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April 6, 2020

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A cellular phone company is not taking "no" for an answer from the City of New Castle (Lawrence Co.). New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC, doing business as AT&T Mobility, has filed a complaint in federal court against the city and city council for rejecting its conditional use request to put

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TVNewsCheck Local TV Won't Be Felled By Coronavirus

Politico

Privacy agenda threatened in West's virus fight

The Hill

Enlisting tech to fight coronavirus sparks surveillance fears

Philadelphia Inquirer Fact-checking a viral Pa. Facebook post on coronavirus that says the government is 'up to something'

Pennlive

Trump official cites Pa. as emerging coronavirus hotspot

Associated Press

Biden raises idea of Democrats holding an online convention

Allentown Morning Call

6 ways to slow coronavirus spread in Pennsylvania (No. 1: close trail parking lots)

CNET

53 funny things to ask Alexa when you need a good laugh

up a 5G cellular tower on the George Washington Intermediate School property.

The appeal was entered March 13 in the U.S. District Court for the Western District, in reaction to city council's Jan. 21 denial of its request under the city zoning laws. The company had proposed to enter a contract with the New Castle Area School District to place the 80-foot tower on the school property at 101 E. Euclid Ave.

The tower, as proposed, would stand independently of the building, which is in an R-1 low-density residential zone of the city. The company's proposal was to build the tower with antennas, plus a radio equipment cabinet, a backup generator and a fenced-in compound. The filing seeks to have the federal court reverse the city's denial of the company's application and grant approval of the conditional use permit and all variances and approvals needed to allow for its construction.

The school district through a lease agreement with AT&T would have received \$24,000 the first year from the company, which would have boosted the district's general fund budget. In subsequent years, that rental fee would increase by two percent each year. District Solicitor Charles Sapienza previously had asked the school board if the members were interested in the district filing an intervention in the case on behalf of AT&T. Because the appeal is in federal court, he said Friday he would talk to the board again about joining the lawsuit on the company's behalf.

AT&T had applied to city council on July 16 for a conditional use to build the tower on the school. The proposal called for the structure to be enclosed in an 80-foot-tall, three-sided panel structure inside a fence behind the school. The city planning commission had reviewed the application and held public hearings in August and September, then referred the application to city council for a decision.

City council conducted a public hearing on Jan. 21, then voted 5-0 to reject the proposal on Feb. 13. Council issued findings of fact that day that neither the chimney nor the school roof are adequate locations for the tower, according to the filing. At that time, council President Tom Smith said the reason for the denial was because of public dissent against the plans.

Lawrence J. Del Rossi of Philadelphia, a labor and industry attorney, filed the appeal on behalf of the company. The complaint is in federal court because AT&T is asserting the claim under federal law as part of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, according to the paperwork. The complaint states that AT&T provides service through an interlocking network of line-of-sight transceiver facilities, and the radio signals it uses are subject to disruption caused by topography, foliage and man-made structures, in addition to range limitations, inherent in the use of low-powered signals.

An irregularly shaped area about a mile in circumference exists in the northern part of the city of New Castle — the area intended to be served — within which AT&T personal wireless customers are unable to consistently and reliably use their wireless phones to transmit or receive services, the document says. The adverse consequences include the inability to make and maintain reliable quality connections.

In order to provide coverage to the area intended to be served, AT&T requires a structure of at least 80 feet in height to support antennas near the center of the area to be served, according to the company's filing. Del Rossi contends that the uninterrupted service is needed for 911 and enhanced 911 calls as a public safety consideration, given that 70 percent of the 911 calls are made from personal wireless devices, with more than half of the country's population no longer using landline services.

He also notes in the filing that a portion of the frequencies licensed to AT&T are used to support FirstNet, a national public safety broadband network for first responders, pursuant to a congressionally mandated public-private partnership between AT&T and the First Responder Network Authority. The complaint points out that the George Washington school already hosts personal wireless facilities for T-Mobile, Sprint and Verizon Wireless, and the Verizon facility, approved in 2014, is in a 10-foot extension on top of its 115-foot-tall chimney.

Del Rossi also argues in the complaint that the school is the only location where the tower can be located to provide adequate coverage to the area to be served within the specific zoning district of the school, where there would be gaps in coverage. New Castle city Solicitor Ted Saad said the company has alleged that the city violated federal law. He said he has sent a copy of the lawsuit to the city's insurance carrier for review, and he doesn't know yet if he or the insurance company will represent the city in the case. "We'll wait and see," he said, "but if we need to, we will defend it in federal court, if that's what council wants to do." – **New Castle (Lawrence Co.) News**

AT&T SportsNet, the [TV](#) home of the Pirates and Penguins, will compensate production personnel for lost work because of the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple sources told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on Friday. Those who would normally be working Pirates games will be paid through their first 10 scheduled home assignments, plus for a March 13 spring training contest that never happened because of COVID-19.

On the Penguins side, those people will be paid for three additional dates (March 12, 14 and 15,) as a gesture of goodwill while all parties involved hope that regular season play will eventually resume. The group affected — everyone from [camera](#) operators to audio and video techs — was told today, sources told the Post-Gazette.

Major League Baseball suspended the start of its season for at least eight weeks on March 16, following recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NHL wants its players to self-quarantine through April 15, meaning it probably also won't restart until May, if at all. The Pirates would be two games into a seven-game homestand. Ten home games translates into the first three series, taking those part-time/freelance employees through April 23. Full-time employees are unaffected by any of this. – **Pittsburgh Post-Gazette**

For many business leaders, the coronavirus pandemic has been a struggle to survive. For Eric Yuan, chief executive of Zoom Video Communications Inc., the challenge has been how to manage breakneck growth. And lately, it hasn't been going well.

In the space of a month, the Silicon Valley videoconferencing business he founded nine years ago has gone from an enterprise-software provider little known outside the business world to a [near-ubiquitous](#)

[social lifeline for homebound Americans](#) and, most recently, the subject of complaints about privacy problems and harassment on its platform. The whiplash has left Mr. Yuan trying to appease upset users and figure out what went wrong—and rethinking a company culture that for nearly a decade was focused on ease of use.

“‘If we mess up again, it’s done,’ I thought a lot last night,” he told The Wall Street Journal in an interview Friday, after what he said was a sleepless night. Among the privacy features Mr. Yuan now promises is an option for end-to-end encryption to safeguard conversations, he told the Journal. Zoom had previously advertised such a feature, but security experts discovered the underlying technology provided a lesser level of data protection. The full-encryption feature won’t be ready for a few months, Mr. Yuan said.

He has faced adversity before. His first several applications to move to the U.S. from his native China were rejected, before he was finally able to make the leap in 1997. He worked at a videoconferencing company that was acquired in 2007 by Cisco Systems Inc., leaving in 2011 to found San Jose, Calif.-based Zoom. His priority, he says, was a frictionless user experience for business customers. But that left holes in security settings.

Use of Zoom exploded as the coronavirus pandemic has forced more people to stay home. Where once it enabled client conferences or training webinars, it is now also a venue for virtual cocktail hours, Zumba classes and children’s birthday parties. It became the most downloaded free app on Apple’s iOS App Store, leapfrogging bigger names like TikTok, DoorDash, and Disney+.

The number of daily meeting participants across Zoom’s paid and free services has gone from around 10 million at the end of last year to 200 million now, the company says. Most of those people are using its free service. Zoom’s [initial public offering just under a year ago](#) was one of 2019’s most successful, making Mr. Yuan a billionaire. While the stock market has taken historic tumbles over the past month, Zoom’s shares are up.

But the platform’s surging popularity has attracted trolls and hackers, as well as scrutiny from privacy advocates. The practice of “Zoombombing”—where people gain unauthorized access to a meeting and share hate-speech or pornographic images—entered the popular vernacular almost overnight. Security experts found publicly highlighted problems with Zoom’s technology could leave user data vulnerable to outsiders’ exploitation.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation issued a warning Monday about videoconference hijacking, spurred in part by Zoombombing incidents. In the U.S., 27 attorney general’s offices have raised questions about privacy issues, Zoom said, adding it is cooperating with authorities. On April 1, Mr. Yuan issued a lengthy [blog post](#) on Zoom’s website vowing to devote all his engineers to fixing trust, safety and privacy issues. “I thought I was letting our users down,” he told the Journal on a video call, using a Zoom virtual background depicting the Golden Gate Bridge. He hasn’t had more than 4½ hours of sleep a night in the past month, he said. “I feel an obligation to win the users’ trust back.”

To some extent, Mr. Yuan is paying the price for well-meaning decisions he made early during the [coronavirus crisis](#). When it hit China late last year, he quickly moved to make Zoom more widely accessible for free so medical professionals and others could remain in touch. When

financial analysts in early March asked him how Zoom would stand to benefit from its sudden popularity—then still mainly overseas—he said “support for each other is more important than revenue.” Though he gives no hint of regretting that choice, Mr. Yuan now says “sometimes you have a good intention, and sometimes you get punished,” adding “we need to slow down and think about privacy and security first. That’s our new culture.”

Security researchers also have scrutinized Zoom’s links to China. Researchers at the Citizen Lab, a security research group affiliated with the University of Toronto, on Friday said Zoom used an encryption technology that is considered substandard, and that in certain circumstances the company stored encryption keys—long strings of numbers and characters that can be used to access encoded communications—on servers based in China.

Brendan Iltelson, head of technical support at Zoom, said because of the distributed nature of the company’s infrastructure, meeting data can be routed through different data centers around the world. Zoom’s system first tries to send this data locally, but if the connections fail, the backup route might send it elsewhere. The encryption setup could give sophisticated hackers—those working for a government, for example—a way of listening into Zoom conferences, said Bill Marczak, a research fellow at Citizen Lab. “We’re not claiming that this is evidence that you should forever delete the app,” he said. “If you’re having a virtual hangout with our friends, you’re probably fine. If you’re discussing classified information, you should maybe think twice.”

Zoom had created a system to prevent this data from being sent through China when calls originate in the U.S. But when traffic surged starting in February, some data was mistakenly routed that way, the company said, adding that it has remedied the problem. Critics also have questioned whether Zoom’s heavy reliance on China-based engineering could pose a security risk. “Zoom’s operations in China were always a concern, but less of a priority when highly sensitive conversations about company or government secrets—or about people’s private medical health information—primarily took place offline in an office,” said Jacob Helberg, a senior adviser of Stanford University’s Cyber Policy Center and formerly a policy adviser at Google. “Now a significant portion of these conversations have moved to Zoom.”

Mr. Yuan said the Chinese government has never asked for information on traffic from foreign users. Zoom was banned inside China for two months last year because it was a U.S.-based company that wasn’t formally registered in the country, Mr. Yuan said. Zoom formally registered within China last year and, Mr. Yuan, said authorities there care only about local meetings. The backlash against Zoom hasn’t come just from security professions. Some corporate users have dropped the platform, including Elon Musk’s Tesla Inc. and Space Exploration Technologies Corp., Mr. Yuan said.

“I really messed up as CEO, and we need to win their trust back. This kind of thing shouldn’t have happened,” he said. Tesla and SpaceX didn’t respond to requests for comment. The barrage of criticism has left Mr. Yuan feeling like someone has put his company in their crosshairs. “Every day has felt like something is behind this trying to destroy us,” Mr. Yuan said. But he is too busy right now to spend time on such suspicions.

At this point, Zoom's mass popularity is something Mr. Yuan suggests he would rather not have had. "Hopefully we can go back to business customers after this," he said. "But the good news—if we can learn the hard lessons and become better and stronger and we can win users back, in one or two or three years, it may have been worth it." He added: "But the journey is so painful." -- **Wall Street Journal**

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