

LOCAL NEWS

Wireless Antenna Draws Heat



PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Colin O'Neill is one of several residents of the Beaumont-Wilshire neighborhood who feel like Clear, an Internet service provider with big plans for Portland, is railroading an antenna and equipment cabinet into their neighborhood.

Proposal runs into strong opposition

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Residents are fuming over an attempt by Clear, a mobile Internet company, to install one of its WiMax Network antennas on a utility pole next to the Wilshire Market on Northeast 37th Avenue and Fremont Street.

At a meeting last week at Beaumont School, about 80 people spent two hours expressing concerns, often heatedly, about the proposed installation and the possible health impacts of wireless technology, as well as the noise it could generate and its potential to be an eyesore.

Present at the meeting was Kevin Martin, a land use and planning consultant for Clear, to field ques-

tions from residents.

He explained that Clear had covered most of Portland, but still needed antennas in a few "leftover" neighborhoods to complete its coverage map.

"We feel like leftovers," muttered one resident.

Clear, which offers Internet service in 25 markets nationwide, initially looked into putting an antenna at Beaumont School. However, Portland Public Schools, which has antennas in six schools, denied its request last year after strong community push back.

Martin said that this pole was the last resort the company had.

"Clear has not told me to back down on this," Martin bluntly told

residents. "They intend to move forward."

Also present at the meeting was David Soloos, the deputy director of the city's Office of Cable Communications and Franchise Management, whose message to residents was: The city's hands are tied on this one.

He explained that federal and

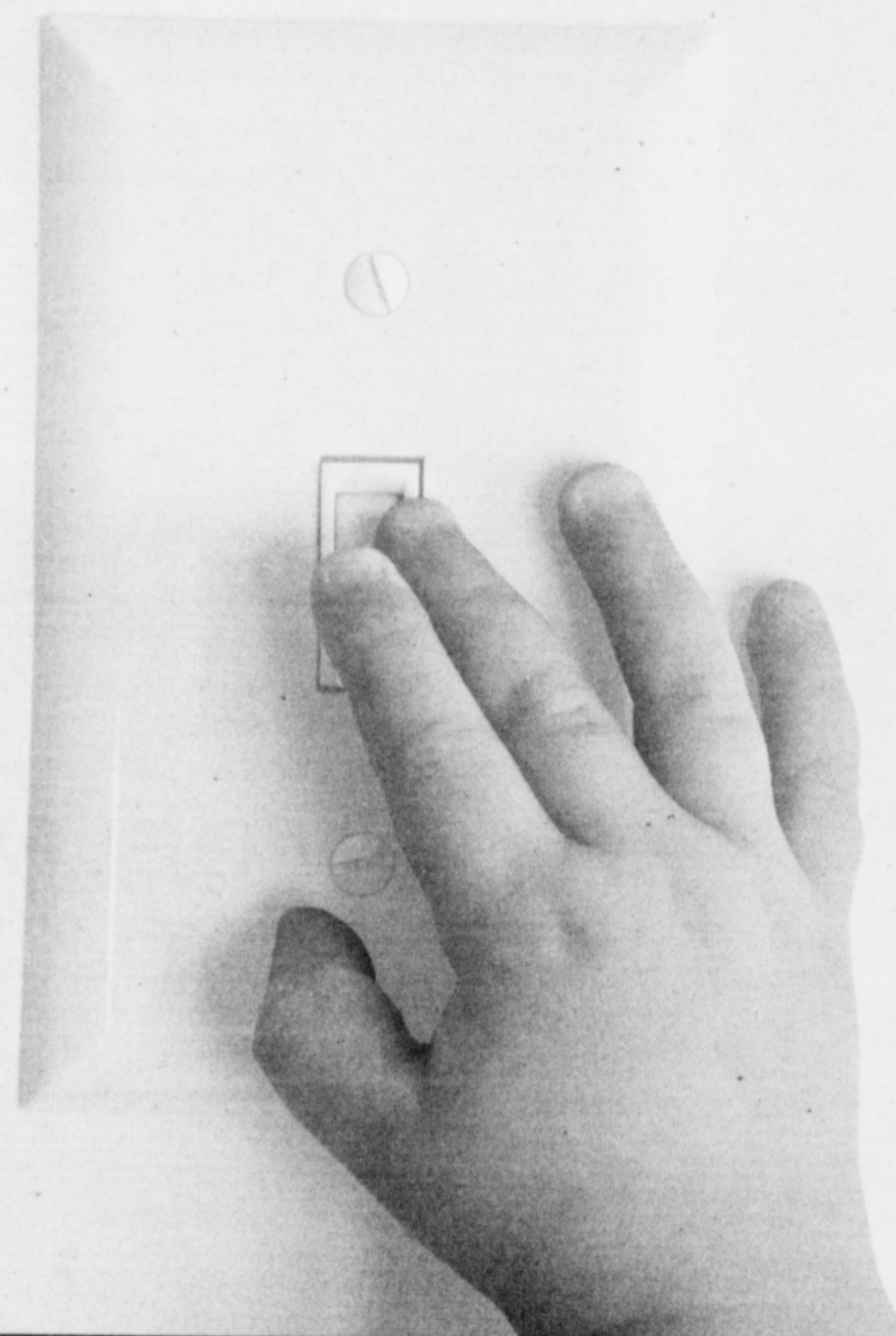
state law gives wireless companies the right to attach to utility poles, provided they pay \$5,000 a year to the city, plus fees to the utility provider.

However, Soloos explained that Portland City Council voted in May of last year in favor of a resolution asking the Federal Communications Commission to look into potential

health effects of wireless technology.

"The city has done its part," he added, telling people to contact their congressional representatives if they wanted further action— an answer residents weren't satisfied with.

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