

# SONOMA COUNTY AVIATION COMMISSION

## Minutes of the July 18, 2024 Meeting

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Young called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

### **COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Hayssen, Starrett, Young, McCord, Jones

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

*Hayssen moved with support from Starrett to approve the July 18, 2024, Aviation Commission Minutes. Abstained: None Opposed: None All Ayes: Yes.* Motion Carried.

### **AIRPORT MANAGER REPORT:**

#### **A. Complaint Update**

Stout reported that in May 2004 there were 409 noise complaints from 38 individual complainants compared to 68 complaints in 2023, an increase of 501%. Stout added that staff had added additional information to show the data for 2023 for comparison.

Hayssen added that the new data was much appreciated for this item, for his line-by-line review of the data prior to the Commission meetings. Hayssen noted almost 50% of the complaints in May, 85 from Thomas Road, and 100 from Foss Hill Road. Making almost 200 complaints of just over 400 from these two locations.

Stout included the Airports analysis of the complaints between 2023 and 2024, to compare the difference for these years. Potential issues for the increase are helicopter operations to the west, FAA procedure changes which moved aircraft closer to Sebastopol and this year impacts from the redhead departure procedure to Forestville and Guerneville.

Hayssen added that 82% of May complaints were from the 5<sup>th</sup> district, but this fell to 61% because of the Foss Road complainant, this address is just within the County line outside Calistoga. So, this dropped 5<sup>th</sup> district to 61%.

General complaints were down for the month of May, from 5 in 2023 to 3 in 2024 a decrease of 40%.

June noise complaints increased from 87 to 326, an increase of 275%. Individual complainants were also up from last year, a total of 14 in 2023, compared to 35 in 2024 an increase of 150%. Year-to-date there have been 1,655 complaints in 2024, compared to 404 in 2023 an increase of 310%.

General complaints were up for the month of June, from 6 in 2023 to 7 in 2024 an increase of 16%. Year-to-date there have been 20 general complaints in 2024, compared to 31 in 2023 a decrease of 35%.

Hayssen asked if our PA (Public Announcement) System is any worse than other airports as described in the general complaint tracker.

Stout responded that the type of mic in use and the abuse it receives being pulled and stretched the cables will get tweaked and cause problems. Overall, the biggest problem is in the individual users. Airline staff are not consistent where they hold the mic, how they speak, or not having proper

placement of the mic when speaking. Much like other airports when the gate area is full it's harder to hear, and it's loud when there's hardly anything around.

Hayssen asked who handles the announcements and if they can be trained. Stout added that the Airport has completed several training sessions with its airline agents and is also working on some tweaks with County IT group, with hopes of improving the sound quality in the baggage, gate, and ticket areas.

Starrett stated the PA volume can make you jump out of your seat. And asked if there's any way for the volume to be adjustable between when there's not so many people in the terminal to when the terminal is very busy. Stout advised it's a dynamic system, but the range in which it can adjust is not that great. The system is zoned, low traffic areas have lower volume, while high traffic areas have higher volume. Carter added that some areas have high and low ceiling making it challenging to dial in the acoustics in those areas.

Stout advised that all individual complaints for May and June are in the commission packets, and the Airport appreciates Art's review of data for each session. He also, anticipates the Annual Noise Complaint Report being completed in the coming weeks.

Hayssen briefly highlighted one of three individual kudos received for being a convenient airport, and the traveler having a great experience. He stated the two additional kudos were along those same lines.

Young asked if there was an increase in complaints with the runway 14/32 closure and runway 2/20 being used. Stout responded that it didn't change significantly. Stout added this change was only in place for one day, a 24 hour period.

## **B. Tower Report/Update**

The Airport had 6,983 operations in April compared to 7,088, a decrease of 1% from 2023. May 2024 had 7,730 operations compared to 7,419 in 2023, an increase of 4%. Year-to-date operations through May are 31,556 compared to 31,464 in 2023, about even for the year.

June and July is Spring Jinx and Bohemian Grove, it is anticipated there will be more traffic for these months, especially corporate jet traffic. The Airport has already put out the notice for the closure of runway 2/20 for the upcoming weekend due to the anticipated traffic. This runway was also, briefly closed last weekend but, traffic wasn't as high as anticipated and was reopened early to all traffic.

Nathan O'Dell introduced himself as the new interim Tower Manager. He's been working here for 9 years and assisted with various programs and meetings in the past. Stout requested that O'Dell provide tower updates to the Aviation Commission like the reports Alex and Dave previously provided. O'Dell added an update about the DME returning to service after the VOR enclosure is replaced. They will then install the equipment and will likely take place next spring.

O'Dell briefly explained that a DME or Distance Measuring Equipment, it is a part of the navigation function. When the very high frequency (VHF) omni-direction range equipment (VOR) was decommissioned a few years back, what was left is the DME. The radials that allowed lateral navigation off the VOR do not exist anymore. However, the distance you are from the airport still functions. O'Dell added unfortunately, this piece of equipment has been broken for over a year because FAA technicians have been unable to repair it for unexplained reasons and numerous attempts have been made to resolve the issue. He added the new DME will be installed when the VOR enclosure is rebuilt.

Stout asked O'Dell if this is part of the cable pulls the Airport has been working on with FA Tech Ops. O'Dell was unclear if this is related to the cable pulls. New fiber lines were installed in the Tower earlier this year. For the DME to be operational the T1 line will need replacing. Starrett asked if this is only required for ILS (Instrument Landing System). O'Dell said ILS can still be used, it's just not as functional. Without it we still have navigation to the Airport with the arc up purchase. This depends on what equipment an aircraft has or if the pilot chooses to use.

Young added when runway 2/20 is closed it makes it very difficult for Apron F tenants to taxi, especially when using runway 2 during special events Keeping runway closures as minimal as possible in these areas is helpful to tenants. Stout added with the increase in NOTAMS (Notice to Air Missions) the Airport is working on a better system to notify tenants of closures other than NOTAM distribution. He requested suggestions from the Commissioners for a better way to get notices out to Airport Users.

### **C. Airline Update**

In May, the Airport set a new passenger record. Passenger counts had a 20% increase with 66,089 passengers compared to 55,550 in 2023. Airline operations were also up 11%, from 3,215 in 2023 to 3,405 in 2024, slightly higher than we were in 2022, with our peak number of operations.

In June, the Airport surpassed the passenger record set in May with a passenger count of 72,881 compared to 56,256, an increase of 30%. Year-to-date totals through June were 322,147 compared to 296,318 in 2023 an increase of 9%. Through the end of the year, based on the schedules, the Airport is looking at a 30 to 40% increase in seats depending on the month.

Starrett asked for an update on the Avelo routes launched in May. Stout added that Pasco was canceled because it didn't start well. Kalispell and Salem have improved on their load factors, but not quite at the desired passenger levels at this time. Boise is just as strong as Burbank and Vegas, as the Airport previously expressed to Avelo this is a good market. Avelo is looking at what markets to do next, while moving things around their system to utilize the aircraft time from Pasco. Avelo is also potentially adding a third aircraft. The Airport has discussed 15 different markets with Avelo, with no indication of which markets are under consideration, other than they are looking at bigger markets.

### **D. Projects Update**

- **Employee Update:** One of the Airport Senior Office Assistants retired in June, the new Senior Office Assistant started in early July. The Airport is fully staffed and trained on the operations side. As well as, having both Airport Maintenance positions and three extra-help maintenance positions.

From the terminal project, the Airport identified a need for a full time IT person who oversees security camera systems, PA system, and all the other IT needs that come with a larger, more automated terminal. Recruitment has started for an Airport IT person. This recruitment ends on July 29<sup>th</sup>, with this new hire tentatively starting at the end of September.

- **Terminal Modernization Project:** The Airport completed working on the last item requested by Permit Sonoma. The toe kick plate on the handrails between concourse A and B has been installed and is awaiting inspection. When this final inspection has been completed and approved the Terminal project will be complete.
- **Approach Feasibility Study:** Cignus has been working with the FAA the past several months, going through potential changes and recommendations to the approach and departure

procedures at the Airport. Feedback has been received from the FAA on which procedures are likely to be approved. The Airport is working with Cignus, and District 4 and 5 Supervisors to schedule the next round of outreach meetings, current proposed dates are September 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>.

Airport staff is researching possible venues near Sebastopol and Windsor, as well as preparing materials for these outreach meetings. Commissioners are expected to receive materials for review a month prior to the meetings, and once approved will be posted for the public before the meetings. After the outreach meetings Cignus will go through the comments gathered from outreach meetings and provide their recommendations to the Airport for potential approach changes. The Airport will present the revised information to the Board of Supervisors and with their concurrence we will move forward to the next phase of the contract. Which is the full design and review of the procedures for publishing.

- **Airline Apron Reconstruction:** Airport staff has submitted its final Grant request for phase 1 of the Airline Apron Reconstruction project. Currently finalizing the construction contract with the contractor. During this phase of the contract the contractor will focus on underground stormwater management systems. The remaining work will be completed early next year. And the Airport is expected to go back to the Board in in the fall for approval of Phase 2.
- **Airport Restaurant Remodel:** Permits were received from Permit Sonoma, and construction has begun on the patio renovation. Construction is expected to last approximately 6 weeks and will include upgrades to the patio and interior space of the restaurant. The restaurant will remain open during renovations.
- **Airport Organizational Review:** No updates to report. Airport staff would like to wrap this project up by September and submit to the Board.
- **Asset Management System (previously referred to as Accounts Receivable System):** Airport staff will be performing a live test run of the asset management system in August. This test is to ensure everything is working as anticipated, and then in September, turn on email notifications to tenants. This will be an opt-in service for those who choose to have their invoices and statements emailed to them.
- **Consolidated Rental Car Facility:** Airport staff will be conducting a meeting in August with the Rental Car partners to discuss next steps for building the Consolidated Rental Car Facility. After this meeting there will be a determination of bringing the project in house or keeping it with our public private partnership partner.
- **Wildlife Exclusion Fence:** The contractor is continuing work on the south side and later this month they're hoping to get into the creeks. The Airport is working through the storm water plan permitting and submitting the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans. All of the subsurface stakes have been completed, with the exception of where they are adding the new fence.
- **Runway 02/20 Alternate Surface:** Still working with the FAA to gain approval. There isn't published guidance, which makes the process more complicated. The Tower is waiting on clarifications from the Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) on the guidelines for an alternate surface runway. Once guidance is received, then the operation requirements will be worked out on the local level on how to integrate the alternate surface use and track for helicopter operations.
- **Airport Admin Backup Generator:** PG&E completed the switchover, and Airport staff tested the generator. The Airport is wrapping up commissioning and finalizing this project.
- **Runway 14/32 Preliminary Engineering Study:** Mead & Hunt is working on basic engineering. As well as the addition of the FAA requested assessment of utilities around and under the runways, which has been added to their scope of work.

- **ARFF Building:** Awaiting approval from the FAA for conceptual sizing and funding eligibility. Preliminary discussions with Sonoma County Fire District for integration of this joint station are underway.
- **ATCT (Air Traffic Control Tower) Siting Study:** The Airport presented 8 potential sites for the new Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) to the FAA. 4 of the 8 proposed sites have been eliminated for various factors. The FAA is building computer models of the remaining 4 sites and will be returning to the Airport in September to review these sites with virtual reality goggles. Airport staff is also working to identify other potential sites, such as the County Jail Annex.
- **FEMA Hazard Grant – Tree Removal Phase Mitigation II:** Continuing to wait for follow-up from FEMA on award of the grant.
- **Sustainability Master Plan:** Airport staff has reviewed the draft and provided edits to the consultant. The Airport is also, partnering with the County’s Sustainability Office to help maximize our efforts. Public engagement meetings will be scheduled for this project.
- **Airport Microgrid:** No new updates.
- **Hangar Development RFI:** No new updates, working to finalize the Request for Interest (RFI).
- **AirportNEXT Survey:** The Airport is actively collecting data for this survey. This survey program is through Airport Counsel International and provides benchmarking of airports in many categories. This survey is related to business, tourism, and those types of stakeholders.
- **Runway 14-32 Repair Project:** Repair project went very well, 20 hours of well-orchestrated work, with only a couple minor glitches. The contractor will return to fix issues and put the grooves in the pavement. Airport staff will put on a second coat of paint on the markings. Overall, the project was a huge success with all involved partners, with only one flight being diverted because American did not communicate the agreed upon date internally.
- **Temporary Overflow Parking Lot:** With the increased passenger counts, parking is becoming tighter so a temporary gravel overflow parking lot will be constructed on the corner of Ordinance Road and Airport. The lot will be used for employees and rental cars and create approximately 150 additional parking spots. This project is due to start next Friday and will become operational in approximately a week and a half.
- **Apron E - Helicopter and Aircraft Parking Apron:** Going to the Board August 13, 2024 for preliminary engineering and environmental work related to the potential construction of additional helicopter and aircraft parking areas.
- **Terminal Area Sidewalk and ADA Improvements:** If approved by the Board of Supervisors this project will extend the sidewalks on the Northside of Airport at Ordinance, as well as a couple other improvements. Going to the board August 13th.
- **Apron A - Remote Parking Apron:** Looking into adding additional remote parking apron west of CalFire.
- **Building Demo:** Wrapping up environmental and awaiting Historical Review of the sites. The Airport has been working with the FAA on this for a year and a half. Hoping to get the sheds near the garden and the old FAA building on Becker demolished by the fall.
- **Website RFP:** The Airport anticipates getting this out in October.
- **Security System Maintenance Services RFP:** This request for proposal will assist the Airport in the selection process for a Security Systems Maintenance Contractor. The selected contractor will handle the preventative maintenance for the Airports security gates, doors, and cameras.

Stout reviewed the list of Future Board Items.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**None**

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**A. Commission Packet Materials Review**

Jones and McCord brought up that they were each missing a portion of the packet, Stout said he would look in to how they were sent and get back to the Commissioners. Young added operationally Airport staff should make sure all materials are received by Commissioners prior to Commission Meetings. Stout added that Airport staff would highlight any changes to reporting as staff reviews and revises the current reports. Young moved to remove this discussion item from future meetings.

**B. Airport Land Use Commission**

Hayssen reported the last meeting of the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) was held in June, when the Commission appointed Wade Eakle who unfortunately passed away. He added that the Commission will potentially have a quorum but, the Cloverdale Commissioner has not been participating. At this meeting a follow-up was scheduled tentatively for July 1<sup>st</sup>, with some parties attending, and some failing to attend. Also, notices for this meeting weren't sent out by Permit Sonoma and did not follow through on their arranged meeting. This meeting has been postponed until the first Monday in August.

Hayssen added there are additional applicants interested in volunteering for the Commission, and their applications are currently under review. Young asked what the Airports standpoint was on this. Stout said Mr. Eakle was the Sonoma County Airport Manager's selection for the Commission. He will reach out to the County Administrators Office (CAO) to obtain a current list and reconvene the Airport managers to make another selection.

Young noted District 3, Supervisor Coursey has a notice posted soliciting individuals to sit on the Airport Land Use Commission. Stout added interested parties must live within the boundaries of the third district to be eligible to apply. Young moved to keep this discussion item on the agenda to assist Hayssen with updates for the Commission. Starrett can think of three projects this year that should be referred to the ALUC this year sometime. Hayssen also, added its nice to have input from outside of Permit Sonoma for these projects.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**None**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Hayssen recommended discussing accessibility of light aircraft maintenance. Young requested this to be added as a discussion item for the next Commission meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

No email comments received before or during the meeting. Young opened comments to the attendees in person.

Ann Fitzgerald, a neighbor on Windsor Road and part of the Westside Neighbor Group, wanted to bring attention to ongoing issues with Helico, and her concern with the announcement of a new Tower manager in today's meeting. She would like a status update about what's being done. She hasn't been regularly making noise complaints, so the data is a little skewed, but Helico is still an ongoing issue for her and her neighbors. Hayssen asked if Fitzgerald could describe the level of activity since the last Commission meeting and compare it to a month or two prior in terms of noise. Fitzgerald said the noise

is static and unpredictable. She reports that helicopter traffic is unpredictable and seems to be dependent of how many lessons are schedule for the day. Young added that he knows the new Tower manager is in attendance and he hears your concerns regarding the operational issues with Helico. He also acknowledged that the Commissioners and Airport are also aware of the challenges with helicopter noise and its effect on the Airports neighbors. Stout added that O'Dell is aware of these issues from working with the previous Tower manager to assist with noise abatement for helicopters. The Airport has sent their recommended helicopter noise abatement to the Tower and is waiting for feedback. Once feedback is received from the Tower the Airport and Tower will submit the information to Helico and other helicopter operators. The Airport is working to maximize the sensitivity of the neighboring area, as well as trying to incorporate best practices from helicopter associations and other airports. Fitzgerald asked if this topic could be revisited during the next meeting. Stout confirmed this information will be discussed once a draft has been finalized per the previous agreement with the neighbors and stakeholders.

Messina added that the helicopter noise is still a nuisance, and the pilot is flying dead center over his house. He claimed the helicopter was low enough that he could see the passenger. He also thanked the parties involved for their efforts to assist with the noise situation, and he does believe it's moving forward.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Hayssen and McCord will be holding a safety program in Hangar 2, which is a Pacific Coast Air Museum (PCAM) hangar. This event will take place next Saturday, July 27<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM, with Dave Sheber as a guest speaker.

Young also thanked the Airport for getting the gate on Apron F back up and operational as quickly as possible.

**ADJOURN:**

*Starrett moved with support from McCord to adjourn. All Ayes.* Meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Jon Stout, AAE, CAE  
Airport Manager