

SONOMA COUNTY AVIATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the May 15, 2025 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER:

Young called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Hayssen, Jasper (Joined 8:08 a.m.), Jones, Newton, Young **Absent:** McCord

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

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

AIRPORT MANAGEMENT REPORT:

A. Complaint Update

Stout reported, in March there were 937 complaints, compared to 203 in March of 2024, an increase of 362%. Complaints year-to-date through March were 1,975 compared to 532 in 2024, an increase of 271%. There were 54 individual complainants compared to 26 in 2024, marking an increase of 108%. For general complaints, there were two compared to four in 2024, a decrease of 50%. For general complaints year-to-date there were 12 compared to seven in 2024 an increase of 71%.

Stout reported, in April there were 1,751 complaints, compared to 388 in April of 2024, an increase of 351%. Complaints year-to-date through April were 3,726 complaints compared to 920 in 2024, an increase of 305%. There were 89 individual complainants compared to 53 in 2024, an increase of 68%. For general complaints, there were 20 compared to three in 2024, an increase of 567%. For general complaints year-to-date there were 32 compared to 10 in 2024 an increase of 220%.

Staff reported that the Airport officially transitioned to the new noise reporting system, Casper, on April 1st. The first month of complaint data has been compiled and included in the meeting packet. However, several data correlation issues have been identified during the initial reporting process.

Staff noted that while validation has been ongoing throughout the month, some data connections were not configured correctly. For example, one complainant's address was inaccurately mapped due to carryover from the previous system, placing their location in central Sebastopol instead of Chestnut Lane. As a result, their submitted complaints did not properly correlate with the relevant flight activity.

It was also found that general complaints submitted with specific flight details were not being correlated by the system, as the “general” category does not support automated matching. Additionally, a number of complaints were incorrectly tagged as “in transit,” with flight data mistakenly attributed to unrelated high-altitude aircraft. despite being related to local Santa Rosa operations.

Casper and Airport staff are actively working to resolve these issues. Due to the identified challenges, the release of the April monthly noise report will be delayed. Staff also noted that the system identifies unique callers differently than the previous platform, Vector, which may result in slight changes to the caller data presentation moving forward.

B. Tower Report/Update

Stout reported that in February, the Airport recorded 5,520 operations, compared to 5,549 in February 2024, a 1% decrease. Year-to-date operations totaled 11,805, compared to 10,955 in 2024, an 8% increase. In March, the Airport recorded 6,290 operations, up 7% from 5,888 in March 2024. Year-to-date operations reached 18,095, up 7% from 16,843 in 2024. The Tower Manager was not present.

C. Airline Update

Stout reported that in March, the Airport had 65,270 passengers, compared to 49,507 in March 2024, a 32% increase. March Year-to-date passenger totals were 167,705, compared to 125,909 in 2024, an increase of 33%. March airline operations were 929, compared to 703 in 2024, a 32% increase. March Year-to-date airline operations totaled 2,462, up from 1,866 in 2024. In April, there were 66,961 passengers, compared to 56,468 in April 2024, a 19% increase. April Year-to-date passenger totals were 234,666, compared to 182,377 in 2024, a 29% increase. April airline operations were 967, up from 789 in 2024, a 23% increase. April Year-to-date airline operations were at 3,429, compared to 2,655 in 2024 a 29% increase.

Stout reported that the Airport has reviewed the updated schedules following Avelo’s base closure changes. Between May 1,2025 and August 31,2025 there is a net difference of 50 departures, which accounts for Avelo’s base reduction and additions from other airline partners. This results in minimal overall change to summer traffic. In June, Stout will attend Jump/Start, Airport Council International's Air Service Development Conference, where meetings are scheduled with 10 different airline partners.

Stout shared discussions are ongoing with a company called Landline, which began their business offering bus connections for Sun Country Airlines between Duluth and Minneapolis. Landline now partners with United, American, Alaska, Sun Country and Air Canada, providing Transportation Security Administration (TSA) compliant ground

transport from smaller airports to Philadelphia. At smaller airports, passengers go through security, check bags, and board a sealed bus that arrives airside at Philadelphia. Landline has been exploring options in the Bay Area for similar services to Philadelphia.

Hayssen asked if it would be possible for passengers to check in at the San Francisco Airport (SFO) and then take a bus to Santa Rosa. Stout responded that most likely, passengers would board a plane at SFO, but confirmed the system could function in both directions. Hayssen then inquired about United Airlines' involvement. He noted that the company already has a contract with United to provide service to Denver from multiple satellite locations.

Jones asked whether Groome might be interested in developing a similar service. Stout replied that they had not been approached by Groome and not aware if they provide secure to secure service. Jones noted that Groome is already in the market. Stout explained that Groome would be a slightly different competitor. He mentioned that a meeting with SFO is in the works. The Airport Director of SFO has expressed interest in the concept, especially as SFO seeks alternatives to 50-seat aircraft. The team is currently working with operations to identify a secure location.

Young asked whether a separate TSA screening would be required or if the existing screening process would be used. Stout explained that passengers would check in like any other traveler. Jones added that screening would occur downstream of the TSA checkpoint. Stout clarified that passengers would use one of the airport's check-in counters, proceed through security, enter the gate area, and then board the bus from one of the gate counters directly on the ramp. Jones concluded that the bus would then travel to SFO, where passengers would disembark on the airside of the SFO.

Newton asked if there had been any interest at the conference in filling the service gap left by Avelo. Stout responded that no discussions had occurred with other partners since Avelo's service reduction announcement. However, they had spoken with Alaska Airlines a few weeks prior to prepare for an upcoming meeting and to understand what information the airline needed. They plan to discuss Boise and other potential service adjustments with Alaska, noting that while Boise is a good operational fit for the airline, any backfill would need to align with their broader network strategy.

D. Projects Update

- **Runway and Airfield Work:** Repairs for Runway 14/32 include mill and fill at five spots, with bids due May 30, 2025 and completion by July 1, 2025. A contractor is being secured to address the 6,000 feet long longitudinal cracks, as the crew lacks proper

equipment. Pavement Condition Index updates occur every few years. Slurry seal is planned for Aprons A and E, while full reconstruction remains a long-term, unfunded Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) priority. BKF Engineers is mapping stormwater pipes, conducting video inspections, and surveying buildings to integrate data into the county Geographic Information System (GIS) for asset management.

- **Airline Apron Reconstruction:** Water Board issues with the underground stormwater detention system are nearly resolved, enabling equipment orders and project launch. A pre-construction meeting is set for May 21, 2025, with work starting soon after. Phase 1A focuses on the former helipads with dirt removal, grading, and storm water system installation. Airline parking will largely remain intact with brief closures for pipe installation, backfilling, and asphalt. Completion is expected by early fall. Phase 2 awaits County Council grant agreement approval or the new language for this year's grant.
- **Consolidated Rental Car Facility:** The Airport is restarting the consolidated rental car facility project with Mead & Hunt and C & S Engineers, shifting from a public-private partnership to an internal progressive design-build model. This change is due to lower financing cost via a California Infrastructure Bank loan versus through private funding. Meetings with rental car companies will occur at month's end to secure support, with bids for contractors and designers expected by late summer and onboarding planned by year's end. Rental car companies will sign five-year agreements covering operations, maintenance, and lease costs. Construction will be funded by customer facility charges, ensuring debt coverage regardless of vendor. The original rental car facility plan was revised due to two large storm drains; moving buildings was easier than rerouting pipes. Now, all rental car operations will shift near the former sheriff's garden: pick-up/drop-off closer to the terminal, long-term parking moved east, and detailing remains in the north garden. Traffic flow will improve with a driveway extension from Kaiser Air to Ordnance Rd, allowing alternative exits. Mead & Hunt are exploring more parking options, including realigning Ordnance Rd to support potential ramp and hangar expansion for Kaiser Air. Talks are ongoing to acquire nearby Cornerstone land, which could add 300 spaces. Long-term concepts include redesigning the short-term lot and vacating buildings near Flightline and Airport as leases expire in about 10 years. Converting Long Term Parking Lot - A into a three-story garage could cost about 50 million and add about 1,600 spaces. All plans are conceptual.
- **Roundabout:** The Public Infrastructure Roads Department is designing a roundabout at Airport Blvd with a 58-foot central area for potential landscaping or airport-themed artwork. The Airport team seeks Commission input and may request an ad hoc group to guide the project. Artwork must preserve driver visibility by remaining a few feet off the ground and not obstructing sightlines to ensure safety.
- **Compost Facility:** The Waste Division and Zero Waste is developing a County composting facility on the closed landfill at the Airport and is nearing 30% design. Mead & Hunt will

review the plans for compliance with advisory circulars and airspace regulations. Once the 30% design is reached, review and public outreach will begin. The Waste Department will lease the land from the Airport, with ongoing coordination to meet all regulations, including wildlife and bird safety. The site is ideal due to limited alternative uses for landfill areas.

- **Employee updates:** Two new operations hires have been approved and are now on board and undergoing training. They are scheduled for 40-hour fire training in June 2025 and expected to complete certifications by early fall, after which schedules, and shifts will be adjusted accordingly.
- **Airport Restaurant Transition:** They are slightly behind schedule due to earlier construction and renovations, which are now mostly complete. Pricing compliance has since improved. The team required resubmission of pricing data after identifying inaccurate comparisons. After challenging items priced outside the 10% acceptable range, corrected rates have been set and should now be reflected in the main totals.
- **Airport Organizational Review:** An initial meeting with HR went well, and the Airport is working on requested documents to follow the HR process. The goal is to present to the Board by late fall, with a potential addition of 8 to 12 staff over the next 3 years depending on needs.
- **Asset Management System:** No Update
- **Wildlife Exclusion Fence:** No Update
- **Runway 02/20 Alternate Surface:** Project is currently in airspace review. Coordination is ongoing with the Tower Manager regarding the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Letter of Agreement. The airspace review was submitted about four to five weeks ago, and no further action can be taken until it's complete.
- **Runway 14/32 Preliminary Engineering Study:** The Airport held an initial meeting with the FAA about a month ago to discuss the conceptual design. The meeting raised more questions than expected, so a follow-up meeting is being scheduled to complete feedback and gather FAA recommendations.
- **Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) Building Preliminary Concept Design and Budget:** Feedback from the FAA on eligible spaces has been received, allowing the study to proceed. A meeting is scheduled to establish a new timeline. In about a month to six weeks, there will be a meeting with The Fire District to review FAA-approved grant-eligible areas and discuss their interest in maintaining a potential joint station, noting that the joint portion is not grant-eligible.
- **Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) Siting Study:** No Update
- **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant – Tree Removal Phase II:** The FEMA grant, issued two years ago, remains a possibility. The team has submitted all requested supplemental information six times, but there has been no update or decision yet.
- **Sustainability Master Plan:** No Update

- **Airport Microgrid:** No Update
- **Hangar Development Request for Interest (RFI):** Discussions on term sheets are ongoing with all involved parties. There are four proposals in total, with three interviews completed. Currently, discussions are progressing with two proposals from the RFI and one prior proposal.
- **Building Demo:** No Update
- **Website RFP:** No Update
- **Security System Maintenance Services RFP:** No Update

Future Board Items

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

ACTION ITEMS:

A. Approach Feasibility Study Phase II

Stout reviewed proposed Approach Feasibility Study Phase II scope of work with the Commission.

After Discussion, Jasper moved with support from Hayssen, that the Aviation Commission hereby recommends the Board of Supervisors approve the proposed Approach Feasibility Study Phase II in an amount no greater than \$275,000 as presented by Airport staff.

Abstained: None Opposed: None Ayes: All Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. FY 25/26 Budget Overview

Paul Hower, Public Infrastructure Department Analyst, presented the FY 2025–2026 Airport budget, heading to the Board of Supervisors in mid-June. It projects \$18.5 million in expenditures, including \$7.1 million for capital assets, and \$24.8 million in revenue. The net cost of \$790,000 will be covered by the fund balance. Operational expenses are projected at \$14.4 million, with \$12.4 million in operational revenue. The budget also includes \$1.8 million in other capital-related costs. Capital revenue is expected to exceed \$10 million, with additional restricted funds from Passenger Facility Charges (\$1.5 million) and Customer Facility Charges (about \$800,000).

Hayssen asked if Sonoma Public Infrastructure (SPI) service charges are included in salary and benefits for the Airport's 24 full-time employees (FTE). Hower explained they're separate. A recent IT reimbursement request to SPI was just under \$40,000. Young asked how reimbursements would be affected if the County offsets them using Airport property. Hower said it would increase revenue under rents and leases. Returning leaseholds could also open new use opportunities. However, no such changes are

reflected yet, pending a formal County decision. Any adjustments will be made during the first-quarter budget adjustment, expected in August or November.

B. Aviation Commission Governance

Stout shared that the Board of Supervisors reviewed Aviation Commission governance and supported keeping the current structure of five district representatives and two at-large members. They recommended adding two more at-large members, to be nominated by the Sonoma County Mayors' and Councilmembers' Association to be appointed by the Board. Supervisor Gore offered to lead outreach. Stout noted minimal feedback on the Commission's broad roles and suggested revisiting outdated duties from the 1976 resolution. The Board supported shifting to bimonthly meetings, with a formal proposal to be presented next month for the new fiscal year calendar for Commission review. The Board plans a broader discussion on enhancing the Commission's support, focusing on more productive meetings and meaningful studies. They rejected merging with the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) and upheld the Commission's advisory-only role.

Jones asked if the Board's recently approved study on all County Commissions would affect this discussion. Stout said he wasn't fully aware of the study and noted most of the meeting focused on the 7/9 structure and appointment process. Hayssen said Supervisor Gore reaffirmed support for adding two at-large members but agreed the current district vacancy should be filled first. Hayssen emphasized this should be a condition for expansion. Jasper expressed concern about bimonthly meetings, noting missing one could impact quorum. He asked about virtual participation. Stout said the Brown Act requires public posting of remote locations, which may not be practical for casual absences. He added quorum has rarely been an issue and could improve with two added members.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ann Fitzgerald lives on the West side of the State Airport. Fitzgerald noted that she was a member of the pilot study. She reiterated a comment she made at that time: the new Casper system does not track the helicopter school because the school does not use their transponders, possibly due to being within the five-mile radius. She also mentioned that the Casper system on a mobile device is very difficult to use, explaining that it is hard to read all the areas where information is to be filled in. When filling it out, the system often mistakes the information entered. Lastly, Fitzgerald referenced that Stout had mentioned last year that the Tower and Helico were meeting and working together to develop new flight paths for the school

or to improve coordination, and that they would be submitting some of their information to the FAA for approval. She noted she never received any feedback on that and, while understanding Stout could not respond now, wanted to raise the point for consideration.

Michael Charters expressed curiosity about the internal car facility moving forward with internal funding. He asked whether the engineering firm involved is addressing the electrical infrastructure required for electric vehicles using internal resources, or if they are being asked to look externally into the industry for leaders with proven expertise in that field.

Ryan Williams, the political lead for Service Employees International Union Local 1250 representing the Airport Operations Specialists, expressed ongoing concerns about staffing at the Airport. He acknowledged that it was positive to hear those approved last October are now joining and undergoing training before fully integrating into the schedule. At that October meeting, discussions included two additional positions: another airport operations specialist and a maintenance role. Williams highlighted ongoing issues with the Airport runway requiring frequent crack sealing and observation, raising safety concerns for both the runway and employees. He requested that these concerns be revisited and indicated he would follow up with management and the Board of Supervisors, suggesting the Commission also consider this issue.

Regarding the Commission's governance, Williams addressed comments made by Stout about the Board rejecting alternative governance structures, including an independent body. While acknowledging the Airport is funded by special funds and could technically be an independent governing authority, Williams emphasized the need for the Commission to have more direct involvement and voting power in Airport decisions. He plans to continue advocating for an "advisory plus" role with more votes, closer communication with management before decisions are finalized, and conditional oversight with clearer explanations. He noted that some items have been discussed more thoroughly recently, which is positive, and recognized the Airport's success but stressed that with growth comes a need for increased oversight.

Lynn Ross, a constituent of District 1, expressed by phone call that the Commission should consider voting to terminate Avelo's operations at the Santa Rosa Airport due to their involvement in deportation flights.

McCord expressed by email a strong reaction upon learning that Avelo was withdrawing from Santa Rosa to participate in these flights. Although he acknowledged uncertainty about the Commission's authority within FAA guidelines, he expressed a desire for the Commission to send a clear message stating that any airline or operator participating in illegal or unconstitutional actions, as determined by a court of law, should be barred from operating at Sonoma County Airport.

Sandy DeVries-Troxel inquired by email if Oakland explained what they meant by “more work for them.” If not, they inquired whether STS Airport could follow up on behalf of West County or if there is a contact person available to reach out to in Oakland.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Young, expressed confusion about the parking revenue figures paid to the Airport, specifically the bottom three rows showing "Totals to Date" "Yearly Totals" and "% Change YTD" seemed inconsistent or possibly contained a math error. Renee responded that she would review the data.

Hayssen expressed concern regarding the ongoing helicopter noise issues raised by resident, Fitzgerald, who feels targeted and referred to negatively despite her environmental concerns. He noted there seems to be no formal agreement in place between the Tower and helicopter operators and questioned what could be done to fast-track such an agreement. Hayssen, who regularly observes Airport activity, reported witnessing repeated helicopter approaches over Fitzgerald’s house, indicating the problem persists.

Jasper asked for clarification on whether Airport Management had issued recommended helicopter flight paths to reduce neighborhood noise. He acknowledged that while these guidelines have been shared with flight schools and local operators such as Reach, adherence is voluntary and cannot be enforced. Stout confirmed that the recommended flight paths were disseminated and are voluntary.

Jasper noted that helicopters operated by Helico do not appear on the Casper system because they lack Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B). Hayssen and Jones clarified that while these helicopters may have transponders, they do not transmit identifying information without ADS-B. Jasper suggested that Casper likely only shows aircraft with ADS-B out, but Stout explained the system uses both FAA radar and ADS-B data. The challenge with tracking helicopters is their low altitude, which prevents them from being picked up by radar.

Jasper concluded that the combination of low altitude and lack of ADS-B means the helicopters do not show up in the system. Jones added that even if they were transmitting on the general VFR code (1200), there would be no identifying information. Jasper pointed out that such aircraft at least appear as VFR targets.

Young mentioned that aircraft are not required to have transponders, but if installed, they must be turned on. Hayssen confirmed this, citing FAA regulations, and explained that although helicopters in this area are not within transponder-mandatory airspace, the FAA defines “should” in this context as imperative.

Jasper expressed surprise that the helicopters don't have ADS-B, attributing it to their limited use in local training flights, which do not require ADS-B equipment. Jones noted that equipping

a flight school with ADS-B is costly. Hayssen added that flight school aircraft operating within 50 nautical miles of an airport are also exempt from having emergency locator transmitters, which he found counterintuitive.

ADJOURN

Hayssen moved with support from Jones to adjourn. All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Stout, AAE, CAE
Airport Manger

DRAFT