

Subject: Lancaster online: Theodora Scarato, Kenneth Foster and Paul Spect presented to a Pennsylvania School Board on Radio frequency Radiation

# Do cell towers belong on school property? Experts weigh in at Hempfield school board meeting

[http://lancasteronline.com/insider/do-cell-towers-belong-on-school-property-experts-weigh-in/article\\_12611dc6-f64b-11e7-b2da-639969122063.html](http://lancasteronline.com/insider/do-cell-towers-belong-on-school-property-experts-weigh-in/article_12611dc6-f64b-11e7-b2da-639969122063.html)

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Facing mounting pressure from the public, the Hempfield school board brought in experts this week to help determine the risk associated with cell towers on school district property.

After two hours of debate in front of an audience of more than 50 community members, the board perhaps was left with more questions than answers.

Though the risk is “relatively low,” said [Paul Specht](#), a professor emeritus of the Occupational Safety & Environmental Health Program at Millersville University, “you have to decide how much risk you’d like to take.”

Specht, who has over 40 years of experience in the safety and health fields, said there is a “growing number of studies that should concern all of us”; however, there is no scientific consensus that could give Hempfield a clear-cut answer.

Specht was one of three panelists who participated in Wednesday’s school board meeting in Hempfield.

The experts — each of whom expressed varied amounts of concern over the cell tower — were brought in as residents continue to question cell tower safety and implore the school board to reverse its 2015 decision to allow Verizon Wireless to build a 100-foot tower behind

Rohrerstown Elementary School.

**The cell tower debate**

[Theodora Scarato](#), executive director of the Environmental Health Trust, was the only panelist who presented science pointing to a high risk associated with cell towers.

She cited an [international appeal](#) to the United Nations signed by 236 scientists from 41 nations that says electromagnetic radiation could potentially cause health effects ranging from an increased cancer risk to functional changes in the reproductive system.

In response, [Kenneth Foster](#), a bioengineering professor at the University of Pennsylvania, pointed to studies done on Hempfield's approved cell tower site. The studies concluded that the cumulative radio frequency exposure levels at all publicly accessible locations would be at least 100 times less than limits assigned by the Federal Communications Commission.

"There is no particular evidence that this type of exposure is dangerous in any way," Foster said. Scarato, however, argued that the FCC limits, adopted in 1985 and revised in 1996, are outdated. "This science was from three decades ago," she said.

Eight professionals in the health and safety field have written to the school board with concerns over the potential health effects of electromagnetic radiation.

That's in addition to the dozens of residents regularly attending board meetings since the summer to express opposition to the tower.

Residents say they not only want the school board to abort its deal with Verizon — meaning the district would lose out on \$24,000 a year, plus potentially land itself in legal trouble — but take down the cell tower currently at Landisville Middle School.

They also took issue with Foster's position on the panel. Foster has testified as an expert witness for cell tower and telecom groups, as well as authoring industry-funded papers, on numerous occasions.

Foster confirmed his affiliation with those groups in the past but denied having any current conflict of interest.

## **Next step**

The board will vote Tuesday on an easement and amended lease agreement, which, if approved, would allow the project to move forward.

As of Wednesday, Verizon had not applied for the necessary permits from East Hempfield Township to begin construction of the tower.

Attempts to reach Hempfield school board President Bill Otto were unsuccessful.

[Verizon Q and A](#) by [LancasterOnline](#) on Scribd

