

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE TEXT OF CHAPTER 218 (USE REGULATIONS) OF THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE OF ROCKDALE COUNTY WITH THE CREATION OF NEW ARTICLE V - SMALL WIRELESS FACILITIES IN THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**WHEREAS**, Title 2 the Unified Development Ordinance of Rockdale County (Subpart B – Planning and Development of The Code of Rockdale County, Georgia), as amended, governs land use and zoning; and

**WHEREAS**, O.C.G.A. § 32-4-92(a)(10) and § 32-4-42(6) authorizes Rockdale County, Georgia to establish reasonable regulations for the installation, construction, maintenance, renewal, removal, and relocation of pipes, mains, conduits, cables, wires, poles, towers, traffic and other signals, and other equipment, facilities, or appliances in, on, along, over, or under the public roads of Rockdale County. Further, 47 U.S.C. § 253(c) provides that Rockdale County has authority to manage its public rights of way. Finally, the Georgia Streamlining Wireless Facilities and Antennas Act, O.C.G.A. Title 36, Chapter 66C (the “SWFAA”), addresses the placement of small wireless facilities in the public rights of way of Rockdale County; and

**WHEREAS**, Rockdale County finds it is in the best interest of Rockdale County and its residents and businesses to establish requirements, specifications reasonable conditions regarding placement of small wireless facilities, poles in the public rights of way. These requirements, specifications and conditions are adopted in order to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the residents and businesses of Rockdale County and to reasonably manage and protect the public rights of way and its uses in Rockdale County; and

**WHEREAS**, public hearings were held following public notice and all other requirements of Sec. 238-4 of the Unified Development Ordinance; and

**WHEREAS**, the objective of this Ordinance is to

- (i) Implement the SWFAA; and
- (ii) Ensure use of the public rights of way is consistent with the design, appearance and other features of nearby land uses, protects the integrity of historic, cultural and scenic resources and does not harm residents’ quality of life.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED** by the Board of Commissioners of Rockdale County, Georgia, and it is hereby ordained by the authority of same as follows:

**Section I**

That Chapter 218 of the Unified Development Ordinance is hereby amended by the creation of a new Article V, entitled Small Wireless Facilities in the Public Rights of Way. Said Article and all relevant and included sections shall read in full as follows:

**ARTICLE V. - SMALL WIRELESS FACILITIES IN THE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY**

**Sec. 218-30. - General.**

- (a) **Title.** This Ordinance shall be known and may be referred to as the "Rockdale County Small Wireless Facilities in the Public Rights of Way Ordinance";
- (b) **Authority.** O.C.G.A. § 32-4-92(a)(10) and § 32-4-42(6) authorizes Rockdale County, Georgia to establish reasonable regulations for the installation, construction, maintenance, renewal, removal,

and relocation of pipes, mains, conduits, cables, wires, poles, towers, traffic and other signals, and other equipment, facilities, or appliances in, on, along, over, or under the public roads of Rockdale County. Further, 47 U.S.C. § 253(c) provides that Rockdale County has authority to manage its public rights of way. Finally, the Georgia Streamlining Wireless Facilities and Antennas Act., O.C.G.A. Title 36, Chapter 66C (the "SWFAA"), addresses the placement of small wireless facilities in the public rights of way of Rockdale County;

- (c) **Findings and objective.** Rockdale County finds it is in the best interest of Rockdale County and its residents and businesses to establish requirements, specifications reasonable conditions regarding placement of small wireless facilities, poles in the public rights of way. These requirements, specifications and conditions are adopted in order to protect the public health, safety and welfare of the residents and businesses of Rockdale County and to reasonably manage and protect the public rights of way and its uses in Rockdale County. The objective of the governing authority of Rockdale County in enacting this Ordinance are as follows:

- (1) Implement the SWFAA; and
- (2) Ensure use of the public rights of way is consistent with the design, appearance and other features of nearby land uses, protects the integrity of historic, cultural and scenic resources and does not harm residents' quality of life.

- (d) **Definitions.** For the purposes of this Ordinance, the following terms, phrases, words, and their derivations have the meanings set forth herein. The words "shall" and "will" are mandatory and "may" is permissive. Words not defined shall be given their common and ordinary meaning. References hereafter to "Sections" are, unless otherwise specified, references to Sections in this Ordinance. Defined terms remain defined terms whether or not capitalized;

Terms used in this Ordinance shall have the meanings given them in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-2. In the event that any federal or state law containing definitions used in this ordinance is amended, the definition in the referenced section, as amended, shall control.

#### **Sec. 218-31. - Permits.**

- (a) A permit is required to collocate a small wireless facility in the public right of way or to install, modify, or replace a pole or a decorative pole in the public right of way. A permit is not required to perform the activities described in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-6(e) or (f);
- (b) Any person seeking to collocate a small wireless facility in the public right of way or to install, modify, or replace a pole or a decorative pole in the public right of way shall submit an application to the Department of Planning and Development for a permit. Applications are available from the Department of Planning and Development. Any material change to information contained in an application shall be submitted in writing to the Department of Planning and Development within thirty (30) days following the events necessitating the change;
- (c) Each application for a permit shall include the maximum application fees permitted under O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-5(a)(1), (a)(2) and (a)(3). Such maximum application fees shall automatically increase on January 1 of each year beginning January 1, 2021, as provided under O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-5(b);
- (d) The Department of Planning and Development shall review applications for permits according to the timelines and using the procedures identified in O.C.G.A. §§ 36-66C-7 and 36-66C-13;
- (e) Applications for permits shall be approved except as follows:

- (1) In order to receive a permit to install a pole or replace a decorative pole, the applicant must have determined, after diligent investigation, that it cannot meet the service objectives of the permit by collocating on an existing pole or support structure on which:
    - (i) The applicant has the right to collocate subject to reasonable terms and conditions; and
    - (ii) Such collocation would not impose technical limitations or significant additional costs. The applicant shall certify that it has made such a determination in good faith, based on the assessment of a licensed engineer, and shall provide a written summary of the basis for such determination.
  - (2) The Department of Planning and Development may deny an application for a permit upon any of the conditions identified in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(j);
  - (3) For applications for new poles in the public right of way in areas zoned for residential use, the Department of Planning and Development may propose an alternate location in the public right of way within 100 feet of the location set forth in the application, and the wireless provider shall use the Department of Planning and Development =proposed alternate location unless the location imposes technical limits or significant additional costs. The wireless provider shall certify that it has made such a determination in good faith, based on the assessment of a licensed engineer, and it shall provide a written summary of the basis for such determination.
- (f) A permit issued under this Article shall authorize such person to occupy the public rights of way to:
- (1) Collocate a small wireless facility on or adjacent to a pole or a support structure that does not exceed the limitations set forth in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(h)(3) or on or adjacent to a decorative pole in compliance with O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-12; and
  - (2) Install, modify, or replace a pole or decorative pole for collocation of a small wireless facility that does not exceed the limitations set forth in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(h)(1) and (h)(2).
- (g) Upon the issuance of a permit under this Article, and on each anniversary of such issuance, every person issued a permit shall submit to Rockdale County the maximum annual payments permitted under O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-5(a)(4) and (a)(5);
- Provided, however, that if such person removes its small wireless facilities from the public rights of way pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-5(e), then such person shall be responsible for the pro rata portion of the annual payment based on the number of days of occupation since the last annual payment. Upon making such pro rata payment and removal of the small wireless facilities, the person's annual payment obligations under this Article shall cease as of the date of the actual removal. The maximum annual payments shall automatically increase on January 1 of each year beginning January 1, 2021, as provided under O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-5(b).
- (h) Any person issued a permit shall pay the fees identified in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-5(a)(6) and (a)(7), as applicable;
  - (i) Rockdale County may revoke a permit issued pursuant to this Article if the wireless provider or its equipment placed in the public right of way under that permit subsequently is not in compliance with any provision of this Article or the Georgia Streamlining Wireless Facilities and Antennas Act. Upon revocation, Rockdale County may proceed according to Sec. 218-31(j);

- (j) If a wireless provider occupies the public rights of way without obtaining a permit required by this Article or without complying with the SWFAA, then Rockdale County may, at the sole discretion of Rockdale County, restore the right of way, to the extent practicable in the reasonable judgment of Rockdale County, to its condition prior to the unpermitted collocation or installation and to charge the responsible wireless provider the reasonable, documented cost of Rockdale County in doing so, plus a penalty not to exceed \$1,000.00. Rockdale County may suspend the ability of the wireless provider to receive any new permits from Rockdale County under this Article until the wireless provider has paid the amount assessed for such restoration costs and the penalty assessed, if any; provided, however, that Rockdale County may not suspend such ability of any applicant that has deposited the amount in controversy in escrow pending an adjudication of the merits of the dispute by a court of competent jurisdiction;
- (k) All accepted applications for permits shall be publicly available subject to the limitations identified in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-6(c);
- (l) An applicant may file a consolidated application related to multiple small wireless facilities, poles or decorative poles so long as such consolidated application meets the requirements of O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-13;
- (m) Activities authorized under a permit shall be completed within the timelines provided in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(k)(2);
- (n) Issuance of a permit authorizes the applicant to:
  - (1) Undertake the collocation, installation, modification or replacement approved by the permit;
  - (2) Operate and maintain the small wireless facilities and any associated pole covered by the permit for a period of 10 years.
- (o) Permits shall be renewed following the expiration of the term identified in Sec. 218-31(n) upon the terms and conditions identified in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(k)(2)(B);
- (p) If an application for a permit seeks to collocate small wireless facilities on authority poles in the public rights of way, then Rockdale County shall, within 60 days of receipt of the completed application:
  - (1) Provide a good faith estimate for any make-ready work necessary to enable the authority pole to support the proposed facility;
  - (2) Notify the wireless provider that the wireless provider will be required to perform the make-ready work. Any make-ready work performed by Rockdale County shall be completed pursuant to and in accordance with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(n).

**Sec. 218-32. – Removal, Relocation, Reconditioning, Replacement, and Abandonment**

- (a) A person may remove its small wireless facilities from the public rights of according to the procedures of O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-5(e);
- (b) In the event of a removal under Sec. 218-32(a), the right of way shall be, to the extent practicable in the reasonable judgment of Rockdale County, restored to its condition prior to the removal. If a person fails to return the right of way, to the extent practicable in the reasonable judgment of Rockdale County, to its condition prior to the removal within 90 days of the removal, Rockdale County may, at the sole discretion of Rockdale County, restore the right of way to such condition and charge the person Rockdale County's reasonable, documented cost of removal and restoration,

plus a penalty not to exceed \$500.00. Rockdale County may suspend the ability of the person to receive any new permits under this Article until the person has paid the amount assessed for such restoration costs and the penalty assessed, if any; provided, however, that Rockdale County will not suspend such ability of any person that has deposited the amount in controversy in escrow pending an adjudication of the merits of the dispute by a court of competent jurisdiction;

- (c) If, in the reasonable exercise of police powers, Rockdale County determines:
  - (1) A pole or support structure unreasonably interferes with the widening, repair, reconstruction, or relocation of a public road or highway, or
  - (2) Relocation of poles, support structures, or small wireless facilities is required as a result of a public project, the wireless provider shall relocate such poles, support structures, or small wireless facilities pursuant to and in accordance with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(l). If the wireless provider fails to relocate a pole, support structure or small wireless facility or fails to provide a written good faith estimate of the time needed to relocate the pole, support structure or small wireless within the time period prescribed in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(l), Rockdale County make take the actions authorized by O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(o), in addition to any other powers under applicable law.
- (d) Rockdale County shall recondition and replace authority poles consistent with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(m). Wireless providers shall accommodate and cooperate with reconditioning and replacement consistent with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(m);
- (e) A wireless provider must notify Rockdale County of its decision to abandon any small wireless facility, support structure or pole pursuant to and in accordance with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(p)(1). The wireless provider shall perform all acts and duties identified in O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(p) regarding abandonment. Rockdale County may take all actions and exercise all powers authorized under O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(p) upon abandonment, in addition to any other powers under applicable law.

**Sec. 218-33. - Standards.**

- (a) Small wireless facilities and new, modified, or replacement poles to be used for collocation of small wireless facilities may be placed in the public right of way as a permitted use:
  - (1) Upon a receipt of a permit under this Article;
  - (2) Subject to applicable codes; and
  - (3) So long as such small wireless facilities and new, modified, or replacement poles to be used for collocation of small wireless facilities comply with the appropriate provisions of O.C.G.A. § 36-66C-7(h).
- (b) New, modified, or replacement poles installed in the right of way in a historic district and in an area zoned primarily for residential use shall not exceed fifty (50) feet above ground level;
- (c) Each new, modified, or replacement pole installed in the right of way that is not in a historic district or in an area zoned primarily for residential use shall not exceed the greater of:
  - (1) Fifty (50) feet above ground level; or
  - (2) Ten feet greater in height above ground level than the tallest existing pole in the same public right of way in place as of January 1, 2019 and located within 500 feet of the new proposed pole.

- (d) New small wireless facilities in the public right of way and collocated on an existing pole or support structure shall not exceed more than ten feet above the existing pole or support structure;
- (e) New small wireless facilities in the public right of way collocated on a new or replacement pole under Sec. 218-33(b) or Sec. 8-218-33(c) may not extend above the top of such poles;
- (f) A decorative pole should only be located where an existing pole can be removed and replaced, or at a new location where Rockdale County has identified that a streetlight is necessary;
- (g) Unless it is determined that another design is less intrusive, or placement is required under applicable law, small wireless facilities shall be concealed as follows:
  - (1) Antennas located at the top of poles and support structures shall be incorporated into the pole or support structure, or placed within shrouds of a size such that the antenna appears to be part of the pole or support structure;
  - (2) Antennas placed elsewhere on a pole or support structure shall be integrated into the pole or support structure or be designed and placed to minimize visual impacts;
  - (3) Radio units or equipment cabinets holding radio units and mounted on a pole shall be placed as high as possible, located to avoid interfering with, or creating any hazard to, any other use of the public rights of way, and located on one side of the pole. Unless the radio units or equipment cabinets can be concealed by appropriate traffic signage, radio units or equipment cabinets mounted below the communications space on poles shall be designed so that the largest dimension is vertical, and the width is such that the radio units or equipment cabinets are minimally visible from the opposite side of the pole on which they are placed;
  - (4) Wiring and cabling shall be neat and concealed within or flush to the pole or support structure, ensuring concealment of these components to the greatest extent possible.
- (h) Notwithstanding any provision of this Article to the contrary, an applicant may collocate a small wireless facility within a historic district, and may place or replace a pole within a historic district, only upon satisfaction of the following:
  - (1) Issuance of a permit under this Article;
  - (2) Compliance with applicable codes.
- (i) Notwithstanding any provision of this Article to the contrary, an applicant may collocate a small wireless facility on a decorative pole, or may replace a decorative pole with a new decorative pole, in the event the existing decorative pole will not structurally support the attachment, only upon satisfaction of the following:
  - (1) Issuance of a permit under this Article;
  - (2) Compliance with applicable codes.

**Sec. 218-34-39. - Reserved.**

## Section II

That all ordinances or resolutions, or parts thereof, in conflict with this Ordinance are hereby repealed.

**Section III**

That should any court of competent jurisdiction declare any section of this ordinance invalid or unconstitutional, such declaration shall not affect the validity of the ordinance as a whole, or any part thereof, which is not specifically declared to be invalid or unconstitutional.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Ordinance shall become effective as of the date hereof.

**ADOPTED AND APPROVED THIS** 11 **DAY OF** August, 2020.


**ROCKDALE COUNTY, GEORGIA  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Oz Nesbitt, Sr., Chairman


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sherri L. Washington, Esq., Commissioner Post I

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Doreen Williams, Commissioner Post II

Attest:

  
By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Rutledge, County Clerk

Approved as to Form:

  
By: \_\_\_\_\_  
M. Qader A. Baig, County Attorney

First Reading: Ord. 2020-224 on May 26, 2020

Second Reading: 8/11/2020