

The Lake County Historical Society receives many calls from individuals concerned about the future of various endangered historic properties. Oftentimes the LCHS is asked, “What is the Historical Society going to do about it?” The best answer is that the local citizens affected by the proposed changes to the property have the greatest voice. The article that follows is a demonstration of this principle. Sharon Sammon and Thomas Marsh took all the right steps to protect an historic property and community:

A 140' Cell Tower proposed for the property between the Maple Grove Grange and the Maple Grove Cemetery on River Road in Willoughby Hills, Ohio

Late in 2016, my husband Chris and I started receiving information in our mailbox about a cell tower that was being proposed to be constructed on the Maple Grove Grange property on River Road in Willoughby Hills, just a short distance from our home. We didn't pay much attention to the information because we didn't realize the scope of the project. Once we realized the situation, we immediately engaged.

We attended a City Zoning meeting on February 2 (meeting minutes enclosed), with several other neighbors from our development. There were many residents in attendance, wanting to voice concerns to the Willoughby Hills Zoning Committee. People spoke about property value depreciation (which was substantiated by a resident who is a licensed realtor), zoning restrictions, health concerns, not to mention the unsightliness of a 140' tower camouflaged as a tree, which would be in plain view from all neighboring properties and developments. But maybe the most heart-felt were those people who spoke about the history of the Grange and what it meant to them. One neighbor spoke of being baptized at the Grange. Others spoke about the Maple Grove cemetery that is on the neighboring grounds, and the children that were buried there in the 1800's that “needed a voice” in the absences of their parents.

Because of this compelling situation, I have personally walked house to house asking neighbors opposed to this project to sign a petition I have prepared (blank petition enclosed). To date I have gathered 118 signatures. I also ordered yard signs (photos enclosed) for those who signed the petition, to display their concerns to passersby, as well as to city officials who had been involved in the discussions with the tower construction company.

A Maple Grove neighbor, Tom Marsh, hired an attorney specializing in Zoning Law, which proved to be helpful through this process. In an effort to raise funds to cover legal expenses, we have started a GoFundMe page at [GoFundMe.com/p/6hbkk](https://www.gofundme.com/p/6hbkk) and we have communicated this through LinkedIn and Facebook with the hopes people will contribute and pass it along to others in the community and those opposed to cell towers in residential areas.

Our goal was to stop the tower construction through our zoning meetings. At this point, the zoning board has voted down the tower construction, which was a victory for local residents and those interested in preserving the Maple Grove Grange and Maple Grove Cemetery. Our community had banded together, and we will remain prepared to take a stand in the future to preserve our rural Historic Maple Grove neighborhood.—SHARON SAMMON