



Oakland Mills Community Association
The Other Barn • 5851 Robert Oliver Place
Columbia, MD 21045

410-730-4610 • oaklandmills.org



June 4, 2018

Mr. David Collins
Executive Secretary
Maryland Public Service Commission
William Donald Schaeffer Tower
6 St. Paul Street, 16th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Mr. Collins:

This letter serves as a request to the Public Service Commission to take appropriate action to require the removal of abandoned above-ground copper wire facilities after a telephone company discontinues its copper wire telephone service. Abandoned utility boxes cause a severe blight to a community. The Oakland Mills Board represents nearly 10,000 residents in Howard County and actively advocates on their behalf.

We are aware that Verizon is currently in the process of retiring its copper wire telephone service in Columbia, Maryland as well as other nearby localities. As part of the public information received from Verizon is stated that the company will “cease maintaining the copper facilities” including junction boxes along right-of-ways and in residential yards.

For the past year, the Oakland Mills Board of Directors has photographed cable boxes that are in complete disrepair. Many of the boxes are basically abandoned. We have photographed and documented the location of the boxes and forwarded the information to the Howard County Cable Commissioner. Some reported boxes have been replaced or repaired. However, for each box that is repaired, several boxes remain abandoned and in complete disrepair. This causes a safety issue and is a complete eyesore in the landscape of our community. It speaks poorly for the responsible company. Photographing and submitting information to fix or remove broken boxes has been a constant problem for Oakland Mills and throughout Howard County. The current problems with boxes in disrepair will exponentially grow in number when Verizon abandons its copper facilities. (Photograph attached of an abandoned Verizon box in Oakland Mills.)

A company should not be allowed to permanently abandon above ground discontinued copper wire facilities without removing them. We understand that in its most recent session, the Maryland General Assembly considered HB 1568, which would have required removal of such boxes. Unfortunately the legislation was not enacted into law.

It is our understanding that the Public Service Commission has the authority to regulate the removal of permanently discontinued facilities. Therefore, we are requesting that the PSC take the required and appropriate action and require that Verizon remove all above ground copper wire facilities within a short period of time after the wire has been discontinued.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We would appreciate a reply noting what actions the PSC intends to pursue to rectify this situation.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Edelson, Chair
Oakland Mills Board of Directors

Cc: Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman
Howard County Councilmember Dr. Calvin Ball