New cell tower to extend coverage

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PICKENS — County planning commissioners gave the go-ahead Monday night for the construction of a cellular tower in northern Pickens County, a move supporters say could have other carriers following close behind to extend cell-phone coverage in an area with little service.

Jonathan Yates, an attorney for Mount Pleasant-based Optima Towers, told the five-member commission that "Pickens County doesn't enjoy very good cell coverage compared to the rest of the state."

However, he said that could change with the 250-foot tower Optima is building for Sprint.

"When one (cell provider) comes in and starts filling out their network, we hope that will create the competition so the others will come in," Yates said.

According to Yates and Martin Deputy, a director with Optima Towers who also spoke at the meeting, the tower will have space for four antennas in addition to the Sprint antenna.

The tower will be on a 10-acre tract near Woodport Road and U.S. 178. Yates said there is good tree coverage around the site, and Optima will create a 10-foot buffer, planted with leyland cypress trees.