

SONOMA COUNTY AVIATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the October 19, 2023 Meeting

This meeting was conducted using a hybrid of in person and over Zoom.

CALL TO ORDER:

Young called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Hayssen, Internicola, Jasper, Young, McCord **Absent:** Starrett

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Hayssen moved with support from McCord to approve the July 20, 2023 Aviation Commission Minutes. Abstained: Jasper. All Ayes: Motion Carried. The August and September Aviation Commission meetings were canceled.

McCord noted that the minutes said the "July minutes were approved," but it should have said "June minutes were approved". This was corrected in the final version of the minutes.

AIRPORT MANAGER REPORT:

A. Complaint Update

Stout reported that in July there were 92 noise complaints compared to 109 in 2022, a decrease of 16%. In August there were 119 complaints compared to 148 in 2022, a decrease of 20% in 2022. In September there were 128 complaints compared to 96 in 2022, an increase of 33%. Year to date as of September there were 743 complaints compared to 678 in 2022, an increase of 10%.

In July there were 9 general complaints, compared to 1 in 2022, an increase of 800%. In August there were 2 general complaints, compared to 6 in 2022, a decrease of 67%. In September there were 2 general complaints, compared to 6 in 2022, a decrease of 67%. Year to date as of June there were 29 general complaints compared to 23 in 2022, an increase of 21%.

The final 2022 Annual Noise Report was circulated to the Commission.

There were 3 kudos reported over the past three months including Tower personnel, Alaska employees, and the Badging office.

Hayssen noted that in a one-month period 61 complaints were reported from 3 locations. He also commented that District 5 accounted for 93% of complaints in June, 92% in July, and 84% in August.

McCord commented that the complaints seem to be getting more with inappropriate language.

Commissioners commented that they appreciate the Kudos report.

Stout noted that Commission meetings going forward will be offered as a Zoom Webinar format. Public comments can only be submitted via email or in person.

Stout introduced new additions to the management team, Samonae Carter, Assistant Airport Manager and Renee Aivaliklis, Administrative Manager.

B. Tower Report/Update

In June there were 7,518 operations compared to 8,603 in 2022, a decrease of 13%. In July there were 8,233 operations compared to 8,002 in 2022, an increase of 3%. In August there were 8,528 operations compared to 8,147 in 2022, an increase of 5%.

Year to date as of August there have been 55,743 operations compared to 64,238 in 2022, a decrease of 13%.

Alex Arndt, the new Tower Manager, introduced himself. The Tower is 100% staffed, though some of the staff is still in training. The Tower's goal is safety for everyone.

Hayssen commented that there will be a FAASTeam meeting next week on October 23 at the Sonoma County Office of Education.

C. Airline Update

In July there were 55,925 passengers compared to 61,099 in 2022, a decrease of 8%. In August there were 57,560 passengers compared to 56,528 in 2022, an increase of 2%. In September there were 62,229 passengers, compared to 58,777 in 2022, an increase of 6%. The passenger count in September 2023 was a new monthly record.

Year to date there have been 471,032 passengers as of September compared to 457,465 passengers in 2022, an increase of 3%.

In July there were 4,332 airline operations compared to 5,421 in 2022, a decrease of 20%. In August there were 4,786 airline operations compared to 6,309 in 2022, a decrease of 24%. In September there were 5,322 airline operations compared to 7,290 in 2022, a decrease of 27%.

Stout is in discussion with a local group and coordinating with Alaska Airlines to coordinate the first Veterans' Honor Flight from STS to Washington, DC in October of 2024.

Stout met with Alaska regarding Ontario, Boise, and Austin route expansion opportunities. Currently nothing is planned for 2024, but they are interested in increasing the frequency to Los Angeles and San Diego. Stout also met with the CEO of Avelo at the Airport, who reported our market is doing well. American is looking to upgrade the Dallas market flights to an Airbus A319 to avoid passenger load issues in the warmer months.

Hayssen asked for more information about the population of Ontario. Stout noted that the Ontario area has grown, and it is a way to spread out traffic in the LA area.

Internicola asked if there has been any contact with JSX. Stout noted that they have not yet elected to meet with STS. The FAA is proposing to change how this type of charter operation operates.

Stout noted that Sun Country still appears interested in STS, but has not yet added any routes.

D. Projects Update

- **Terminal Modernization Project:** Terminal project complete with just a few items on a punch list for the contractor to complete. Outdoor patio in secure area should be opening in a few weeks. Awaiting baggage system plans from the manufacturer to get the final occupancy certificate. All security cameras are being switched to a new software. To help improve signage in the terminal, the Airport organized a focus group of residents to walk to the terminal and provide feedback. A memo outlining the feedback was provided to Commissioners.

- **Airport Restaurant Transition:** Awaiting permits from Permit Sonoma to complete final renovations by first quarter of 2024. Crush Wine Bar is open and fully operational.
- **Approach Feasibility Study:** Staff and consultant will be presenting preliminary results at community outreach meetings November 1 in Windsor and November 2 in Sebastopol. Community members will have several weeks to submit questions and consultant will draft responses to the questions, which will be posted on the website.
- **Taxiway A Overlay:** Phases 1, 2, and 3 have been completed, and the contract is being closed out.
- **Airline Apron Reconstruction:** Construction is expected to start in June 2024. This is grant funded and the estimated cost is \$14 million. The goal is to complete the project in 2 years.
- **Airport Organizational Review:** The Airport hopes to add two administrative positions by the end of fiscal 23/24.
- **Accounts Receivable System:** Staff are beginning to input tenant data and starting internal testing phase.
- **Consolidated Rental Car Facility:** This project is currently on hold and rental car agencies will be meeting with the SPI Director to discuss potential fueling options. The Airport is working with Permit Sonoma on a temporary overflow lot.
- **Runway 02/20 Alternate Surface:** This is with the Tower for approval, and the goal is for it to be in use in Spring 2024.
- **Wildlife Exclusion Fence:** A pre-construction kickoff meeting has been set up and construction is expected to begin in May 2024. Work cannot be done in the creeks between mid-October and mid-June.
- **Security Services Contract:** The Board approved contract with new vendor (KR Contracting), who will take over operations on November 15th. The operations center is expected to open mid-January 2024.
- **Vending RFP:** Schandel has been working with identified vendors to get new machines installed. Some of the machines include baby supplies, hot noodles, and earbuds. Costeaux will be putting in a larger machine post-security.
- **Rental Car RFP:** This project is still on hold while the ConRAC project is on hold.
- **FEMA Hazard Grant – Tree Removal Phase Mitigation II:** FEMA is asking technical questions related to the grant.
- **EV Infrastructure Grant:** The Airport applied for an EV charger for Lot A, but the grant was not received. The agency felt that the lot was not public enough because it is behind a gate.
- **Airport Admin Backup Generator:** The preliminary installation work has started, and the generator is scheduled to arrive in February.
- **Sustainability Master Plan:** The contractor leading this project has sent a large data request to kickoff the project. The goal is to be complete with this project by July 2024.
- **Airport Microgrid:** The Clean Air Coalition asked the Airport to consider a microgrid. The Airport is meeting with 4 companies this week that specialize in microgrids to start a feasibility study.
- **ARFF Building:** This week the Board approved the contract with Mead & Hunt for design work.
- **ATCT Siting Study:** This week the Board approved a reimbursable agreement with the FAA for a Tower Siting Study, along with a contract with Mead & Hunt to complete the study. Four potential sites were identified on the Airport Layout Plan.
- **Runway 14/32 Preliminary Engineering Study:** The Airport received a grant to rehab the original portion of the runway. A recent Advisory Circular requires connectors to be at 90 degrees, and the Airport has some that do not meet this requirement.

- **CARB EV Offroad Grant:** The Airport was approved for a grant for 2 electric tractors. The first was delivered today and staff are beginning to train on it.
- **Crackfill/Airfield Painting/Roofs:** Operations and maintenance staff have been busy with these projects over the last few months.
- **Approach Tree Topping:** Staff are topping trees for the South approach.
- **Hangar Development RFI:** Schandel has been working on getting the RFI out for Apron F and Apron D out, along with the historic house development.
- **Future Board Items:** Airport items that are expected to go to the Board in the next few months include the Apple Spice Lease (November 7), the Airport Bridge Loan (December 12), and the 2023 Airport Annual Update (Date TBD).

Hayssen asked if Approach Feasibility contractor recommendations could be previewed. Stout noted that recommendations would take some time, and would not begin until after the initial public outreach meetings.

Young commented that he was surprised that the Board dismissed the comments of the Commission related to the Living Wage Ordinance.

Jasper asked if the restaurant has provided a price survey to the Airport yet. Stout confirmed that it has been received.

McCord asked if ACH will be impacted by the new Airport payment system (Veoci). Stout confirmed that ACH will not be impacted, but credit card payment will be an additional option.

Internicola asked if most of the new vending machine companies are local. Stout noted that it is a mix of local and national companies.

Young asked if the new generator will be run by propane. Stout confirmed that it will be diesel.

Internicola noted that a comment was included in the September meeting packet regarding concerns about a microgrid. Hayssen asked for clarification regarding what a microgrid is. Stout confirmed that it is a self-sustaining power system usually with solar and battery storage.

ACTION ITEMS:

None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Airport Land Use Commission

Hayssen is concerned that the Land Use Commission being absorbed into Permit Sonoma and asked Stout to propose a meeting. This will be moved to an Action Item at the next Commission Meeting. Stout commented that he has not yet been able to speak with the staff person for the ALUC.

B. Airport Rates and Fees FY24-25

The majority of Airport rates and fees were increased for the current fiscal year. Stout asked if Commissioners would recommend raising hangar rates again this year, or waiting until the following year.

Internicola asked if anyone gave up their hangar due to the rate increase and are all tenants now paying the updated amount. Stout confirmed that no one mentioned that they are giving up their hangar due to the rent increase, but the Airport is still working with some tenants to correct their payments. Internicola also asked if there is a waiting list for hangars. Stout confirmed that there is.

Stout noted that parking and airline rates will be reviewed. Parking lots may move to validation to receive first 2 hours free. Commissioners agreed that it makes sense to skip a year for hangar rent increases.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

In attendance, Joe Messina stated that he represents Silk Road, Windsor Road, Mark West Station Road, and NW Station Road neighbors regarding helicopter flight school operations on the west side of the Airport. He cited noisy intrusive hours of operation, health and wellbeing, and safety concerns. Commissioners explained the limited control the Airport has to regulate the flight school but want to continue communications among all parties. Jasper explained that there are limitations to what the Commission can do, but communication is important. Young plans to reach out to the flight school and ask to take training flights to better understand the issues. Messina appreciated the Commission taking the time to listen and is hoping for a win-win outcome.

Ann Fitzgerald, who resides at the end of Windsor Road on the West side of the Airport, submitted a letter noting her concerns. She has similar complaints to Mr. Messina's regarding the helicopter flight school. Issues include hours of operation, flight frequency, and noise. She provided several exhibits as to training flight paths, practice area recommendations, and a recorded decibel reading.

Via email, John Necker of Sebastopol submitted a screenshot from Flightradar showing a private aircraft flying over Sebastopol at 936 ft, 64 ft under proscribed minimum altitude.

Via email, Kari Svanstrom of Sebastopol shared concerns about flight arrivals and departures over the city of Sebastopol and the increased frequency of traffic. She met with Commissioner Hayssen and also asked that the Airport share this information with the consultants doing the ongoing Approach Study.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Young complimented one of the Tower controllers for how they managed a conversation with a disgruntled pilot.

ADJOURN:

McCord moved with support from Internicola to adjourn. All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 9:54 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jon Stout, AAE, CAE
Airport Manager