

Parents win cell phone fight
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JESSUP — Sprint Nextel withdrew an appeal Monday to activate 12 cell phone antennas installed on the diocese-run La Salle Academy and agreed to remove the telecommunication facility within six months.

A roomful of residents, parents and La Salle students broke out in applause after hearing the fight was at an end. Sprint Nextel acquiesced to Jessup through a letter read during a brief Zoning Hearing Board meeting.

Kim Giombetti, the Zoning Hearing Board solicitor, read the letter, which indicated the borough had signed an agreement to have the installation taken down by Aug. 15. The telecommunication facility had never been used, and the company would not activate it in the meantime, according to the agreement.

Borough Council President James Brunoizzi said he was happy the fight ended with all sides coming to an agreement.

"There's no doubt: The public coming out, participating on this issue, made the difference. And that's the case with public comment on any issue," Mr. Brunoizzi said.

Efforts to reach Sprint Nextel officials were unsuccessful Monday night.

Jessup had given a permit in error to Sprint Nextel for building cellular antennas in a residential area. After realizing the mistake, the borough revoked the company's permit, issued a stop-work order and filed an enforcement notice.

Sprint Nextel responded by appealing the decision to the Zoning Hearing Board.

La Salle parents were relieved by the announcement that the appeal had been withdrawn.

"I am looking forward to seeing the cell tower come down," said La Salle parent Alison Bollard. She is also a member of Jessup Area Neighborhood Alliance, a citizens group formed as a result of the installation.

The citizens group will make sure the company disassembles all of its equipment by Aug. 15 "or we'll be back asking (the Zoning Hearing Board) to fine them," Ms. Bollard said.

Under the Diocese of Scranton's restructuring plan, La Salle Academy and St. Mary's Visitation in Dickson City were consolidated into one school, with St. Mary's housing preschool through third-grade students and La Salle housing students in grades four through eight.

The building where the antennas were installed on the La Salle campus, St. Michael's school, has remained vacant. Several parents expressed interest in seeing students at St. Mary's returned to the La Salle campus.

"I would like very much, as a La Salle parent, to bring the school family back together again," Ms. Bollard said.

She said the older students served as mentors to younger students, and all grades were able to share lunch, Mass and activities.

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Borough Councilman Jack Mancak, happy the fight is over, said he hopes the building is filled with children again.

"It'd be a shame to let that building go to waste. It's a beautiful building," he said.

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