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Cell tower antennas on hold after York Heights residents voice concerns

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YORK, Maine — A proposal to add cell towers atop a water tank in the York Heights neighborhood is officially on hold.

At their monthly meeting last Wednesday afternoon, the York Water District trustees voted 4-1 to "pause and study" the proposed AT&T cell antenna array, according to Superintendent Don Neumann.

The dissenting vote came from board chair Richard Boston, who said he wanted to turn down the project and direct AT&T to find a more appropriate location.

"I am very much opposed to ... putting cell (antennas) on the York Heights water tower," said Boston, who likened the issue to a 2002 fight to keep high-voltage transmission lines from passing through his York Village neighborhood.

"We had all the same concerns then ... radiation, property values, health issues," Boston said. "Back then, nobody could tell us any answers. There was a study that said it was harmful, and a study that said it wasn't harmful."

The majority determined further study was needed to properly weigh concerns of expressed by York Heights residents. Those include possible health risks from radiation emanating from the cell antennas, noise and safety risks related to a propane-fueled generator that would be installed on site, and a possible reduction in property values as a result of the antennas' presence in the densely populated residential area.

"We want to make the right decision," said Trustee Karen Arsenault. "We want to make sure we're doing the right thing for the community and for the water district."

"Residents have been saying (to the board) 'slow down and study' the project," Neumann said. "The board intends to honor the public process."

Neumann said he will meet with SmartLink, the consultant handling the project for AT&T, to request an independent peer review study of radio frequency radiation exposure on residents, especially as it may affect children, be prepared at AT&T's cost.