

CITY OF PINE BLUFF
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
MARCH 31ST, 2026 4:00 p.m.
City Hall Council Chambers
200 E. 8th Avenue



AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES: NONE

OLD BUSINESS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Variance request to use metal containers for the construction of a fire training and burn building at 3216 W. 7th Avenue in a R-3, Residential zone.

Adjourn to Planning Commission Meeting

**RECOMMENDATION
 TO THE
 PINE BLUFF PLANNING COMMISSION**

SUBJECT: Variance request to utilize metal containers for a fire training burn building at the fire department’s fire training site. The property is located at 3216 W. 7th Avenue and is zone R-3, Residential.

APPLICANT: Fire Chief Randy Compton

ZONING AND LAND USES: R-3, Residential

ZONING:	North:	R-3, Residential	LAND USE:	North:	Vacant
	South:	R-3, Residential		South:	County Road Department
	East:	R-3, Residential		East:	Vacant / Sf Residential
	West:	R-3, Residential		West:	County Road Department

History

No similar request made within city limits.

REVIEW

Background and request: The applicant is requesting a variance from the City of Pine Bluff Zoning Ordinance to allow the use of metal storage containers as structural components of a fire training burn facility on an existing, approximately one-acre fire training site located within an R-3 Residential zoning district. The subject property has an established history of use as a fire training area. The proposed improvement consists of purposed metal storage containers configured to simulate structural fire conditions for firefighter training exercises. The variance is required because the zoning ordinance prohibits the use of metal storage containers in residential zoning districts, regardless of use. The containers provide a durable, cost-effective, and controlled training environment that enhances firefighter safety and preparedness.

Site and Surrounding Area: The subject site is an existing fire training property situated within an R-3 Residential zoning district. The area is characterized primarily by low density residential development of declining value alongside the county operated road department. The training site has historically functioned as a public safety support facility, and its continued use for training purposes represents an intensification rather than a change in use. Surrounding properties include

residential structures at varying distances, with typical neighborhood street access and local traffic patterns. The nearest residence is approximately 200 feet from the proposed use site. Given the established use, the site is not entirely incompatible with the surrounding area; however, the introduction of permanent or semi-permanent container structures represents a visible and potentially impactful modification.

Zoning and Land Use Considerations: The R-3 Residential District is intended to support moderate-density residential development and compatible uses. While certain public or quasi-public uses may be permitted or conditionally allowed, the ordinance explicitly prohibits metal storage containers due to concerns related to aesthetics, property values, and neighborhood character.

The requested variance is specific to the material and structural form (metal containers), not the underlying use of the property as a training facility. However, the proposed structures function as both equipment and built form, raising questions about whether they should be regulated as accessory structures.

In evaluating a variance request, the Planning Commission must consider whether:

- Strict enforcement of the ordinance would create an unnecessary hardship;
- The hardship is unique to the property and not self-imposed;
- The variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood; and
- The variance is the minimum necessary to afford relief.

The applicant's hardship claim is primarily based on functional and financial considerations rather than physical constraints of the property, which may limit the strength of the variance justification under traditional zoning standards.

Parking and Site Operational Impacts: The proposed burn facility is intended for controlled, scheduled training exercises rather than continuous public use. As such, parking demand is expected to remain consistent with existing operations on the site. Operational impacts to consider include:

- **Traffic:** Periodic increases during training events, though generally limited in duration.
- **Noise:** Fire training activities may generate intermittent noise, including sirens, equipment operation, and personnel coordination.
- **Smoke and Air Quality:** Controlled burns may produce smoke, though typically regulated and managed under fire department protocols.
- **Visual Impact:** The presence of metal containers may introduce an industrial appearance inconsistent with residential surroundings.

No significant changes to site circulation or parking layout are anticipated; however, the visual and operational intensity may increase relative to current conditions.

Comprehensive Plan and Policy Consistency: The City of Pine Bluff Comprehensive Plan generally supports:

- Protection of established residential neighborhoods;
- Compatibility of land uses;
- Provision of adequate public safety services and facilities; and
- Mitigation of adverse impacts from non-residential uses in residential areas.

The proposed facility advances public safety objectives by enhancing firefighter training capabilities. However, it introduces structural elements and operational characteristics that may conflict with neighborhood preservation goals.

Balancing these priorities requires careful consideration of whether the public benefit outweighs potential localized impacts, and whether mitigation measures can ensure compatibility.

Findings and Analysis: Staff offers the following findings:

1. **Existence of Hardship:**

The hardship presented is primarily operational and financial rather than based on unique physical characteristics of the property. This does not fully align with traditional variance criteria.

2. **Uniqueness of the Property:**

While the property's established use as a fire training site is somewhat unique within a residential district, the condition necessitating the variance (use of metal containers) is not inherently tied to the land itself.

3. **Impact on Neighborhood Character:**

The introduction of metal storage containers may adversely affect the visual character of the surrounding residential area unless adequately screened or designed to minimize impact.

4. **Public Benefit Consideration:**

The facility serves a clear public safety function, which is a significant factor supporting the request.

5. **Minimum Necessary Relief:**

The request appears broader than the minimum necessary unless limited by conditions regarding placement, screening, design, and operational controls.

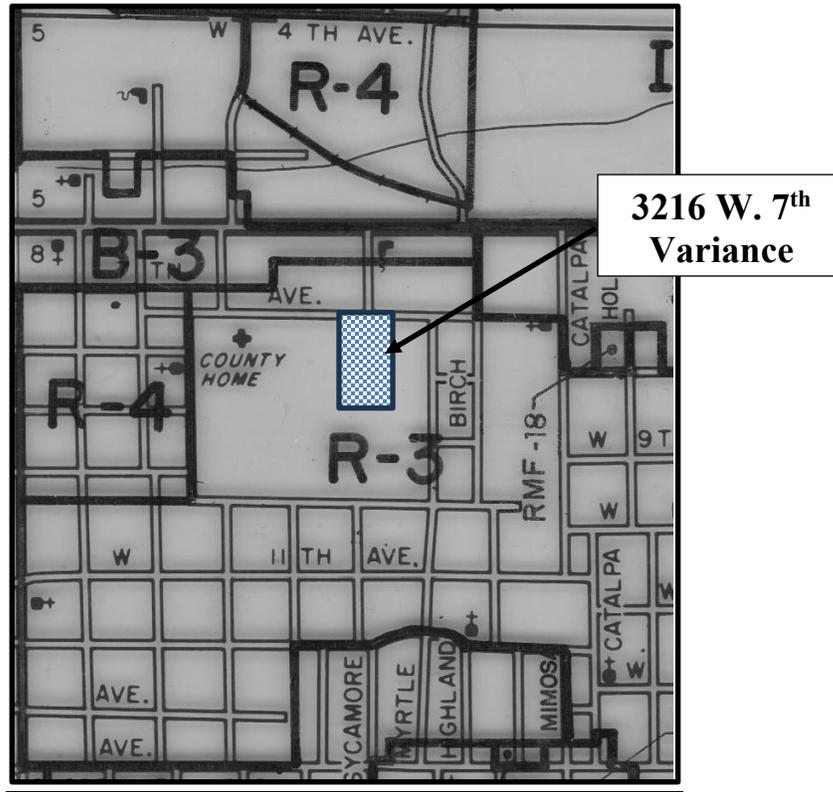
Recommendation

Based on the foregoing analysis, staff recommends **conditional approval** of the variance request, subject to the following conditions to ensure compatibility and mitigate impacts:

1. The metal storage containers shall be permanently secured and configured specifically for fire training purposes and not used for general storage.
2. The structures shall be screened from adjacent residential properties through fencing, landscaping, or other approved buffering methods.
3. Exterior finishes shall be treated, painted, or otherwise modified to reduce industrial appearance.
4. Training activities involving live burns shall comply with all applicable environmental and safety regulations and be limited to reasonable hours.
5. Any expansion of the facility or additional containers beyond twenty-five percent shall require further review and approval.

Conclusion

While the request does not strictly meet all traditional variance criteria, the established public safety use of the property and the demonstrated benefit to emergency services provide a reasonable basis for approval, provided that adequate safeguards are imposed to protect the surrounding residential character.





3216 W. 7th Fire Training Office



Access into are where Fire Training Burn Building will be installed



Adjoining abandoned commercial use east of facility entrance



Adjoining residential uses to the east

VARIANCE

**AGENDA ITEM #1
3216 W. 7TH AVENUE
MARCH 31ST, 2026**



Adjoining residential use to east



View north from back of property



View north from back of property



View north from back of property



Adjoining County Road Department Entrance



County Road Department



Property north of site across W. 7th



Property north of site across W. 7th



CITY OF PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS / VARIANCE

Application

Please fill out this form completely, supplying all necessary information and documentation to support your request.
Your application will not be placed on the Planning Commission agenda until this information is provided.

Business or Applicant Name: PINE BLUFF FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES-TRAINING
Business Location: (address or lot, block, or nearest intersection) 3216 WEST 7TH AVENUE.71603
Property/Parcel ID No. 930-25843-000

Size of Property (acres): 1.06 acres Current Zoning: _____ Ward: 3

Applicant / Business Owner

Property Owner (Must be filled out if different)

Name: Randy Compton, Fire Chief

Name: City of Pine Bluff

Address: 200 East 8th Street
Pine Bluff, AR

Address: 200 East 8th Street
Pine Bluff, AR

Telephone: 870-730-2061 Telephone: _____

870-730-2061

Email: _____

Email: _____

Fax: _____

Fax: _____

Who will run the business? Pine Bluff Fire personnel Number of employees: 100

Number of off-street parking spaces required: Unknown Number provided: _____

Are there any special licenses for your business? No
(explain) N/A

Will you require a sign? No

Applicant / Business Owner Signature

Date

PROPERTY OWNER(S) / AUTHORIZED AGENT CERTIFICATION: I (We), the undersigned, hereby certify under penalty of perjury that I (we) are the owner(s) of the property that is the subject of this application and I (we) have read this application and consent to its filing. (If signed by the authorized agent, a letter from each property owner must be provided indicating that the agent is authorized to act on his/her behalf.)

Randy Compton

3-10-26

Ernest Jones

3-10-26

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Printed Name

Owner _____ or Authorized Agent
(Check one)

Owner _____ or Authorized Agent
(Check one)

Submission Deadline: _____ Expected Planning Commission Meeting Date: _____

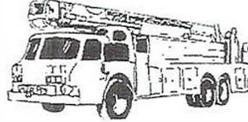
• SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS •

It is our intention to assist you in making your project a success in a timely manner. Please call if you have any questions or need assistance from the City of Pine Bluff Inspection & Zoning Department, 200 E. 8th Avenue, Pine Bluff, AR 71611 Tel: (870)730-2020 fax: (870) 730-2170.

YOUR APPLICATION WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT A DRAWING OF THE PROPERTY

CITY OF PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS

PINE BLUFF FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES



Randy Compton
FIRE CHIEF

ASSISTANT CHIEF
Ernest Jones

EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SEC.
Pamela Jenkins

March 05, 2026

Variance request

The Pine Bluff Fire and Emergency Services Department respectfully request to **allow the use of shipping containers** sometimes referred to as railroad cars for the purpose of constructing a fire training burn building at our current facility at 3216 W. 7th.

This request is necessitated based on current zoning codes limiting such uses in residential zones. The codes does make exception for use in commercial and industrial zones. The structure will rest on our 1 plus acres site and be strategically located away from adjoining property lines eliminating any adverse impact on adjoining residential properties.

Additional information on the facility's purpose is included within our application.

Respectfully,

Randy Compton, CFEI
Fire Chief
Pine Bluff Fire & EMS
200 E 8th Ave
Pine Bluff, AR 71601
870-730-2061- Office
870-267-4235- Cell



Complete the section below if you have chosen not to type a statement:

1. What is the current zone and use of the property?

Training center for the City of Pine Bluff's, Fire & Emergency Services department.

2. What is the proposed use and zone you are requesting?

Same as current use however, we will have the ability to mock fire train.

Write a narrative below explaining the reason for your request and describing the proposed use.

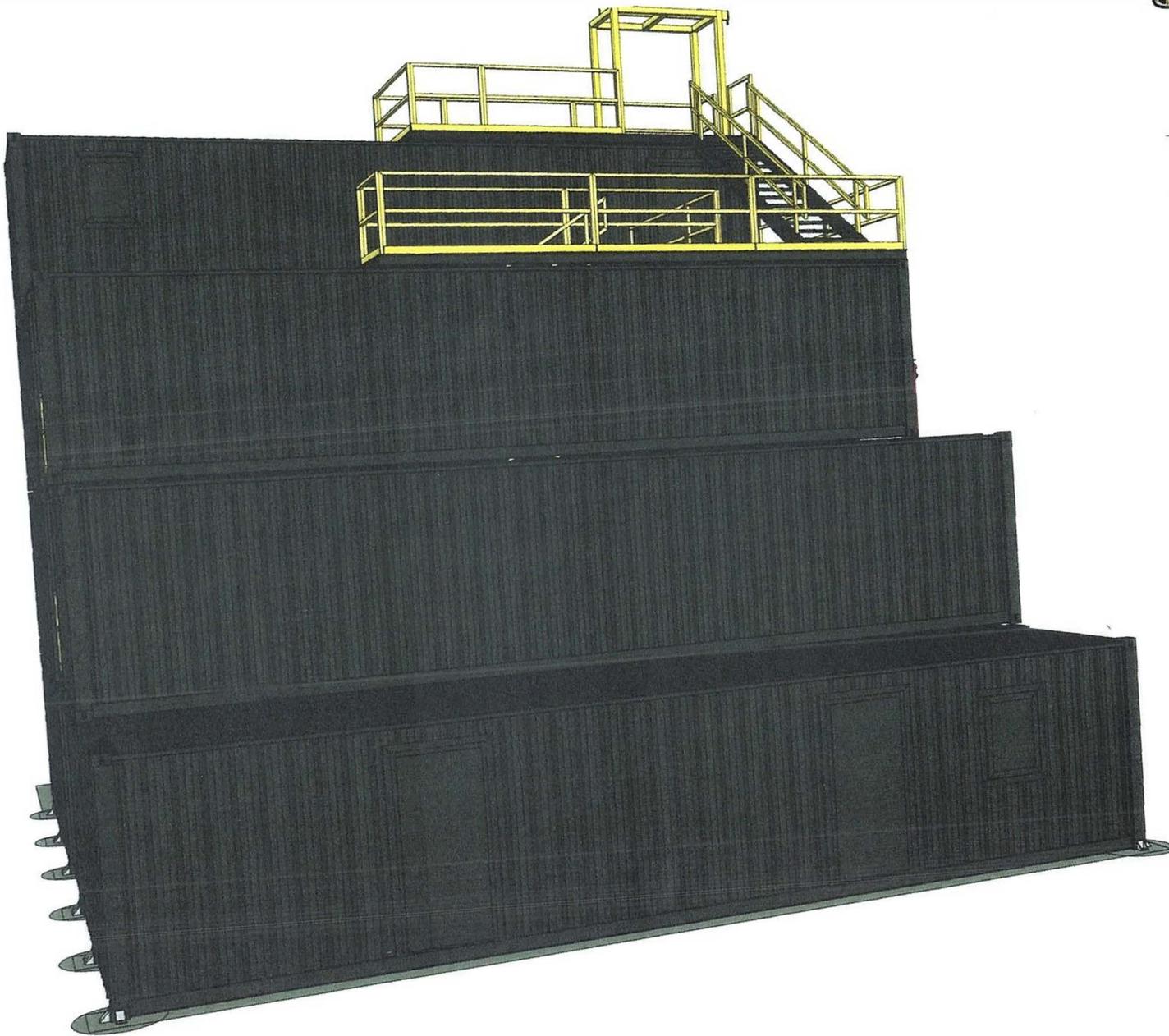
Pine Bluff Fire & Emergency Services is requesting zoning approval to establish a fire training burn building at the department's designated training site. The proposed structure will serve as a permanent training facility used for firefighter education, emergency response preparation, and skill development.

The burn building will provide a controlled environment where firefighters can conduct live fire training evolutions, fire suppression exercises, search and rescue drills, ventilation training, and other critical emergency response scenarios. These training activities are essential to maintaining firefighter readiness and ensuring that personnel are properly prepared to respond to structural fires and other emergency incidents within the City of Pine Bluff and surrounding mutual aid jurisdictions.

The proposed facility will be constructed specifically for fire service training purposes and will be utilized solely by Pine Bluff Fire & Emergency Services personnel, as well as partner agencies participating in approved joint training exercises. All training conducted at the site will comply with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and applicable state and local safety regulations governing live fire training.

The establishment of this training facility will enhance the department's ability to provide consistent, standardized training for current and future firefighters while improving operational safety and response effectiveness. The burn building will support the department's mission of protecting life, property, and the community through professional emergency services and ongoing training.

This request is submitted to ensure the proposed training structure is properly permitted and in compliance with all applicable zoning requirements for municipal public safety facilities.



Lonestar Tactical Buildings LLC
34990 Mayer Rd.
Hempstead Tx. 77445

REV1 02/14/2023

CLIENT:
PINEBLUFF FIRE DEPT.
200 East 8th Ave.
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601
Tel: (870) 730-2048

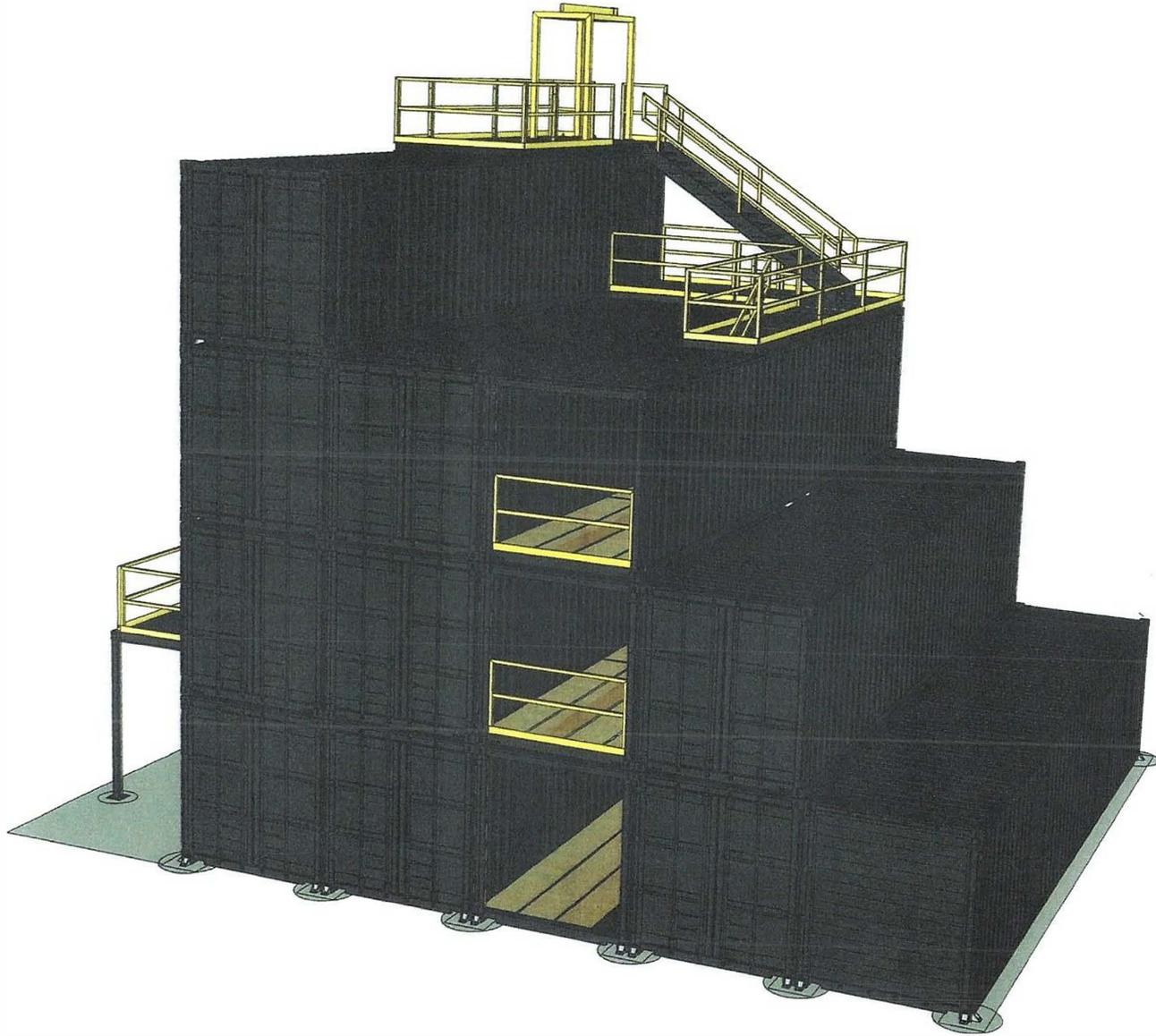
PROJECT
PINEBLUFF FIRE DEPT.

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ISSUE
02/14/2023

RE-ISSUE
MM.DD.YY

ALPHA SIDE VIEW



Lonestar Tactical Buildings LLC.
3499● Mayer Rd.
Hempstead Tx, 77445

REV1 02/14/2023

CLIENT:
PINEBLUFF FIRE DEPT.
200 East 8th Ave.
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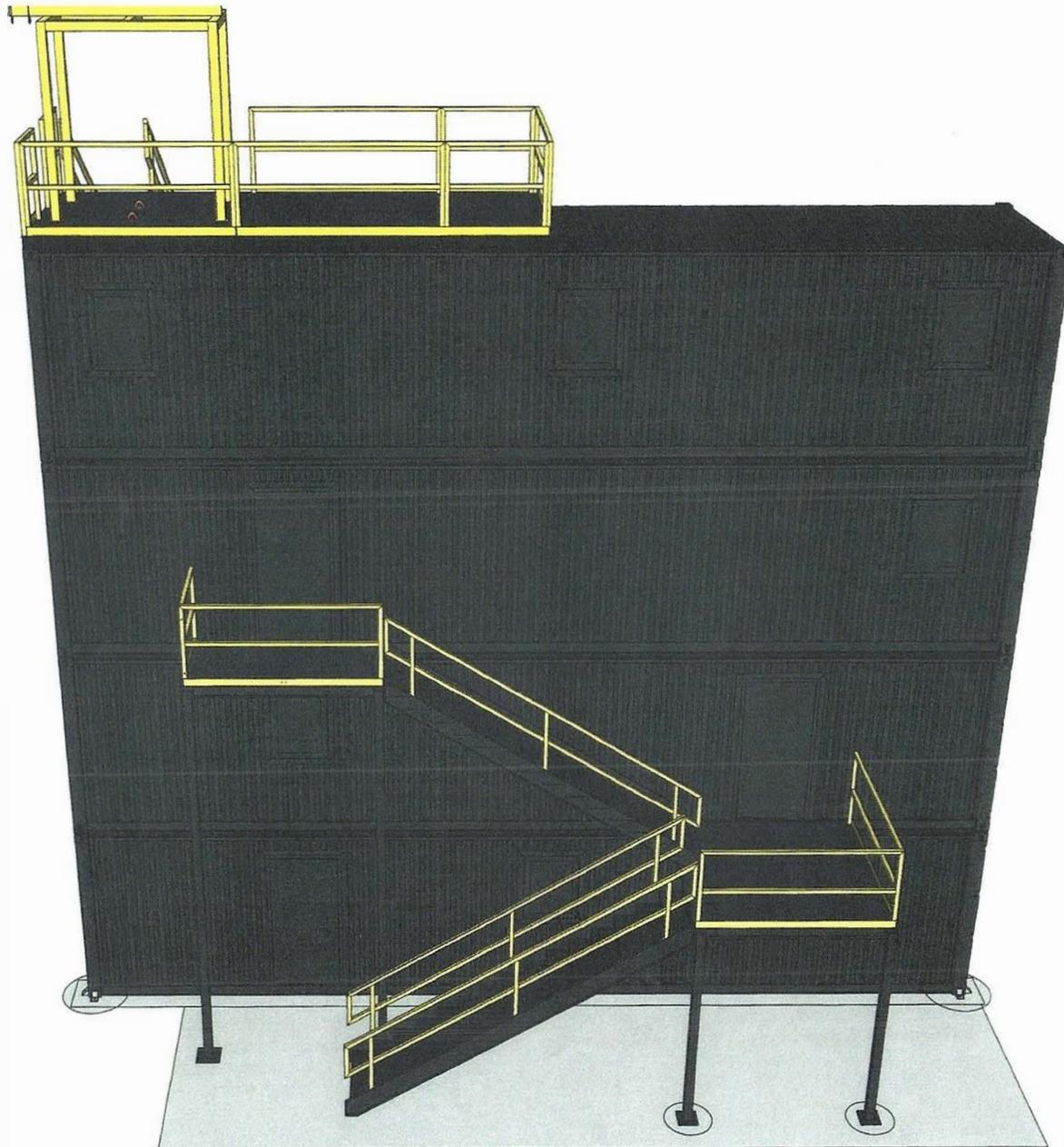
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02/14/2023

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BRAVO SIDE VIEW



Lonestar Tactical Buildings, LLC.
34990 Mayer Rd.
Hempstead Tx, 77445



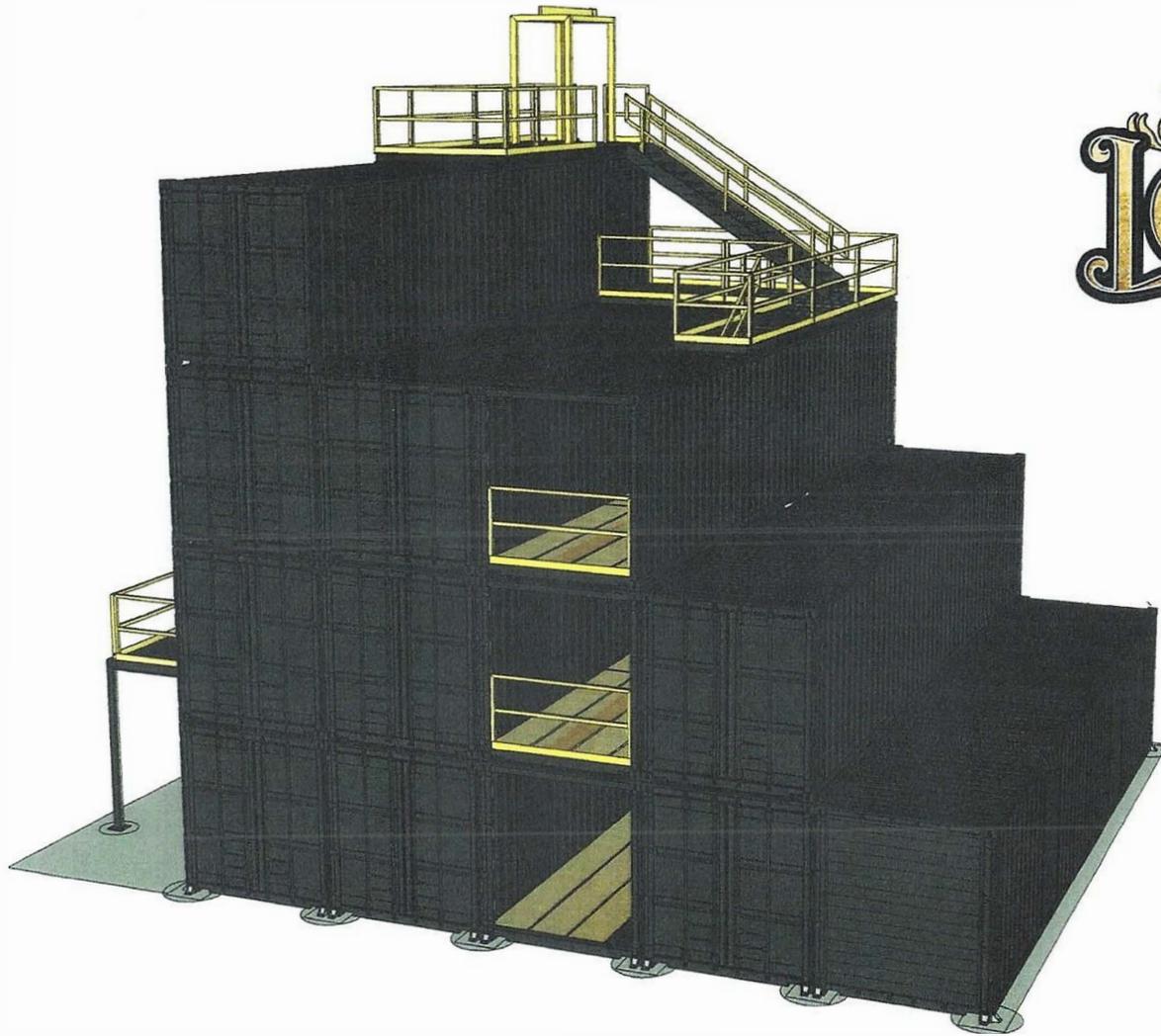
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PINEBLUFF FIRE DEPT.

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02/14/2023

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MM.DD.YY

CHARLIE



CLIENT:
PINEBLUFF FIRE DEPT.
200 East 8th Ave.
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601
Tel: (870) 730-2048

PROJECT
PINEBLUFF FIRE TRAINING FACILITY

PROJECT NO.
RFP#

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ISSUE
12/20/2022

DESCRIPTION
COVER

ALPHA BRAVO