

FILE NO.: Z-8998

NAME: MEMS Headquarters Short-form PD-O

LOCATION: Located at 1022 West 8th Street

DEVELOPER:

MEMS
Metropolitan Emergency Medical Service
1022 West 8th Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

ENGINEER:

Cromwell Architects Engineers
101 South Spring Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

AREA: 3.13 acres NUMBER OF LOTS: 1 zoning lot FT. NEW STREET: 0 LF

CURRENT ZONING: UU, Urban Use District

ALLOWED USES: Residential, Office, Commercial and Industrial – all inside

PROPOSED ZONING: PD-O

PROPOSED USE: Ambulance service, headquarters post

VARIANCE/WAIVERS: None requested.

A. PROPOSAL/REQUEST/APPLICANT'S STATEMENT:

On a previous occasion Metropolitan Emergency Medical Services (MEMS), appeared before the Planning Commission to present the Master Plan for the MEMS campus. This filing represents the first phase of implementation of the Master Plan. As part of the planning several key points are needed for construction of a new secure campus; located south of 8th Street and between 8th and 7th Streets and Ringo and Cross Streets.

- First, the existing MEMS Main Building, built in 1985, was not designed to withstand the significant wind or seismic loads required for a facility

housing essential public services. In order to place MEMS in a good position for the future, a structurally sound, code compliant Headquarters building is critical to the organization's continued success.

- Second, the existing MEMS Headquarters Building currently sits on land leased from the Arkansas State Highway Department (AHTD). Theoretically, AHTD could choose to cancel or not renew the lease. While this is unlikely it does make MEMS vulnerable to future changes in use along the I-630 corridor.
- Third, due to Operational and Training functions within the MEMS organization, additional land would be required for an ambulance vehicular use area and employee parking. MEMS has acquired additional acreage for the purposes of vehicular use and parking after the 2012 presentation to the Planning Commission.
- Fourth, due to growth of the metropolitan area and an increase in services provided (for example, the dispatching and coordination function of the Arkansas Trauma System) by MEMS, more and larger building spaces are required.
- Fifth, MEMS is a 24/7 operation, with employees moving about the campus at all hours. MEMS long ago outgrew the original secure, fenced compound. There have been increasing security concerns for MEMS employees.

On the site plan, the new headquarters building is shown in the southwest corner of Block 289, setback from the property line to allow for the width of the spread footing. Directly to the north is the visitor and 8 to 5 employee parking lot of 29 regular spaces and 4 ADA compliant parking spaces, surrounded by an ornamental metal fence and appropriate landscape screening. MEMS currently has this proposed parking area enrolled as a brownfield site with Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (AEDQ) due to the presence of dry-cleaning chemicals beneath the grounds surface. Building or disturbing the earth's surface with anything other than parking on this portion of the site is not possible due to the agreement with ADEQ. To the east of the headquarters building is the vehicular use area for ambulances and other MEMS support vehicles. This includes five covered drive-thru bays for ambulance cleaning and resupply. The parking shown in the southeast corner of Block 289, is exclusively for parking of ambulance trucks. Between every two parking spaces will be a bollard containing electrical connections for charging the ambulance batteries. This area, while containing islands, is best described as a vehicular service yard similar to those utilized by local utility providers. On the south side of the headquarters building is the service entry and delivery dock. The extensive concrete paving in this location is to accommodate heavy, semi-truck turning in order to access the dock. The portion of the site leased from AHTD, directly south of 8th Street, will be utilized as parking for the 24-7 employees. The existing main building will remain until the new headquarter building is built. At some point in the future, the main building may be removed to provide more

secure parking. It should be noted that the 8th Street connection to the I-630 West entrance ramp is currently being permanently closed based on approval from AHTD and MEMS.

The vehicular use pattern will be as follows:

- Ambulance traffic will turn off 7th Street, south onto Ringo Street and enter MEMS campus thru an electronically controlled, swing gate. Ambulances will traverse the driveway and stop to be cleaned and resupplied beneath the covered drive-thru bays. Each ambulance will either then park to charge or exit campus by going north on Ringo Street.
- Delivery truck traffic will turn off of 7th Street, south onto Cross Street and stop to be allowed entry to the MEMS campus via another electronically controlled, swing gate. Delivery traffic will then negotiate a turn-around and back-up to the delivery dock, make their delivery and then circle back around and out Cross Street north to 7th Street.
- Employees parking for regular 8-5 employees will be within the parking lot at the corner of 7th Street and Cross Street. The parking area is controlled, after business hours by an electronically controlled arm gate. Emergency medical and dispatch employees will enter campus via Cross Street and park within the area leased from AHTD, which is essentially unchanged from its existing layout.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS:

The MEMS site is located along I-630 at the Chester Street entrance ramp. There are a number of buildings located on the site related to the operation of MEMS. West 8th Street through the site was recently closed. Portions of Ringo and Cross Streets were also abandoned as public rights of way.

There are a number of uses in the area including State and Federal offices, a City of Little Rock Fire Station, restaurants, retail uses and residential uses.

C. NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS:

As of this writing, staff has received several informational phone calls from area residents. All owners of property located within 200-feet of the site along with the Downtown Neighborhood Association were notified of the public hearing.

D. ENGINEERING COMMENTS:

PUBLIC WORKS CONDITIONS:

1. Right-of-way dedications meet the Master Street Plan standards.

2. Repair or replace any curb and gutter or sidewalk that is damaged in the public right-of-way prior to occupancy. South Cross Street should be overlaid with asphalt to the centerline.
3. If disturbed area is one (1) or more acres, obtain a NPDES stormwater permit from the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality prior to the start of construction.
4. Street Improvement plans shall include signage and striping. Public Works must approve completed plans prior to construction.
5. Damage to public and private property due to hauling operations or operation of construction related equipment from a nearby construction site shall be repaired by the responsible party prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
6. A truck route should be established for delivery trucks to the site. Equipment should be installed to enable the proposed gates to be opened for vehicles to pass through the site on 8th Street and Ringo Street due to street turnarounds are not provided.

E. UTILITIES AND FIRE DEPARTMENT/COUNTY PLANNING:

Wastewater: Sewer available to this project.

Entergy: See attached for Entergy's previous response to this proposal. An Entergy designer is already working with the developer on options and cost to rearrange the electrical facilities to enable the construction.

Centerpoint Energy: Be advised that Centerpoint Energy owns and operates facilities in street right-of-way on 8th, Cross, and Ringo Streets in Little Rock, AR. As mentioned in our ROW abandonment response letter on July 30th, 2014 CNP requests that a twenty foot (20') utility easement be maintained within the proposed ROW being abandoned. CNP also requests access to these facilities be granted to CNP and contractors at our discretion.

AT & T: No comment received.

Central Arkansas Water: No comment received.

Fire Department: Maintain access, fire hydrants per code. Contact the Little Rock Fire Department for additional information.

County Planning: No comment.

CATA: The site is located on CATA Bus Route #15, the 65th Street Route.

1. All Central Arkansas Water requirements in effect at the time of request for water service must be met.

2. Due to the nature of this facility, installation of an approved reduced pressure zone backflow preventer assembly (RPZA) is required on the domestic water service. This assembly must be installed prior to the first point of use. Central Arkansas Water requires that upon installation of the RPZA, successful tests of the assembly must be completed by a Certified Assembly Tester licensed by the State of Arkansas and approved by Central Arkansas Water. The test results must be sent to Central Arkansas Water's Cross Connection Section within ten days of installation and annually thereafter. Contact the Cross Connection Section at 501.377.1226 if you would like to discuss backflow prevention requirements for this project.
3. This development will have minor impact on the existing water distribution system. Proposed water facilities will be sized to provide adequate pressure and fire protection.
4. The Little Rock Fire Department needs to evaluate this site to determine whether additional public and/or private fire hydrant(s) will be required. If additional fire hydrant(s) are required, they will be installed at the Developer's expense.
5. Please submit plans for water facilities and/or fire protection system to Central Arkansas Water for review. Plan revisions may be required after additional review. Contact Central Arkansas Water regarding procedures for installation of water facilities and/or fire service. Approval of plans by the Arkansas Department of Health Engineering Division and the Little Rock Fire Department is required.
6. A Capital Investment Charge based on the size of meter connection(s) will apply to this project in addition to normal charges. This fee will apply to all connections including metered connections off the private fire system.
7. If there are facilities that need to be adjusted and/or relocated, contact Central Arkansas Water. That work would be done at the expense of the developer.
8. Contact Central Arkansas Water if additional fire protection or metered water service is required.

Parks and Recreation: No comment received.

F. ISSUES/TECHNICAL/DESIGN:

Building Code: Project is subject to full commercial plan review approval prior to issuance of a building permit. For information on submittal requirements and the review process, contact a commercial plans examiner: Curtis Richey at 501.371.4724; crichey@littlerock.org or Mark Alderfer at 501.371.4875; malderfer@littlerock.org.

Planning Division: This request is located in the Downtown Planning District. The Land Use Plan shows Mixed Use-Urban (MX-U) for this property. The Mixed Use-Urban category provides for a mix of residential, office and commercial uses not only in the same block but also within the same structure. This category is intended for older "urban" areas to allow dissimilar uses to exist, which support each other to create a vital area. Development should reinforce the urban fabric creating a 24-hour activity area. Using the Planned Zoning District or the Urban Use District, high and moderate density developments that result in a vital (dense) pedestrian oriented area are appropriate. The applicant has applied for a rezoning from UU (Urban Use District) to PDO (Planned District Office) to allow the additional development to support the MEMS service on this site.

Master Street Plan: 7th Street is a Collector and Cross and Ringo Streets are Local Streets on the Master Street Plan. The primary function of a Collector Street is to provide a connection from Local Streets to Arterials. The primary function of a Local Street is to provide access to adjacent properties. Local Streets that are abutted by non-residential zoning/use or more intensive zoning than duplexes are considered as "Commercial Streets". A Collector design standard is used for Commercial Streets. These streets may require dedication of right-of-way and may require street improvements for entrances and exits to the site.

Bicycle Plan: There is a Class III Bike Route shown along 7th Street. Bike Routes require no additional right-of-way or pavement markings, but only a sign to identify and direct the route.

Landscape:

1. Site plan must comply with the City's landscape and buffer ordinance requirements.
2. The property is located in the UU, Urban Use district. Street trees a minimum of three-inch caliper will be required. The trees shall be located a minimum of two (2) feet off the back of a curb and shall be thirty (30) feet on center and no closer than thirty (30) feet to a street intersection with a water source provided. The tree canopy shall be maintained at least eight (8) feet above the sidewalk.
 - Street trees are to be provided on South Cross Street and West 7th Street.
3. Street buffers will be required at six (6) percent of the average depth of the lot. The minimum dimension shall be one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) the full width requirement but in no case less than nine (9) feet. The property is located in the City's Designated Mature Area. A twenty-five (25%) percent reduction of the buffer requirements is acceptable. Easements cannot count toward fulfilling this requirement. The plantings, existing and purposed, shall be provided within the City's landscape ordinance requirements.

- The depth of the lot is approximately three hundred and sixty (360) linear feet. After the twenty-five (25%) percent reduction of the buffer requirements a sixteen (16) foot street buffer will be required on West 7th Street.
4. Screening requirements will need to be met for the vehicular use areas adjacent to street right-of-ways. Provide screening shrubs with an average linear spacing of not less at three (3) feet within the required landscape area. Provide trees with an average linear spacing of not less than thirty (30) feet.
 5. A perimeter planting strip is required along any side of a vehicular use area that abuts adjoining property. This strip shall be at least nine (9) feet wide. The property is located in the City's designated mature area. A 25% reduction of the perimeter requirements is acceptable. One (1) tree and three (3) shrubs or vines shall be planted for every thirty (30) linear feet of perimeter planting strip.
 - A minimum 6.75-foot perimeter planting strip is required adjacent to the vehicular use area at the west property line. Up to twenty-five (25) percent of the perimeter planter area may be shifted from one area of the site to another. In no instance shall the perimeter planting strip width be less than five (5) feet.
 6. Landscape areas shall be provided between the vehicular use area used for public parking and the general vicinity of the building, excluding truck loading or service areas not open to public parking. These areas shall be equal to an equivalent planter strip three (3) feet wide along the vehicular use area.
 7. Eight percent (8%) of the vehicular use area must be designated for green space; this green space needs to be evenly distributed throughout the parking area(s). The minimum size of an interior landscape area shall be one hundred fifty (150) square feet for developments with one hundred fifty (150) or fewer parking spaces. Interior islands must be a minimum of seven and one half (7 1/2) feet in width. Trees shall be included in the interior landscape areas at the rate of one (1) tree for every twelve (12) parking spaces.
 8. An irrigation system shall be required for developments of one (1) acre or larger.
 9. The City Beautiful Commission recommends preserving as many existing trees as feasible on this site. Credit toward fulfilling Landscape Ordinance requirements can be given when preserving trees of six (6) inch caliper or larger.

G. SUBDIVISION COMMITTEE COMMENT: (November 19, 2014)

The applicant was present. Staff presented an overview of the item stating there were additional items necessary to complete the review process. Staff requested the applicant provide the maximum building height for the proposed structures. Staff also requested additional information concerning the proposed uses of the buildings and the future use of the existing buildings.

Public Works comments were addressed. Staff stated right of way dedications were required to meet the Master Street Plan standards. Staff stated if the disturbed area was more than one (1) acre a NPDES stormwater permit from the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality would be required. Staff requested the applicant provide the proposed truck route to the site.

Landscaping comments were addressed. Staff stated the site was located within the Designated Mature Area which allowed the landscape strips to be reduced to 6-feet 9-inches. Staff also stated screening would be required adjacent to the vehicular use area and the street right of way. Staff stated building landscaping would be required and should be a minimum of three (3) feet in width. Staff stated nonpublic parking areas were not required to be landscaped.

Staff noted the comments from the various other agencies. There were no more issues for discussion. The Committee then forwarded the item to the full Commission for final action.

H. ANALYSIS:

The applicant submitted a revised cover letter and site plan to staff addressing a number of the issues raised at the November 19, 2014, Subdivision Committee meeting. The applicant has indicated the maximum building height for the structures will be 35-feet above the finished floor elevation. The applicant has indicated the headquarter building is primarily business occupancy, commercial office use. The dispatch and operations portions of the headquarters building will be 24-hours a day, seven (7) days per week, 365-days per year. The 2nd floor will house the training area, finance, billing and accounts receivable departments and executive offices and board room. The existing MEMS building will eventually be demolished, as part of a separate construction contract, but until that time MEMS will utilize the space as storage for materials currently stored at an off-site, rented facility.

The applicant is seeking a rezoning from UU, Urban Use District to PD-O to allow the approval of a site plan for the redevelopment of the future MEMS headquarters. The applicant has previously presented to the City their Master Plan for redevelopment of the site. The applicant is now requesting the rezoning to establish the plan and future components.

The street buffer is required at six (6) percent of the average depth of the lot. The minimum dimension must be one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) the full width requirement but in no case less than nine (9) feet. This property is located in the City's Designated Mature Area which allows a twenty-five (25%) percent reduction of the buffer requirement. Based on the depth of the lot, approximately 360 linear feet, a 21.6-foot street buffer would typically be required. There is a twenty-five (25%) percent reduction of the buffer requirement allowed which reduces the required street buffer along West 7th Street to sixteen (16) feet. The applicant is requesting a reduction in the required buffer along West 7th Street to be allowed the placement of a 14-foot 6-inch buffer.

Staff is supportive of the request. The applicant is seeking a rezoning of the site from UU, Urban Use District to PD-O to allow the approval of the overall master plan for the MEMS Headquarters site. To staff's knowledge there are no remaining outstanding technical issues associated with the request. Staff feels the development as proposed is appropriate.

I. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the request subject to compliance with the comments and conditions as outlined in paragraphs D, E and F of the agenda staff report.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

(DECEMBER 18, 2014)

The applicant was present. There were no registered objectors present. Staff presented the item with a recommendation of approval of the request subject to compliance with the comments and conditions as outlined in paragraphs D, E and F of the agenda staff report.

There was no further discussion of the item. The Chair entertained a motion for approval of the item as presented by staff. The motion carried by a vote of 10 ayes, 0 noes and 1 absent.