

SONOMA COUNTY
AVIATION COMMISSION
Minutes of the April 15, 2021 Meeting

This meeting was conducted virtually over Zoom.

CALL TO ORDER:

Young called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Young, Delaney, Duste, Hayssen, and Starrett.

Absent: McCord.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Starrett moved with support from Duste to approve the March 21, 2021 Aviation Commission Minutes.

All Ayes: Motion Carried.

Due to technical difficulties, Young request Vice Chair Hayssen to lead the meeting.

AIRPORT MANAGER REPORT:

A. Complaint Update

Stout reported there were 68 aircraft related complaints and no general complaints in March compared to 84 aircraft related complaints and 1 general complainants, from last year. Year to date 144 complaints through the end of March compared to 170, down 13%, and year to date, 1 general complaint compared to 2 general complaints last year.

Hayssen observed that the top complaints have been about helicopters and having the altitude of the aircraft helps with the analysis of the complaints. Hayssen noted that helicopters do not have the minimum safe altitude for aircraft, which is 500 feet for takeoff and landing.

Delaney inquired as to how information of the complaints are gathered and formatted into the comments of the complaints. Stout said they are input as received from complainants.

Duste inquired to helicopter flight school practicing landing, if they follow formal pattern? Stout answered stating that it depends on the activity, if they are practicing patterns, they will do a regular pattern. If they are working on auto-rotation, they tend to stay over the skid pads or runway depending Airport traffic. Reason for this is to stay segregated from other aircraft.

Stout verified that complaints received are shared with helicopter operators, with mixed results. Originally, they were willing to work with the Airport about the complaints. Now they are of the opinion they can't do anything. Delaney inquired: is there something more the operators can do to modify their flight path to mitigate the complaints? Stout replied that the tower and the operators have met and discussed the complaints. Operators are willing to fly alternative routes without compromising safety and direction from the tower.

B. Tower Report/Update

Craig Lucas, Tower Manager, not available, so no updates from the tower or any staff change. Stout did provide that the Assistant Tower Chief has retired.

There were 6,788 operations in February 2021, an increase of 2.7% from 6,607 in February 2020. Year to date, there were 11,639 operations, a decrease of 9% from 12,851 in 2020.

Delaney shared concerns of operation being down compared to last year at the peak of COVID. Stout reported that there were more General Aviation (GA) activities compared to Commercial flight from Airlines.

Attendee Mark Vogler- wanted to respond to the details he provides in his complaints and was instructed by Hayssen to wait until the public comment section at the end of the meeting.

C. Airline Update

Stout reported that brand new low cost carrier, Avelo will start 4/28/2021. They announced 11 destinations from Burbank. They have 3 aircraft, and will be going to 6 aircraft by the end of the year. Also, looking to expand to the Mid-West and East-Coast operations in the next 12-18 months.

Stout reported that there are currently nine (9) airline flights per day. Alaska covering all their markets; American Airlines serving two of their markets, and have not returned to LAX, it's on their schedule on June 3. United is showing flights from SFO on June 4th; and have pushed Denver off until September 8th. Passenger loads have improved and from what advanced schedule are showing, around September 8th, departures will go up to 18 per day.

There were 13,822 passengers in March 2021, a decrease of 30% from 19,735 in March 2020. Year-to-date, through March the Airport had 26,516 passengers, a decrease of 71% from 93,775 in 2020.

D. Projects Update

- **Gate 2/ TSA Check Point Move:** Still working on final close out paperwork and getting to the Board of Supervisors for the project acceptance.
- **Terminal Improvement:** Phase one is about 40% through and on track for completion in July. We are doing some changes and bringing some items out of phase two, which will help with future movements around the terminal floor. Contractor will be closing off areas to start inside work; jack hammering to lower the terminal. Rental cars will be moved to start building the new ticket counters. Anticipate completion by end of July. August will be a juggle of shifting bag room, TSA, and the rental cars out to airlines ticket module and United and American move to the terminal. All airlines will be in one facility and the lobby will be for ticketing. In between that, some of phase two work will be started. With the work of the counter, anticipated shaving 2-3 months off time of the project.
- **Solar Panel Installation:** Airspace Review is still with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Reached out to commercial operators at the Airport to participate; many of the commercial operators have responded favorably.
- **Generator:** We are now required to install a Tier 4 compliant generator and are in the process of procuring the 750 kW generator. Should be installed by September.
- **Replacement Fire Trucks:** Notified that the release of funds is pending.
- **Car Wash Facility Upgrade:** The Airport expects that the additional bay will be in place by next month.

- **Reserved Parking:** SP Plus parking has set up online system to reserve parking. All scanners are installed and the program is out and live. You can go to the STS website and click on the app and reserve your parking. In addition, 10 spaces have been reserved in both parking lots for additional revenue opportunities as reserved parking. SP Plus also working with app developer to pre-order and pay for restaurants on site. The last piece that SP Plus is working on is the sale of Airport merchandise.
- **Hangar Electrical Cleanup:** Daaboul reported that the Airport is working with a contractor to address electrical deficiencies identified in hangars. Once the estimate is finalized, the Airport will begin scheduling the repairs, starting with the most critical. Tenants will be notified. The contractor will also be performing preventative maintenance to avert further critical issues.
- **Operation Center:** Working on setting up the Operation Center; as STS is approaching a Category 2 airport. Operation Center will have a lot of cameras and monitors to help with operations, emergencies, and take phone calls. A third party will be used to monitor and coordinate efforts. It will be staffed during commercial operating hours.
- **Rotating Beacon:** Procuring LED rotating beacon, which was approved by FAA. Stout indicated the maintenance is the primary factor, but there is some cost savings in energy reduction. In addition, the beam from the beacon will not be much of a factor for homes nearby, and actual will reduce light pollution on their home.
- **Consolidated Rental Car Facility:** The Board approved the term sheet with ConRac Solutions for the consolidated car rental facility. They will start their analysis of site for the proposed facility. For the next six to nine months they will be doing feasibility reviews, environmental reviews, and validation of the construction cost estimate.

E. Runway Safety Action Team (RSAT) Update

Stout reported that the Airport has submitted the completed modifications to standard requests to the FAA and a response is pending. Although, it's been six months, hoping to hear back and anticipating to complete the modifications by this summer.

Hayssen asked for confirmation if the 2021 RSAT meeting is set for August 20th? Daaboul reported that he contacted Craig Lucas, Tower Manager, for a new RSAT date due to scheduling conflict. New date is July 19th 9am -12pm. But no invite has been sent out.

F. Sheriff's Garden/Jail Facilities

This item remains on the agenda pending an update. The garden is vacated, and under Airport control, minus the greenhouses.

G. COVID-19 Update

Nothing new to report at this time. Minor changes taking place, such as permeant shield that can be easily added and removed for the ticket counters. Also ordering shields with delineator between them to create separation between queue lines.

ACTION ITEMS:

A. Schedule FY21-22 Schedule Meeting

Adopting fiscal year 2021-2022 meeting schedule. Commission meetings third Thursday of every month.

Young moved with support from Duste to recommend to adopt the FY21-22 Schedule. All Ayes:
Motion carried.

Stout reported that Staff will get the website updated with the new dates for the year.

B. FY21-22 Chair and Vice Chair

Stout reported that the current Chair is Young and the Vice Chair is Hayssen.

Hayssen asked for volunteers or nominations, and hoped that Young would continue as the Chair.

Starrett moved with support from Duste to recommend that Young continue as Chair with Hayssen as Vice Chair for FY21-22. All Ayes: Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Noise Abatement Update

Young reported that McCord is taking the lead on the Noise Abatement Workgroup. Young reported that one main notable thing is the old map had yellow color for noise sensitive areas; however, everywhere near the Airport is a noise sensitive area. Trying to bring pattern and procedures to balance the noise while looking into three areas: 1) Safety, 2) Standardization, and 3) Change in pattern, will effect someone else. No easy suggestion to manage the noise. Working on updated guide, which will not be printed but sent to FlightAware and uploaded to the STS website.

Hayssen shared the proposed updates to the recommended patterns. Hayssen and Young indicated that the highlights to certain areas designated as noise sensitive would be removed and replaced with a notice that the Airport is located in a noise sensitive area. The new recommendations are more realistic and take aircraft further from the Airport in a pattern that avoids the Silk Road area. Stout reported that the new recommendations have been taken into consideration on how the pilots are actually flying. Hayssen indicated that the workgroup is also considering adding a page addressing helicopter training specifically, and shared a draft. More research is to be done on that subject. The notes portion of the guide will also be revised and the links added.

Stout reported that they had completed the analysis of the 2020 data, and had meetings with the subcommittee. Some key factors: Runway 14-the approaches were the dominant complaint issues (landing from the North). 55% of the complainants were within 5 miles of the Airport. 56% were regarding aircraft below a 1,000 feet; and 21% were over 2,000 feet. We have incorporate some of the data from the analysis into the procedures.

Hayssen inquired into the next steps. Stout reported that staff is working on the materials McCord has put together; but still working on it. Once it is complete, will distribute to the Commissioners for comments and then to the operators, and once it's complete will get it published.

Duste asked Stout regarding the progress of modifying our approaches using a third party consulting firm to shortcut the timing. Stout reported that we are six weeks behind on that project, due to launching the new airline and staff changes, have not finished the RFP. The process will be to evaluate all of our approaches, look at terrain and opportunities to upgrade all the approaches and departures to fully optimize. Currently, there are no visual approaches that are published for the Airport, and through the efforts of the Noise Abatement discussion, we are asking that company to design standardized visual approaches. Once the RFP goes out and a selection is made, it would take about 18 to 24 months, instead of the 3 to 4 years if we worked directly with the FAA.

B. Neighbor Guide/Community Information

Stout reported that the subcommittee is waiting on information to be aggregated on the Noise Abatement Update in order to update the Neighbor Guide/Community Information.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Vogler wanted to address some of the comments around the helicopters. Vogler's goal behind his complaints is to give a sense of how much traffic is flying overhead. He also stated that he always likes to provide as much information as possible, so that we have tangible data to go off. Mission is to reduce the flight activities over neighborhood and go over empty spaces. Vogler requested an update from the meeting with the FAA and the helicopter companies.

Hayssen informed Vogler his comments are well noted, and that they will be taken into consideration when discussing modifying patterns, but they have to follow the guidelines from the FAA. Hayssen also reported that aircraft traffic today is 1/3 of what it was 45 years ago. Traffic has decreased from the 1970s peak of over 200,000 annual operation.

Stout reported that Vogler's information has been passed to the Committee to take into consideration as they write the Noise Abatement Guide. We have also had discussion with the Tower and the operators', and letters have also gone out to them reiterating to avoid neighborhoods when possible. The FAA is clear that safety is first and their role is not to mitigate noise, but aircraft safety and direct them to avoid and maintain clearance with other aircraft.

Vogler stated his issue is with the flight school (smaller aircraft) and not commercial flights.

Hayssen informed Vogler that his concerns will be taken into consideration and offered to have a meeting with him at a later date in his capacity as the FAA Safety Representative.

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Delaney announced that this is his last meeting after 17 years, and thanked everyone.

Young reported that he attend a meeting last week where Stout and the Airport had a meeting with the commercial operators regarding issues and concerns and status of the Airport. Meeting was well received and will continue quarterly, which was a good development to keep the commercial operators engaged and informed. Young reiterated that the Committee is aware of the noise; however, Silk Road is right underneath the downwind for runway 14/32 on the west side. Flight school: there are fewer trainings going on, and is less than what it was 20-40 years ago; however, the helicopters are generating different types of noise. Everyone has become become more sensitive to the noise over time; however, we need to follow the FAA standards and guidelines and sometimes a standardized pattern needs to be flown. Young reported that all the Commissioners will continue to work to improve the noise

Stout updated on the status of replacement for the vacant Commissioner's seat for District 3 and the soon to be vacant At Large appointment for Delaney. The appointment for At Large goes through the County website. For the District appointment, it needs to go to that District Representative, but ultimately it needs to go to the Board for confirmation.

Duste inquired on the status of the Land Use Commission. Stout reported that the Airport Manager selected representative, does not need the Board's approval, and the Airport Managers have that authority. That Commission is operated and managed by Permit Sonoma. Hayssen and Stout confirmed that the last time he spoke with the Commission the paperwork was complete and they are part of the Committee. Stout reports that no new meeting has been set as of yet, and the last time they met was approximately 2 years ago.

ADJOURN:

Young moved with support from Delaney to adjourn. All Ayes. Meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jon Stout, AAE, CAE
Airport Manager