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## Church's price to kill cell tower: \$750,000

*South Eugene pastor tells neighbors opposed to the project that they can pay to make it go away*

BY EDWARD RUSSO  
*The Register-Guard*

Crossfire World Outreach Ministries on Tuesday made an unusual, public offer to opponents of a proposed cell

tower at its south Eugene church: Pay big bucks and the tower proposal will disappear.

Nearby residents are upset over Crossfire's plan to lease land next to its church at West Amazon Drive and Fox

Hollow Road to AT&T. The firm wants to build a 75-foot cellphone tower disguised as an evergreen tree on the site.

But Pastor Aaron Taylor on Tuesday said Crossfire would drop plans to rent land for the tower if opponents paid it \$750,000. That is half the value Crossfire would receive from the lease deal over the

long term, he said.

Otherwise, opponents can buy the entire church and its 2-acre parcel for about \$2 million, Taylor said. The wood-frame, 7,200-square-foot church building is 55 years old.

If Crossfire sells the

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*"I don't know if it's completely ridiculous or if people will think of it as extortion."*

— WILLIAM COLLINGE, CELLPHONE TOWER OPPONENT



TOM PENIX/The Register-Guard

# Tower: Pastor says he has received threats over tower plan

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church, it would find another one to buy in south Eugene, Taylor said.

"I'm just saying if (opponents) believe" that cell phone towers are harmful, "I'm giving them options," he said.

The church's offer was published Tuesday in a three-quarter-page advertisement in The Register-Guard that responded to a Jan. 6 ad from tower opponents, also published in the newspaper.

South Eugene resident and tower opponent William Collinge said he didn't know if opponents would consider accepting the church's offers.

Opponents will meet today to discuss it, he said. "I don't know if it's completely ridiculous or if people will think of it as extortion," Collinge said.

Opponents worry that radio frequency emissions from the tower would threaten human health as well as wildlife in the nearby Amazon Creek corridor, and that the tower would depress property values.

Taylor and leaders of Crossfire, a Springfield-based non-denominational church, say concerns about tower emissions are overblown.

The Federal Communications Commission, which regulates tower emissions, has determined the towers are safe, they said.

In their ad, Crossfire church leaders said the hypocrisy of opponents is "amazing."

Only two or three opponents that church leaders have spoken to "refrain from using cellphones," the ad said.

Most tower opponents politely disagree with church leaders about the tower, but a few "have threatened to teach us a lesson by coming to our personal homes and churches to inflict violence," the ad said.

Taylor on Tuesday said two opponents, whom he would not name, sent him threatening messages by email.

"One, in particular, said, 'If you put a cell tower next to my house and try to kill me with radio frequency (waves), I'm going to come to your house and do the same,'" he said. "I get their

rationale, but this is ridiculous."

Collinge, a scientific reviewer for the National Institutes of Health, said he "abhors the threats and hateful messages" that people have sent Taylor.

Like many Americans, Taylor and other Crossfire church leaders have been led to believe that cell tower emissions are safe, mainly because of outdated FCC standards, Collinge said.

The FCC regulations were written with the help of telecommunication firms, which are reluctant to have them changed, he said.

The rules are faulty because they are based on the thermal, or temperature, effects of the emissions, Collinge said.

However, more recent research is focusing on how electromagnetic radiation damages human tissue, DNA and chromosomes, Collinge said.

Studies in European countries indicate that people who live near cell towers run greater chances of developing cancer than other people, he said.

"They are good people," Collinge said of Taylor and other

church leaders. "But there is a knowledge gap. And it's not their fault. It's our society because of the political system and the power we have given corporations."

In 2013, Taylor told The Register-Guard that his church would only collect "several hundred dollars a month" from its AT&T tower deal.

But on Tuesday he said the deal has the potential to generate \$1.5 million or more for the church over 25 years, or a minimum of \$5,000 a month.

Taylor said the total includes projected rent increases, the value of building additions that AT&T would make to the church, and potential lease agreements with other companies that would put transmission equipment on the tower.

Under Eugene city code, cell towers are allowed on residentially zoned property, which includes the church site, if the spires meet conditions on height, screening, noise, lighting and other factors.

Tower proposals are subject to public hearings, and residents

can raise objections and fight the structures in court.

AT&T last year submitted a tower application to city officials, who have approval authority.

The firm is under a deadline to revise its application by Friday. A public hearing on the request before a city hearings official has yet to be scheduled.

The Jan. 6 newspaper ad from opponents was signed by 215 people, who asked the church to withdraw the tower application.

"While land use processes are available to all citizens to oppose locations of cell towers, we would like to believe that, as neighbors, we should appeal to you on moral grounds," the ad stated. "Even if you reject the science and the precautionary actions now being taken in other countries, you can still change course out of respect and love for your neighbors in Eugene."

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