

SONOMA COUNTY AVIATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the March 21, 2024 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER:

Young called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Hayssen, Starrett, Young, Jasper, McCord

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Hayssen moved with support from Starrett to approve the January 18th, 2023, Aviation Commission Minutes. Abstained: McCord. All Ayes: Motion Carried. The February Aviation Commission meeting was canceled.

AIRPORT MANAGER REPORT:

A. Complaint Update

Stout reported that in January there were 182 complaints compared to 32 in 2023, an increase of 478%. General complaints were 1 compared to 5 in 2023, a decrease of 80%. In February there were 144 complaints from 17 individuals compared to 51 complaints in 2023, an increase of 182%. Year to date for January and February there are 329 complaints compared to 83, an increase of 296%.

Hayssen shared his analysis of the noise complaints reviewed. Geographics and demographics remain the same with 4th district up and the 5th district down from a peak of 93% last year and 74% this year. There was an addition of complaints from the 18000 block of Foss Hill Road. Young added that the Foss Hill Road area is in Calistoga is 9 miles from the Airport and a number of the complaints could not be correlated to a specific flight.

B. Tower Report/Update

In December the Airport had 5,279 operations compared to 5,172 the previous year, an increase of 2%. 2023 had 82,710 operations compared to 90,742 in 2022, a decrease of 9%.

In January there were 5,406 operations compared to 5,637 in 2023, a decrease of 4%.

Alex Arndt, ATCT (Air Traffic Control Tower) Manager was in attendance and provided an update. There are a lot of equipment upgrades from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) side. The Tower is working on DME (Distance Measuring Equipment) and the DME (Distance Measuring Equipment) shelter so the Airport will get that back soon. The RVR (Runway Visual Range) equipment will also soon be working on the runway. Safety is still the number one priority and the ATCT (Air Traffic Control Tower) has been more restrictive on the ODO (opposite Direction operations) which will impact some pilot expectations.

Hayssen inquired about the nationwide MON (Minimum Operational Network) program to keep high frequency navigation aids in place in case of an outage of the GPS satellite system. The program is aiming at keeping operational high frequency navigation aids within 100 nautical miles nationwide. Hayssen believes it is critical that we get the DME (DISTANCE MEASURING EQUIPMENT) fixed so the Airport can qualify for the northern California route.

Arndt agreed with Hayssen and shared that the delay has been due mostly to funding which is in place now and the operational risk management plan is complete. So, there should be no further delays.

Jasper asked Arndt to explain the impacts of the ODO (opposite direction operations). Arndt explained the restrictions and cutoffs for aircraft approaching and landing can vary by aircraft and environmental conditions. It is an operational necessity and for safety. Arndt and the Commissioners discussed an incident with an aircraft completing a high speed taxi practice that caused the aircraft to go into a ground loop. It is unknown whether wind played a factor. Arndt is working on the package for it now. The incident resulted in a runway closure of approximately 30-45 minutes.

Young asked Arndt about staff and he replied that there are 10 total controllers, 3 are trainees. There are also 2 operational supervisors which adds up to 12 total rotating in the tower and Arndt.

Jasper inquired about the alternate landing service approval from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) Arndt replied that they are in a stalemate. He is working on communications with the ADO (AIRPORT DISTRICT OFFICE)), the operational support group and runway safety. There is a target of May 15th to be up and running. Joe Centauro and Fernando Morales from the FAA are reviewing it. Arndt shared that the alternative landing surface is a low priority for the agency and ATCT (Air Traffic Control Tower) but they are getting to it. This is also an uncommon project with many airports not having this feature and the setup and chain of accountability are complex. Stout added that there has been reengagement and movement this month.

C. Airline Update

In January passenger counts were up 4% with 38,553 passengers compared to 37,126. The operations are slightly up on airline counts, at 569 compared to 561. In February the Airport was down 6%, 37,849 compared to 40,136.

Avelo is expanding operations in Santa Rosa starting May 1st. They will base 2 aircraft and operate 4 new routes starting May 1st. The routes are twice a week with new direct destinations being: Kalispell, MT (Glacier Park); Boise, ID; Pasco, WA; and Salem, OR.

American Airlines will start their Airbus service to Dallas May 6th. Airbus parking hasn't been used in a few years so the gate parking will need to be updated to ensure the safety layouts match. They are also reducing the Phoenix flights to one a day.

Alaska has announced they will start flights to Las Vegas in October.

Passengers year to date at the end of February was 76,402 compared to 77,265, down 1%. Year to date airline operations count was 1,163, compared to 1,134, up 2.5%.

As Avelo expands in Santa Rosa they will be utilizing the modular building in the front of the terminal building and using warehouse space in the administrative building. They will have up to 50 employees based in Santa Rosa.

The Airport maintains the same base agreement with all the airlines to ensure they operate on the same lease agreement and operating agreement terms. The most recent agreements were drafted in 2016 and the airlines are now operating on month to month. The Airport is working on a new 5-year master agreement that is expected to be completed in the next 6 months.

D. Projects Update

- **Employee Update:** One of the Airport maintenance workers was promoted into the vacant operations specialist position. The final round interviews were completed for the new vacancy in maintenance. The new Admin Aide is scheduled to start April 2nd.
- **Terminal Modernization Project:** The Airport is working on the last items with Permit Sonoma. They completed the final inspection and requested a toe kick plate on the handrails between concourse A and B. This is the final item to complete everything for Permit Sonoma.
- **Approach Feasibility Study:** The ADA remediation has been completed and the items will be posted soon. Participants and interested parties will be notified when the materials are available on the website. The Airport is working with the Consultant on dates for the next workshop sessions which will likely be in June or July. Hayssen asked Arndt whether there is a better, or more common, departure procedure. Arndt replied that they are still monitoring it and working with the safety council. Some procedures are better for traffic patterns, and some are better for fuel use. There has been a balance between all three procedures and there should be more data in the next 3 to 6 months. Stout added that consultants are working on setting up a meeting with air traffic and procedures to go through conceptual ideas to get feedback before going to the meetings and workshops. This will ensure feasibility and the potential to gain FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) approval. That meeting is expected in the next 6 months. Arndt mentioned that there are longer than usual wait times when working with the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) due to the election year and VIP travel.
- **Airline Apron Reconstruction:** Design is 90% complete and the guaranteed maximum price should be provided in the next 3 weeks. That will go to the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) for this year's round of grants. A phasing plan is being laid out to allow for flexibility to match grants that are secured. This year will focus on the underground work needed and not impact aircraft parking spots. Work is being done with the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) to secure funds for paving for next year. Between Airport entitlement funds and airport infrastructure grant program there will be a base of \$6 million and it is expected that discretionary funding will close the gap for roughly \$6 million dollars. The project should be complete by the end of next summer.
- **Airport Restaurant Remodel:** Awaiting permits from Permit Sonoma.
- **Airport Organizational Review:** No updates to report.
- **Accounts Receivable System:** Continuing to work with the developers and testing. Approximately 2-3 more months to complete the setup of the system. There has been a delay in accepting credit cards that is being worked through.
- **Consolidated Rental Car Facility:** Waiting for data from the public private partnership group.
- **Wildlife Exclusion Fence:** Contractor is continuing to work on portions installing out-riggers and wire in general terminal area as they can between rain. Wire is 75-85% complete. Anticipated completion by the end of August or early September.
- **Runway 02/20 Alternate Surface:** Discussed earlier in the meeting. An MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) will need to be approved between the Airport and the Tower. Pilots that want to use it will need to sign off.
- **Airport Admin Backup Generator:** Awaiting delivery of the generator expected on April 13th. Everything else is ready.
- **Runway 14/32 Preliminary Engineering Study:** Most of the boring sampling work has been done. Survey work is underway. An assessment is being completed of the taxiways and airfield design. This project is expected to continue for a year. Once 30% of the design is complete the environmental portion will be started. Construction is expected to be started in 2028.

- **ATCT (Air Traffic Control Tower) Siting Study:** County payment was expected to have been sent to the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration). The FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) will run the computerized study after payment is received to study the four proposed tower sites. Historical relevance of the existing tower will be analyzed as part of the environmental study.
- **FEMA Hazard Grant – Tree Removal Phase Mitigation II:** Continuing to wait for follow-up from FEMA regarding our answers to their technical questions related to the grant.
- **Sustainability Master Plan:** Visioning sessions were completed with staff and internal parties to define the mission, vision, and goals and to identify projects. The completion is expected in fall.
- **Airport Microgrid:** Reviewing proposals on feasibility analysis.
- **Hangar Development RFI:** Schandel is awaiting Stout’s final review. There are several interested parties for the development of new hangars.

Stout reviewed the list of Future Board Items.

ACTION ITEMS:

None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Commission Packet Materials Review

Jasper expressed that he supports continuing items #1-#10 (operations, traffic flows, and noise complaints) monthly. The financial and budgetary items could be shared quarterly as it can be challenging to keep up with them anyway. Two of the Commissioners verbally agreed with Jasper. Young agreed and suggested the financial and budgetary items could be covered quarterly with a 10-year look-back every one or two years. Stout read the list of all items included in the packet out loud. Young added that items #17 through #19 should continue monthly and that work order information is particularly useful when discussing the work that is being done at the Airport with other parties. Stout suggested revisiting the reporting after the new software, Veoci, is implemented which may automate some financial reporting.

B. Airport Land Use Commission

Young asked the group if there are any Airport Land Use Commission updates. Stout answered that the airport managers got together and went through the applications and made a selection. The group is now working on the swearing in process which is not clearly defined. Hayssen added that there are no urgent issues right now. The goal is to be prepared. Young suggested creating their own process for swearing in to speed up getting new members seated.

NEW BUSINESS:

Stout requested cancelling the April 18th Commissioners meeting due to staffing gaps. Young did not object and motioned to cancel the meeting. All Ayes: Motion Carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No email comments received. Young opened comments to the attendees in person.

Rebecca Purcell asked when the last time the Airport Land Use Commission was fully functional and had a meeting. She also asked what the runway 14-32 engineering study is about. Hayssen responded that it has been about 3 years since the last Airport Land Use Commission meeting and confirmed that it is a requirement of the State to have that Commission and that private citizens are able to be on that Board. Stout commented on the 14-32 engineering study. It is the preliminary work to get to 30% design for an overlay project on the south $\frac{3}{4}$ of the runway and confirmed that the project is repaving and not extending the surface.

Ann Fitzgerald, a neighbor on Windsor Road, requested that during the Commission meetings acronyms are defined so the public can better understand the discussion. Fitzgerald asked if the helicopter school is required to make contact with the Airport Tower for takeoffs and landings. Arndt replied that they are required and that the Tower's jurisdiction is within the Delta airspace which is 5 miles by 2,500 feet elevation. Fitzgerald asked if there are plans for adding hangars on the west side of the Airport and if there will be the possibility for public comments. She shared her appreciation for the existing hangars not having lights on the back sides of the building.

Julia Hochberg from the Sonoma Jet Center shared information about a chili cookoff for the Airport community on Sunday in the hangar. She also shared that the Sonoma Jet Center will be pumping sustainable aviation jet fuel all day on April 18th as part of their Green Week.

Hayssen had comments about aviation safety programs coming up. On March 26th and April 4th there will be safety programs for maintenance, pilots, and CFIs (Certified Flight Instructors).

Joe Messina, who represents the West Side Airport Neighbors, asked what the procedures are for becoming a noise sensitive neighborhood. He also expressed continued frustration with the noise while also acknowledging that some improvements have been made. He also stated his frustration with Young for saying that the helicopter noise wasn't a problem.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Young responded to Messina's statement that Young didn't think the helicopter noise was a problem by acknowledging that Messina is in an area of impacted noise and that is not disputed. Young said that the complaints about noise are heard and understood. He added that his primary focus is safety and that his previous comments have been that the helicopter operations are where they should be and within the recommendations for safety.

Young took some time to share positive feedback about Airport staff. He recounted more than one incident where he overheard communications between the Tower and pilots where a pilot has made a rude comment to the Tower staff. He commended the Tower staff for responding to the incidents professionally. He also expressed thanks to the Airport Administrative staff for being accommodating with hangar inspection scheduling. Jasper, Young, and Stout discussed the notification timing for hangar inspections. Jasper mentioned that some may feel that 24 hours notice is too short and suggested that sharing more information and reminders about compliance requirements regularly would be helpful so tenants can remedy items before receiving a ticket.

Arndt and Stout shared that on the week of April 23rd there will be the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) required fire and emergency training and some pavements will be closed. The main event will be on the 25th and the training will include controlled fire, a prop aircraft, and actors to

simulate a real event. There will be press releases and other announcements distributed to the media and public closer to the date of the activity.

ADJOURN:

Starrett moved with support from Young to adjourn. All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 9:46 a.m.
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Stout', written over a horizontal line.

Jon Stout, AAE, CAE
Airport Manager