

SONOMA COUNTY AVIATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the March 20, 2025 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER:

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

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Hayssen, Jones, McCord, Newton, Young. Absent: Jasper

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Hayssen moved with support from Jones to approve the February 20, 2025, Aviation Commission Minutes. Abstained: None Opposed: None All Ayes: Yes. Motion Carried.

AIRPORT MANAGEMENT REPORT:

A. Complaint Update

Stout reported, in February there were 541 complaints, compared to 144 in February of 2024, marking an increase of 276%. Complaints year-to-date were 1,038 complaints compared to 329 in 2024, marking an increase of 216%. There were 50 individual complainants compared to 17 in 2024, marking an increase of 194%. Individual complainants year-to-date were 93 compared to 28 in 2024 marking an increase of 232%. For general complaints, there were six compared to two in 2024, marking an increase of 200%. For general complaints year-to-date there were 10 compared to three in 2024 marking an increase of 233%.

Hayssen reviewed 481 complaints, finding that 89% originated from the 5th District, consistent with past trends despite some address changes in the Occidental area. Complainants cited aircraft at altitudes of 10,250 feet, 8,000 feet, and 2,500–2,700 feet, all within legal limits. No complaints involved aircraft below minimum safe altitudes. Questions remain about altitude data accuracy, as some reports show negative readings with no clear explanation for discrepancies between ADS-B radar reports. Hayssen also noted that while pilots once held FCC licenses prohibiting profanity, recent reports show a surge in offensive language, raising concerns about the trend.

B. Tower Report/Update

Stout reported for January, the Airport recorded 6,285 operations, compared to 5,406 in January 2024, marking a 16% increase.

C. Airline Update

Stout reported, in February, there were 49,530 passengers, compared to 37,849 in 2024, marking a 31% increase. Passengers year-to-date were 102,435 compared to 76,402 in 2024, marking an increase of 34%. February airline operations were 712 compared to 574 in 2024 marking a 24% increase. Year-to-date airline operations were 1,533 compared to 1,163 operations in 2024.

D. Projects Update

- **Runway Work:** No new updates.
- **Employee updates:** New Operations Specialist, David O'Halloran has started. Operations is now fully staffed.
- **Approach Feasibility Study:** The Airport received the draft contract from Cignus for Phase Two. Public Comments are near completion.
- **Airline Apron Reconstruction:** No new updates.
- **Airport Restaurant Transition:** Planning new opening after landscaping is complete.
- **Airport Organizational Review:** No new updates.
- **Asset Management System:** No new updates.
- **Consolidated Rental Car Facility:** No new updates.
- **Wildlife Exclusion Fence:** No new updates.
- **Runway 02/20 Alternate Surface:** The Runway 02/20 alternative surface has been submitted for Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) review, with approval expected by summer. The RSA area can serve as an adjacent unpaved landing zone. Coordinating with the new tower chief to finalize the Memorandum of Understanding. The Airport proposes using the alternate service to Runway 20, which follows the same pattern but with a sidestep.
- **Runway 14/32 Preliminary Engineering Study:** A meeting with the FAA is scheduled for April 3rd to review the study and receive feedback on compliance with new design standards. Once feedback is received, the study can be completed, and full design and environmental work will begin.
- **ARFF Building Preliminary Concept Design and Budget:** The FAA's review of the eligibility of the ARFF building items was received on Tuesday, including a list of eligible, ineligible, and partial items. With this, the study can be restarted, the site set up, and coordination for the proposed tower.
- **ATCT Siting Study:** The tower siting study is under airspace review for the two potential sites that were moved forward. Completion of the study depends on the results of this review.
- **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant:** No new updates.

- **Sustainability Master Plan:** A meeting on the sustainability master plan's implementation was held on Tuesday. The plan, including near-term and long-term sustainability efforts, is intended to be presented to the Commission in May.
- **Airport Microgrid:** No new updates.
- **Hangar Development Request for Interest (RFI):** No new updates.
- **Apron E - Helicopter:** No new updates.
- **Terminal Area Sidewalk:** No new updates.
- **Apron A:** No new updates.
- **Building Demo:** No new updates.
- **Website RFP:** No new updates.
- **Security System Maintenance Services RFP:** No new updates.
- **Budget Process:** No new updates.

E. Future Board Items

Stout reviewed the list of Future Board items and Airport items for the Board.

ACTION ITEMS:

A. Fiscal Year (FY) 25-26 Rates and Charges

Stout reviewed proposed rates and charges for FY 25-26 with the Commission.

The Aviation Commission hereby recommends the Board of Supervisors adopt the proposed FY 25-26 Rates and Charges as presented by Airport staff.

Hayssen moved, with support from McCord to recommend FY 25-26 Rates and Charges to the Board of Supervisors. Abstained: None Opposed: None **All Ayes: Yes.** Motion Carried.

B. Aviation Commission Structure

Stout reviewed aviation commission Structure findings and options with the Commission. The Commission gave the public opportunity to comment on this action item.

Michael Charter with a background in Healdsburg sustainability and renewable energy, shared that with emerging aviation technologies, he suggests incorporating a category in the Commission's diversity framework to ensure expertise in innovation and modernization is represented.

Jeremy Epperson of Sonoma Jet suggests that consideration be given to the Commission's size, as an increase in membership may result in political complexity and hinder functionality due to excessive input and decision-making challenges.

The Aviation Commission hereby recommends the following items for the Board of Supervisors consideration regarding the Aviation Commission structure and governance:

- The Board should not merge the Aviation Commission and Airport Land Use Commission.
- Commission size at 7 is appropriate.
 - The Board is challenged with keeping member positions filled.
 - Diversity can be accomplished individually by the Board.
 - Consider removing the requirement to live within district boundary.
- Terms for district representatives should match the supervisor's term; at-large representatives should remain until removed or resigned.
- No term limits for Commissioner.
The Commission should meet bi-monthly unless requested otherwise by the Board of Supervisors, Commission, or Airport Manager.

Young moved, with support from McCord, to recommend the Aviation Commission structure recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Abstained: None Opposed: None **All Ayes: Yes.** Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Casper Noise Portal

Stout provided an update on the noise recording portal transition. After researching software options from August to November, Casper was selected as the best fit due to its cost and improved functionality. The contract was negotiated with a trial period, and internal testing began in January, with external testing involving 11 residents in February and March. The system, set to go live on April 1st, includes website updates, voicemail transcription, and a streamlined complaint submission process. Public testing will continue for two weeks before a media announcement. Report formatting will evolve, with Commissioner feedback sought in May. While generally seen as an improvement, concerns remain about helicopter tracking, lag time in flight data, and missing destination details.

Aivaliklis reported that while flight origin and destination data is available on the back end, it is not yet visible on the public portal, and developers are actively working on a solution. Additional on-site training from Casper will focus on reporting and business intelligence. The portal also includes Spanish translation and phone transcription, improving accessibility.

Further discussions covered experiences using the new flight tracking system, data delays, and terminology for noise reporting. Newton shared his observations while using the system, noting it was engaging and mostly quiet during his brief monitoring session.

Young raised concerns about a 10-minute delay in data availability, questioning if it was a safety issue. Stout explained that the FAA previously suggested a delay, but Casper might reduce it to two minutes through programming adjustments. McCord asked if FAA approval was needed, but Stout clarified it was a technical matter.

Young also suggested changing terminology from "complainants" to "inputters" to better reflect the range of public reports, which include positive, neutral, and negative feedback. Stout agreed, emphasizing the shift toward "reporting" rather than categorizing all submissions as complaints. Young noted that labeling all reports as complaints skews data and stigmatizes participants, advocating for a more neutral approach.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Brad Alper explained that he established a dialogue with a senior dispatcher at American Airlines to investigate flight plan options. He requested the dispatcher to run two simultaneous flight plans from Santa Rosa to San Diego—one using the Redhead departure and the other using the Charlie Eight route. The results showed that the Redhead departure burns 220 pounds more fuel.

Alper discovered that Jeppesen provides flight data to most dispatchers, but the Charlie Eight route is not available in their system. As a result, dispatchers are unaware of its existence and do not file it. The only way the Charlie Eight route can be used is if a dispatcher is specifically aware of it and files it manually. Currently, it appears to be invisible to dispatchers, making it difficult to implement. Alper acknowledged the complexity of the issue and noted that addressing it requires navigating a lengthy chain of command.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Hayssen noted that Jeppesen does publish the chart for Charlie Eight. Albert explained that while Jeppesen publishes the chart, they provide the data to most dispatchers. He shared that when a dispatcher files a flight plan, it's not just the chart or the STAR that's provided, but the data itself. The issue came to light when he asked for fuel burn data, and the dispatcher mentioned that it was hard to find because they couldn't locate Charlie Eight. Albert clarified that Jeppesen does have the data, but it's not easily accessible to dispatchers. He further

explained that Charlie Eight is only filed or cleared for southbound departures prior to the tower opening, when crews contact Oakland Center directly. When crews contact Oakland, if the flight has filed RRHED, Oakland will not clear them for RRHED but instead assigns Charlie Eight, as it is the most efficient departure. Albert noted that 100% of Alaska flight 3360 always gets shifted to Charlie Eight.

Young asked if there was a way to check what United sees in their dispatch system. Newton and Alper responded that they would check with their airline contacts. Hayssen then wondered if other airports with similar vector-based departure procedures face the same issues when filing flight plans, particularly for different runway departures. Young expressed an interest in determining whether the lack of data is an airline-specific issue, such as with American Airlines, or a broader industry issue that could affect other airlines, like Alaska and American, operating out of the airport. Jones mentioned that his son, a captain for Alaska who previously worked as a dispatcher there, could help by looking into it. Young suggested that by triangulating information, they might be able to identify the roadblock and get it resolved.

McCord shared that in the past, when trying to file a flight plan with Charlie Eight, he was told that it can only be assigned by ATC. He acknowledged that different dispatchers at different airlines may have varying experiences, but he planned to try filing it again to see what would happen. Young asked if the issue was that the system wouldn't allow Charlie Eight to be filed directly and suggested that the simpler solution might be to just request it directly from ATC. McCord agreed, confirming that it seemed like a more straightforward approach. Hayssen added that they may want continuous fixes from wheels up to the in-route structure. McCord clarified that Charlie Eight can only be assigned by ATC. He expressed uncertainty whether other airlines face the same issue, but shared that it is a challenge he encounters, which is why he usually does not file it, even though he does get it assigned in most cases.

Young concluded that the problem may be related to the system not allowing Charlie Eight to be filed directly and agreed that there appears to be available data that could help resolve the issue.

ADJOURN

McCord moved with support from Jones to adjourn. All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 9:47 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Stout, AAE, CAE
Airport Manager