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July 20, 2018

Terry J. Romine, Esquire
Executive Secretary
Public Service Commission of Maryland
6 St. Paul Street, 16th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: Oakland Mills Community Association – Mail Log 220805

Dear Ms. Romine:

This is the response of Verizon Maryland LLC (“Verizon”) to the letter received by Verizon on June 13, 2018 from Jonathan Edelson to the Maryland Public Service Commission (“PSC”). Mr. Edelson’s letter identifies the location of a single damaged Verizon pedestal and also suggests that there are other unspecific “cable boxes” that are “abandoned” or “in complete disrepair.”

Before explaining why Verizon is not abandoning its pedestals, “utility boxes,” or other similar equipment, we first want to express our appreciation that Mr. Edelson took the time to provide us with specific information about damaged Verizon facilities. One of the many challenges with managing Verizon’s vast field-deployed network is that we cannot monitor each specific piece of equipment all the time. Our field equipment is often damaged by routine landscaping and excavation work, automobile accidents, and public works projects such as road re-paving, to name just a few. And, unless the public contacts us, we sometimes will not know about a damaged piece of field equipment until a technician is working nearby.

Fortunately, when Verizon’s field-deployed equipment is damaged, it usually poses no risk of harm to the public, and Verizon repairs such equipment when we’re aware of it. Sometimes, however, damaged facilities can pose a risk of harm to the public, and we treat these situations with urgency, including dispatching additional technicians to ameliorate the condition as fast as possible. This is because safety is our highest priority – the safety of our customers, employees, and the general public. And that’s why Verizon maintains its network in good condition and in accordance with all appropriate standards of safety and reliability.

When Verizon received Mr. Edelson's letter concerning the damaged Verizon pedestal, we promptly investigated the location he provided and remedied the condition. Attachment 1 is a photograph of the pedestal after we repaired it. Contrary to Mr. Edelson's statement, this pedestal was not "abandoned" at all, but in fact continues to serve customers in the area.

Mr. Edelson's letter also states that his association has photographed other Verizon equipment that is "in complete disrepair" and "basically abandoned." We have not received any information about such conditions. If Mr. Edelson provides us with the location of any Verizon facilities that appear to be damaged or raise safety issues, we will investigate the situation, repair any damage, and address any safety issues.

Over the course of the next several months, Verizon will be conducting a physical inspection of its facilities in the entire Village of Oakland Mills and the surrounding area. Any facilities identified during that review that appear to be in need of repair and/or replacement will be documented and the necessary work will be scheduled. When the physical review of Verizon's facilities is completed, I will provide the Commission's Staff with feedback on our review, including specifics related to any actions that we have taken to address any plant conditions that have been remedied.

During this process, Verizon welcomes input from stakeholders and has set up a temporary email address while it is conducting the physical inspection of facilities in the area: OaklandMills@one.verizon.com. We have provided local officials with this email address so that they can provide us with information to assist in our physical inspection of our plant in this area. I have copied Mr. Edelson on this letter so that he may also use it to share some of the documentation he references in his letter to the Commission.

Finally, we must address a misconception in Mr. Edelson's letter concerning the retirement of our copper lines under the FCC's copper retirement rules. As the PSC knows, Verizon is investing heavily in Maryland to deploy its state-of-the-art fiber optics network in many areas, including the Columbia region, which will eventually replace our older copper lines.

Retiring copper lines and decommissioning a Verizon switch can take years to complete, and, even when that process has concluded, our field-deployed equipment such as pedestals, cross-boxes, and the like will continue to serve active Verizon customers. In fact, in some cases, we are retrofitting certain equipment such as Serving Area Cabinets to serve as fiber hubs, which benefits both Verizon and municipalities because we can avoid trenching in streets and sidewalks. Both the FCC and the PSC have recognized the importance of providing carriers with the opportunity to engineer their networks in a manner that optimizes the use of legally granted facilities and rights-of-way, whether those networks are copper or fiber. In short, the retirement of our copper lines in order to deploy fiber does not mean that our existing field-deployed equipment will be abandoned.

In order to ensure a full understanding of Verizon's fiber deployment in the Columbia area, Verizon has also begun meeting with key stakeholders, including members of the Maryland Legislature and County leadership for their feedback on Verizon's fiber efforts, and to assure them that Verizon remains committed to providing their constituents with quality service without compromising safety standards.

Please feel free to give me a call if I can answer any questions you may have or provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip J. Wood / easb". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Philip J. Wood" on the top line and "/ easb" on the bottom line.

Philip J. Wood

Attachment

cc: Jonathan Edelson – Chair of Oakland Mills Board of Directors

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verizon
WARNING
Underground Facilities
Call Before You Dig