

# NOTTAWA TOWNSHIP

St. Joseph County

*Bret Lutz, Clerk*  
*Steven Clark, Trustee*

*Dave Peterson, Supervisor*

*Deb Rice, Treasurer*  
*Jim Rigby, Trustee*

## Cell Tower Update and Timeline

- October 2023** **Initial Mailings of Interest:** SMJ International on behalf of Vertical Bridge sent mailings to all property owners in the search ring area seeking agreement for hosting a cell tower. 10 sites had either no response or “not interested”. 1 site had a positive response, but was outside the search ring. 1 site (addressed as 25289 Findley Rd, owned by Vernon and Regina Hochstetler) was selected for a proposed site 250’ south of the intersection of Bucknell Rd and Findley Rd after a positive response. All other parcels were in wetlands or not zoned for telecommunications towers.
- November 8, 2024** **NEPA Review:** Trileaf Corporation completed a NEPA Review for the above-referenced tower site. The purpose of a NEPA Review is to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Trileaf performed extensive research by consulting with appropriate state and federal agencies and reviewing readily available published lists, files, data, and maps to provide a complete NEPA document. The scope of work Trileaf performed is in accordance with the Federal Communications Commission rules.
- November 20, 2024** **Applications submitted:** SMJ International on behalf of Vertical Bridge submitted an Application for Zoning and Site Plan review and an Application for Special Use Permit for the proposed telecommunications tower near the intersection of Bucknell Rd and Findley Rd. A Public Hearing was scheduled for January 14, 2025 during the Planning Commission meeting. The required newspaper posting was published on December 20, 2024 and required mailings were sent to property owners within 300’ of proposed property. The proposed tower is 195’ in height (199’ with attachments). The tower and associated equipment will be located within a 100’ by 100’ lease area.
- January 14, 2025** **Planning Commission:** The Nottawa Township Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on the application for a Special Use Permit for a Telecommunications Tower near the intersection of Findley Rd and Bucknell Rd on property addressed as 25289 Findley Rd, Sturgis MI. Most of the public comments expressed opposition to the cell tower for the following reasons: health concerns from electromagnetic radiation, property values would be reduced in sight of a cell tower, it would be unsightly for lake residents, that the cell service was good around the lake with current towers, there were insufficient studies demonstrating a need for an additional tower, a cell tower did not meet the vision of the Master Plan, and the Nottawa Township Zoning Ordinance gave the lowest priority to Residential property for locating a cell tower. The Planning Commission voted to recommend to the Nottawa Township Board a denial of the Special Use Permit by unanimous decision.
- February 17, 2025** **Nottawa Township Board:** The Nottawa Township Board voted to partially rezone (Ordinance 55) a portion of the property addressed as 25289 Findley Rd, Sturgis MI from the R-3 Waterfront Residential District Zoning Classification to R-2 Medium Density Residential District Zoning. The approximately 1 acre portion directly on the waterfront will remain R-3 Waterfront Residential District.

Nottawa Township Board then considered the Special Use Permit application for a Telecommunications tower on the property addressed as 25289 Findley Rd – located near the intersection of Findley Rd and Bucknell Rd. Public comments expressed the same concerns as voiced to the Planning Commission. Also, Don Powell, owner of St. Joseph Valley Golf Course, said that the golf course would be open to hosting a cell tower and that they were never notified for consideration. (The cell tower representative disputed this claim.) The Nottawa Township Board then voted 4-1 to deny the Special Use Permit application for the cell tower at its requested location, encouraging Verizon to pursue a location on the golf course.

**March 14, 2025**  
**May 9, 2025**  
**July 14, 2025**

**Amended tolling agreement**  
**Amended tolling agreement**  
**Amended tolling agreement**

These tolling agreements were to allow the telecommunications company extended time to look for alternate sites, including the St. Joseph Valley Golf Course

**August 18, 2025**

**Nottawa Township Board:** Nottawa Township was informed that the option of St. Joseph Valley Golf Course as a hosting site for the cell tower did not materialize. This site was the only other option that would be a higher priority for a possible location. The Nottawa Township Board met in closed session with legal counsel to evaluate our options. Back in open session based on additional information provided by the applicant and state and federal wireless communication laws the Nottawa Township Board voted unanimously to reconsider the decision of the Special Use Permit application for a telecommunications tower on the site near the intersection of Findley Rd and Bucknell Rd. Based on additional information provided by the applicant and state and federal wireless communication laws, the Nottawa Township Board voted unanimously to approve the Special Use Permit application for the telecommunications tower on the property addressed as 25289 owned by Vernon and Regina Hochstetler.