



COLUMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AGENDA ITEM REQUEST FORM

The Board of County Commissioners meets the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month in the Columbia County School Board Administrative Complex Auditorium, 372 West Duval Street, Lake City, Florida 32055. The first meeting of every month is at 9:30AM while the second meeting of every month takes place at 5:30PM. All agenda items are due in the Board's office one week prior to the meeting date.

Today's Date: 12/5/2024 Meeting Date: 12/12/2024

Department: County Attorney

1. Nature and purpose of agenda item:

Request to Seek Bids for Build-to-suit Helipad Site

2. Recommended Motion/Action:

To approve a request for proposals to lease County land to an air ambulance service provider for a build-to-suit helipad site.

3. Fiscal impact on current budget.

This item has no effect on the current budget.

MEMORANDUM

To: Board Agenda, December 12, 2024

From: Joel F. Foreman



Re: **Request to Seek Bids for Build-to-suit Helipad Site**

Date: December 5, 2024

At its last meeting the Board was advised during public comment that an air ambulance service, sometimes referred to as a “life flight” service, would like to locate a helipad near the Columbia County Fire Station at Lake Jeffery Road. Staff met with Anthony Davis, who explained his company’s intentions for using a County site, and the justification for locating another helicopter in this part of the state. Mr. Davis stated, and the Fire Chief agrees, that approximately 400 calls per year in our regions (beyond just the County) go un-answered due to a lack of availability of helicopters to timely respond. When a call has to be canceled, a conventional ambulance completes the transport, but the transport takes much longer. In some cases, this can reduce the chance to save the patient’s life.

Locating a helipad near the County’s fire station will allow for ambulances to transport patients directly to the helipad in those circumstances where the helicopter cannot reach the patient at the scene of the accident (heavily wooded or developed areas where landing is unsafe). Even though the patient would be transported partly by conventional ambulance, the availability of a helicopter at a helipad location will allow for a much faster transport to Gainesville or Jacksonville.

Staff have discussed possible locations for this helipad site, and have settled on the parcel fronting Lake Jeffery Road between the Fire Station and Dollar General store. Use of this parcel will avoid disruption of the football fields and keep the helipad further from residential areas.

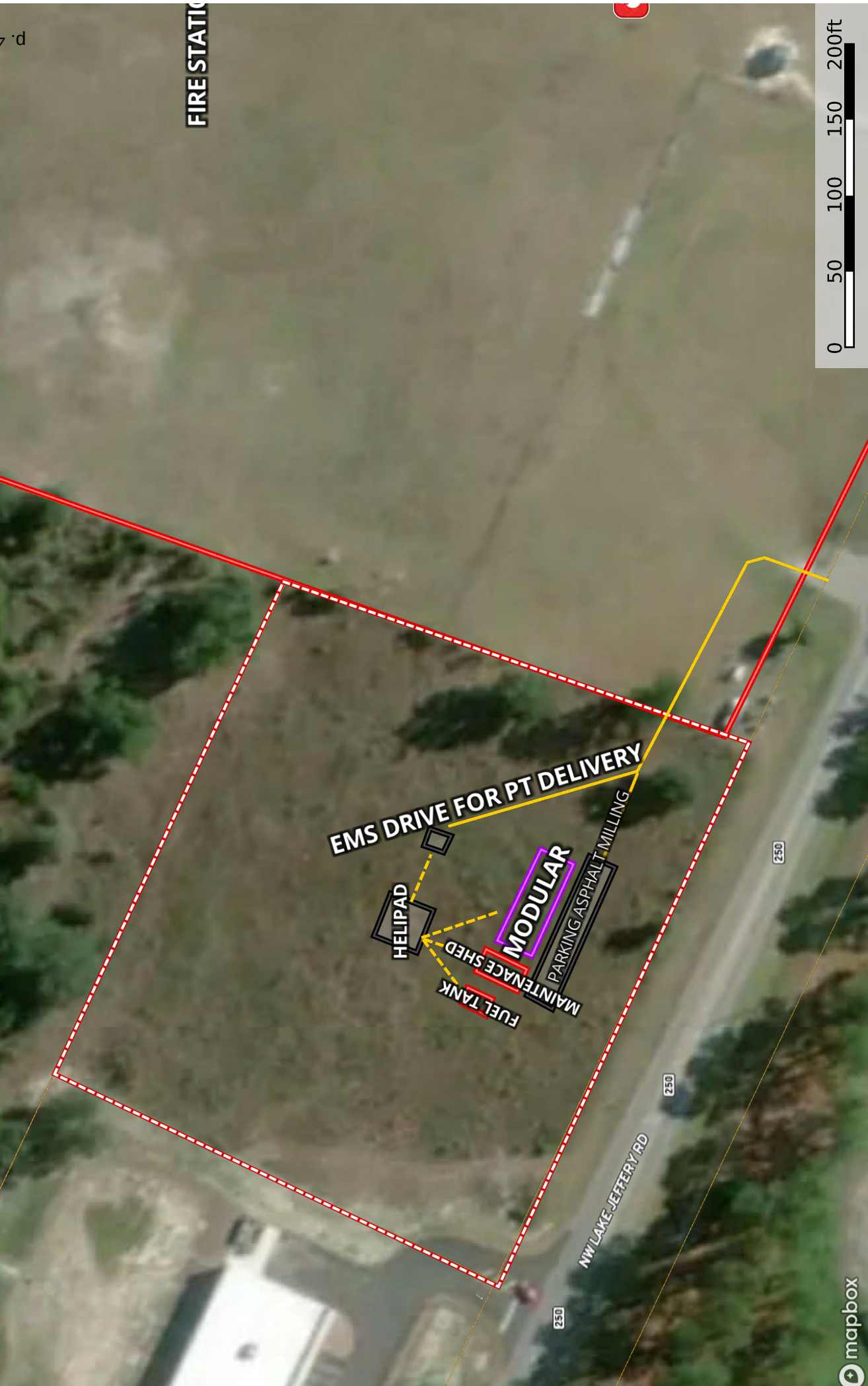
Because this project would entail leasing County land, the threshold question to the Board is whether it would like to offer this parcel for a build-to-suit lease. A map detailing minimum specifications for the improvements is attached. Purchasing would place a request for proposals, offering to lease the site only for an air ambulance or “life flight” service, and interested bidders would be required to build out their own improvements at their expense. Obviously permanent improvements to the property would become property of the County. Because the project would entail impervious areas, and because the County has other projects in development in the area, any surface water permitting would have to be done in concert with the County.

The Fire Chief is supportive of this project as he believes adding another helicopter in

Columbia County will serve public safety. Other concerned staff are also supportive of a project like this at this particular location.

The Board would have final approval of the top-ranked proposal and lease agreement.

Recommended motion: To approve a request for proposals to lease County land to an air ambulance service provider for a build-to-suit helipad site.



- Fire Station
- Hospital
- Plane
- Cell Tower
- Primary Road
- Road / Trail
- Transmission Line 1
- Boundary
- Boundary 1
- Boundary 2
- Boundary 3
- Boundary