

I first want to state that public safety is very concerned about the view from Keep Tryst Road and surrounding areas. However, from a public safety standpoint we have a significant communication and safety problem in the Southern End of Washington County. We have analyzed this situation and could not find another alternative tower site that would provide the same level of coverage as the Keep Tryst tower site.

Law enforcement works as individuals in individual vehicles for the most part. When assistance is needed, backup officers also respond however it takes them some time to respond to the request from the original officer.

When we are outside of our cruisers, our only means of communication is the portable radio. As pointed out earlier, the portable radio is only 4 watts and must be able to reach one of the tower sites in order to communicate. Without the Keep Tryst Tower, our ability to communicate outside of our cruisers is non-existent. Communication within our cruisers from the mobile radio is spotty at best and almost non-existent as well.

Therefore, if we perform a traffic stop we may or may not be able to communicate from inside the vehicle which means the dispatch center may not even know that a vehicle is being stopped or the location of the deputy.

Most of you probably read the recent news account of the traffic stop west of Clear Spring where Maryland State Police troopers stopped a vehicle and the violator threatened them with a handgun. Unfortunately, they had to shoot and kill the traffic violator. If the Keep Tryst tower is not installed as part of the new radio system and these same troopers stop the vehicle on Sandy Hook Road, the only way the troopers could call for assistance would be if a motorist passes by and goes to a telephone to call 911 to let them know what happened.

The Washington County Sheriff's Office alone responded to over 300 calls for service in the Keep Tryst Rd. and Sandy Hook Road area in the last 12 months. That's almost one call a day. This doesn't include other public safety users. Radio communication is essential to our ability to provide services and protection to your community.

Let's say that one of your children walk away from your home and becomes lost. Public safety would need go on foot to look for your child and would have no communication whatsoever without the Keep Tryst tower. So, we could not coordinate our search with other units and if we were able to locate your child and they were injured, we would not have the ability to call for medical services.

A couple of years ago there was a homicide that occurred on Keep Tryst Road. Our deputies were not able to communicate at all with our dispatch center from this location. When they needed something, one of the deputies had to get into his vehicle and travel to higher ground so that they could talk on the radio. Fortunately, this

was an incident that had already occurred and not one in progress. However, it certainly slowed down the process and ability to investigate this murder.

Close your eyes for a minute and envision that in the middle of the night you hear someone break into your home and you have to lock yourself in your bedroom. Without having a Tower in the Keep Tryst area, a single law enforcement officer is not going to come to your aid because he has no ability to communicate with his responding backup officer. He is going to wait until his backup officers arrive, which could be another 15 to 20 minutes. In the meantime, you are in the house with the burglar on the other side of your bedroom door. This is a real scenario that could occur. Not a very comforting thought, is it?

We can't properly provide the level of law enforcement services you deserve in your community without this tower. It doesn't matter whether it is the Sheriff's Office, the Maryland State Police, or fire and EMS because we all have the same communication problems in this end of the County.

I would also like to point out that should an incident occur in the Sandy Hook area as just occurred in the Smithsburg area on December 19, 2007 where Officer Chris Nicholson was killed, the outcome of the incident would have been very different. A majority of the communications that occurred during this 3 hour incident occurred on portable radios or on cell phones.

This could not have occurred in the Keep Tryst area today or in the future if the proposed Keep Tryst tower were not installed as part of the new radio system. When the officers came in contact with the suspect in this case, who had already killed his girlfriend and a police officer; he immediately began firing on the police officers. Their only means of communicating this contact and the need for assistance occurred over portable radios. This allowed the officers to call in the Special Response Team, who are specifically trained and equipped for these high-risk situations, to move in and take the suspect into custody without other police officers being shot or killed. There is no doubt in my mind that the suspect would have killed additional police officers if we did not have the ability to call in the Special Response Team in an armored vehicle that was stationed about a mile away.

This is not an isolated incident. On January 8, 2005 Brandon Morris killed Correctional Officer Jeff Wroten at the Washington County Hospital. He fled the hospital in a cab and was chased by law enforcement until the cab wrecked. He got out of the cab and held up a handgun for officers to see. Law enforcement officers from 5 different police agencies were involved in the search for Morris in the woods and in the dark.

If this occurred in the Sandy Hook area, these officers would be out in the woods in the middle of the night looking for an armed suspect without the ability to talk to other officers at all. Would you want to be one of those police officers? I don't think so.

Would you be able to sleep at night if one of your fellow citizens dies because public safety couldn't communicate the need for additional services for your loved one? I would hope that as human beings we would not allow this to happen. I want to thank you for your time and ask that you send a letter in support of the installation of the Keep Tryst tower.