

MUSC Health requests more heliports for medical use

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Content

Lancaster City Council unanimously approved the first reading of an ordinance to allow certain additions pertaining to heliports, or helicopter landing places, at the Aug. 22 City Council meeting.

The request to increase helicopter-landing places in the city came from MUSC Health — Lancaster Medical Center.

MUSC Health — Lancaster unveiled its new medical helicopter and heliport at the Meeting Street campus earlier this year, but said it needs more spaces for medical helicopters to land.

“A lot of our first responders, fire department, police department can attest to this, (but) when you have multiple people in a wreck of any kind, you might have multiple victims or multiple casualties,” said Jarvis Driggers, city facilities director. “(Those affected) have to have some other type of trauma level assistance, so this way they would have the accessibility to pull those additional resources.”

Driggers said the whole concern for bringing the matter to council was to advance the health-care setting in Lancaster, and increase the ability for fast, reliable medical care. The proposed location would likely be on MUSC — Lancaster’s existing campus, in the parking lot adjacent to the current heliport on Meeting Street.

Along with additional heliports for helicopters to land on, MUSC is also seeking approval to build a flight crew housing facility, so three or four on-call medical personnel can rest close to the flight facility. This will allow the crew to be local and better prepared to act fast during an emergency.

The facility would likely house two paramedics, a pilot and an office manager at a time. Registered nurses and paramedics would be able to stay in the area, which is not possible now, due to the lack of on-site crew quarters.

“We’re worried about the health care of our citizens,” Driggers said. “We don’t want to have to land a secondary helicopter in the middle of Meeting Street. We don’t want to cause any extra stress to that location.”

Down the line, MUSC also hopes to have locations for refueling, under the supervision of the fire marshal, and hangars to store the helicopters in the case of inclement weather.

However, the main pressing concern now, Driggers said, is approval for additional heliports and sleeping quarters for crew members.

However, the first reading of the ordinance presented allows for a special exception, meaning the heliport usage could extend to non-medical uses as well, such as private citizens. The ordinance would require uses for special exceptions to go through the board of zoning appeals, a public hearing and requests would be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

The ordinance, presented by Building and Zoning Director Louis Streater, will require a second reading for approval. The passing of this ordinance is also the first step in a long journey before citizens can expect construction of new facilities.

Child images

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