as possible.

302

303 (d) Towers shall not be artificially lighted, unless required by the FAA or other applicable
304 authority. If lighting is required, the appropriate governing authority may review the available
305 lighting alternatives and approve the design that would cause the least disturbance to the
306 surrounding views.

307

308 (3) Landscaping.

309

310 (a) Tower facilities shall be landscaped with a buffer of plant materials that effectively screens the
311 view of the tower compound from adjacent residential property. The standard buffer shall consist
312 of a landscaped strip which incorporates such measures as to adequately protect adjacent
313 properties, i.e., berming, shrub and tree plantings or a combination of these measures, at least six
314 feet wide outside the perimeter of the compound shall be provided. A site plan approval from the
315 Director of Planning and Development is required before a building permit may be issued.

316

317 (b) In locations where the visual impact of the tower would be minimal, the landscaping
318 requirement may be reduced or waived altogether.

319

320 (c) Existing mature tree growth and natural land forms on the site shall be preserved to the
321 maximum extent possible. In some cases, such as towers sited on large, wooded lots, natural
322 growth around the property perimeter may be sufficient buffer.

323
324 (4) Security fencing.

325
326 (a) Towers and equipment shall be enclosed by security fencing not less than six feet in height,
327 with appropriate anticlimbing devices.

328
329 (b) Towers and fencing shall also be equipped with the appropriate measures to ensure security of
330 the equipment and tower.

331
332 I. Removal of abandoned antennas and towers. Any antenna or tower that is not operated for a
333 continuous period of 12 months shall be considered abandoned, and the owner of such antenna or
334 tower shall remove same within 90 days of receipt of notice from the Building Official notifying
335 the owner of such abandonment. The applicant/owner shall post an acceptable form of "Financial
336 Security" as authorized and defined in the Town of Coventry Code of Ordinances, Part II General
337 Legislation, Chapter 123 a-bond which shall be reevaluated every two years, to cover the cost of
338 removal. If such antenna or tower is not removed within said 90 days, the Town may remove such
339 antenna or tower at the owner's expense. If there are two or more users of a single tower, then this
340 provision shall not become effective until all users cease using the tower.

341
342 **Section 2.** This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and final adoption.

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366 Approved as to Form:

367

368

369 _____
Town Solicitor Date

370

371

372

373 Introduced by/Pursuant to: Council 

374

375 Referred to/for: First Reading of the Ordinance on _____, 2026

376

377 Planning Commission for recommendation on _____, 2026

378

379 Public Hearing before the Town Council on _____, 2026

380

381

382 Passed or Denied on a vote of _____

383

384

385 _____
John-Paul A. Verducci – Town Council President

386

387

388 Approved:

389

390

391 _____
Daniel O. Parrillo – Town Manager

392

393

394 Certification Actions by Town Clerk:

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396
