WEST VIRGINIA CODE CHAPTER 31G ARTICLE 5

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§31G-5-1. Short title.

This article shall be known and cited as the Vertical Real Estate Management and Availability Act.

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§31G-5-2. Definitions.

For the purposes of this article unless the context otherwise requires:

“Ground facilities” means any shed, buildings, server rooms, or other ancillary structure providing essential services to a tower, including, but not limited to, distributing power, providing communications backhaul, or other service necessary to carry out the purposes of the tower.

“Tower” means a structure which hosts an antenna or other equipment used for the purposes of transmitting cellular or wireless signals for communications purposes, including telephonically, or, for computing purposes, including any antenna and all associated equipment; and

“Vertical Real Estate” means any communication or broadcast tower, or any other structure or similar installation mounted on a rooftop or other prominent place, and any other such facilities associated with that structure, upon which is suitable to mount communications equipment thereon, and the associated ground facilities necessary to accommodate that communications purpose, or other real estate suitable for the installation of a telecommunications vertical asset: *Provided*, That any excess telecommunications facilities owned or controlled by the West Virginia Division of Highways that do not meet this definition of Vertical Real Estate, shall be subject to the provisions of §17-2E-6a of this code: *Provided further*, That nothing in this definition may serve to prohibit terrestrial, middle-mile or last-mile broadband or high speed internet wiring or facilities installation pursuant to §17-2E-1 *et seq.* nor may classification as such facilities serve to prevent utility installation including, but not limited to, water, electric and sewer services.

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§31G-5-3. Management of vertical real estate.

(a) Beginning on July 1, 2020, the Department of Administration shall coordinate with the executive to issue a request for proposals to manage state-owned vertical real estate. This request for proposals shall contain at a minimum the following information from each prospective manager:

(1) A standard method for valuation of space on each tower that is reasonable and customary for the reach of and the numbers of the population served by the vertical real estate.

(2) A clause which forbids any vendor to enter into an exclusive arrangement with any person for the right to use the vertical real estate, unless no other entity is interested, and a clause which forbids the sharing of information, backhaul, or any other resources gleaned from managing the assets competitively with any competitors.

(3) A clause forbidding the vendor from engaging in any preferential treatment to their own operations as a competing provider of wireless broadband access.

(4) A minimum of 50 percent rental reduction for any entity whose utilization of that vertical real estate is providing broadband access which is rate unlimited or unthrottled; subject to current load/demand network management.

(b) There is hereby created in the state treasury a special account to be known as the Technology Infrastructure Reinvestment Fund to be administered by the Office of Technology. All revenue derived from the management of the vertical real estate shall be deposited into the fund pursuant to §31G-5-3 of this code. Expenditures from the fund shall be made by the Office of Technology for the purpose of reinvestment in the vertical real estate or technology infrastructure supporting broadband on state-owned property. Expenditures are not authorized from collections but are to be made in accordance with appropriation by the Legislature pursuant to the provisions of §12-3-1, *et seq.* of this code and upon the fulfillment of the provisions of §11B-2-1, *et seq.* of this code.

(c) The Office of Technology shall remit to the manager the compensation as per the contract and then on June 30 each year shall distribute any funds received in excess of the compensation due the manager as follows:

(1) Fifty percent to the Technology Infrastructure Reinvestment Fund,

(2) Fifty percent will go to the Broadband Expansion Fund established in §31G-1-5 of this code in control of the Broadband Enhancement Council with the specific purpose of:

(A) Funding the ongoing operations of the Broadband Enhancement Council, and

(B) To provide funds to match federal grants.

(d) Counties, municipalities and other political subdivisions, as applicable, may join or

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participate in an awarded agreement with a successful manager under the same terms and conditions: *Provided,* That distribution of funds attributable to their assets may be expended at the discretion of their governing body.

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§31G-5-4. Exceptions to the management of vertical real estate.

Any vertical real estate shall be exempted from management if:

(A) The rental of that vertical real estate would potentially affect the operations of any public safety, emergency management or homeland security operations: *Provided,* That if there is a showing that a reasonable, technically feasible, nondiscriminatory design can prevent such adverse effect on any public safety, emergency management or homeland security operations then such management may occur; or

(B) It would have an adverse effect on historic preservation of a property: *Provided,* That if there is a showing that a reasonable, technically feasible, nondiscriminatory, and technologically neutral design or concealment measures can prevent such adverse effect on the property's historic preservations then such management may occur.

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