

SONOMA COUNTY AVIATION COMMISSION

Minutes of the November 21, 2024 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER:

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

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Hayssen, McCord, Young, Jasper(Arrived at 8:04am), Jones

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Hayssen moved with support from Jones to approve the October 17, 2024, Aviation Commission Minutes.

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

Airport Manager Report

A. Complaint Update

Stout Reported, in October, the number of complaints increased from 96 to 548, which is a 471% increase. Year-to-date complaints increased from 839 to 3,382, a 303% increase. General complaints in October decreased 50% from 12 to 6 and decreasing from 60 to 37 year-to-date a 38% decrease.

The Airport is currently evaluating two potential replacements for the current noise management software system, Vector. Demos for both options have been completed, with one vendor providing a sandbox environment for hands-on testing. A few frequent contributors to aircraft feedback have been invited to test the public interface once access is fully available. A meeting with the second vendor is scheduled for December 2nd to further assess its capabilities.

The goal of adopting new software is to enhance reporting accuracy, streamline the complaint submission process, and introduce automation features, such as voicemail transcription. Feedback from other airports using similar systems is being gathered to inform the decision. Anticipated By the end of the year.

Hayssen, Young, and Stout discussed the source of noise complaints, with 95% attributed to the RRHED departure procedure. Hayssen noted complaints range from 600 to 6,600 feet, with most concentrated at higher altitudes, particularly in the 5th district, which accounts for 81% of the total. Young observed that most aircraft operate above 3,000 feet, making mitigation challenging despite their visibility and noise. Stout confirmed that while departure procedures were not initially part of the approach study, they have since been added, and the Approach Feasibility Study is reviewing potential adjustments, including altitude changes or fixed turning points off the runway.

B. Tower Report/Update

Stout reported, September had a 7% increase in operation activity with 7,712 operations compared to 7,187. Year-to-date operations are down by 1% , 62,349 compared to 62,930. The Tower team is also managing a few trainees currently in progress.

C. Airline Update:

Stout reported, American Airlines experienced issues with their reporting system, so their October data was unavailable. The Avelo and Alaska provided their numbers, but overall, the report indicates it has been a busy period and will be reported at the next meeting.

D. Project Update:

- **Runway Work:** The Airport has been coordinating with the Roads crew to schedule crack sealing on the main runway, but weather delays have affected progress. The goal is to complete the work before the end of the year, with both the Roads and Airport crews working overnight for 4-5 nights. Once an opening is found, the runway closure will be announced.
- **Employee Updates:** The recruitment for the Airport Operations Specialist position has closed. Second-round interviews are scheduled for December 9. The Airport Property Manager position has also closed, with 33 applicants for the role. The Airport is working on a strategic staffing plan for the next few years, with the goal of presenting to the Board by late first or early second quarter. This plan could involve adding 9-10 new positions over the next four years.
- **Approach Feasibility Study:** The comment period closed on October 20th, with a total of 347 comments received. Comments were categorized with: 311 related to noise exposure, 81 regarding aircraft arrival paths, 70 regarding aircraft departures and 141 focused on overall operations and frequency. Cignus is reviewing the comments and preparing preliminary responses. In about two weeks, a list of questions for both the airport and the team will be provided. The goal is to compile and release the final comments by the end of the year.
- **Airline Apron Reconstruction:** The Airport will present Phase I of the construction project to the Board of Supervisors on December 10. After the Board's decision, a pre-construction meeting will be scheduled for mid to late January. Granite Construction has been selected for the project due to their experience with the specific scheduling and phasing required for the apron work.
- **Airport Restaurant Transition:** Construction on the interior of the restaurant is nearly complete, with hopes to finish this week. A soft opening will follow, with a full rebranding and reopening planned for after the first of the year. An opening window is being installed, and discussions are ongoing regarding the food service. The proposed menu and street pricing comparisons are being reviewed, and feedback provided.
- **Airport Organizational Review:** Still in progress.
- **Asset Management System:** The Airport found the proposed software is not suitable for current needs. Currently working with another company that has provided a sandbox environment for testing. The initial review looks promising but there is still more to verify before committing to another potential system.

- **Consolidated Rental Car Facility:** A meeting was held with Mead & Hunt and C & S Consulting to discuss their potential project management approach. They are preparing materials to present to the Board. If approved, the goal will be to break ground in 18 to 24 months, depending on external factors. The project is moving forward as the need for the space is critical.
- **Wildlife Exclusion Fence:** The Punch List walkthrough was completed. The only remaining task is installing the steel grates on two culverts, which are delayed by about a week to 10 days due to current weather conditions. The foundations and other necessary components for the racks are already in place, so the project is nearly finished. Jasper asked about the efforts to relocate larger animals, like deer and coyotes, once the project is completed. The Airport is collaborating with wildlife biologists and agencies, to ensure appropriate actions are taken.
- **Runway 02/20 Alternate Surface:** The FAA has provided feedback requiring updates. The area in question is not an alternate surface, turf runway, or grass runway, but rather a landing area within the runway safety area. As a result, the color designation of the box must be changed, and the updated information will need to be added to the airport layout plan. Stout reported that the information was coming from the Airport District Office of San Francisco.
- **Airport Admin Building Back Up Generator:** Once closeout paperwork for the grant with FEMA is complete, this item will be removed from project list.
- **Runway 14/32 Preliminary Engineering Study:** A kickoff meeting was held with the FAA to review the survey work and soil borings. A meeting with the FAA is planned for late spring to discuss geometry changes and taxiway connectors. The project must also consider updates to airfield geometry guidance, as several taxiway connectors currently do not meet the new standards.
- **ARFF Building Preliminary Concept Design and Budget:** The Airport is waiting on FAA feedback on the eligibility for the spaces we've identified for the new ARFF building.
- **ATCT Siting Study:** The siting work for the FAA's traffic control tower has been completed, and the Airport is now waiting for the final report. Two potential sites have been narrowed down: one next to the ARFF building at the west end of the long-term parking lot, and another on Becker Boulevard near PCAM and the Becker Boulevard bathrooms.
- **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant- Tree Removal Phase II:** The Airport has been meeting with stakeholders to address questions regarding the grant and project. The primary concern is the proximity to wetlands, the Airport has provided the wetland delineation map to show the distances. Some areas will need to be removed from the project as they fall within 50 feet of an Army Corps jurisdictional area.
- **Sustainability Master Plan:** A public outreach meeting was held, with just under 20 attendees on November 15th. Hayssen questioned the significant drop in funding from \$44 million in 2022 to a much lower amount, asking if this reduction would be sustained. Stout explained that the peak in funding was due to the terminal project and COVID relief grants. Stout noted that funding might increase in the coming years due to large projects, such as a \$40 million runway project, a \$12 million ARFF building, and a tower project costing between \$12 to \$15 million.
- **Airport Microgrid:** The feasibility study for the microgrid is currently on hold, but efforts are being made to restart the project. The team plans to meet with proposers to have them update their proposal.

- **Hangar Development RFI:** A pre-bid meeting was held, but with limited participation. The project has been promoted on social media and through media coverage to generate interest, and the Airport will assess the level of interest in the project once the proposals have been received. Regarding out-of-town interest, Stout confirmed that while there hadn't been significant participation in site visits. There has been some interest from both developers and contractors with some interested parties looking to build but not own the project.
- **Apron E- Helicopter and Aircraft Parking Apron:** No new updates
- **Terminal Area Sidewalk and ADA Improvements:** No new updates
- **Apron A- Remote Parking Apron:** No new updates
- **Building Demo:** No new updates
- **Website RFP:** No new updates
- **Security System Maintenance Services RFP:** No new updates. Hayssen inquired about the security system and referenced a letter from Mr. Brent Kennedy regarding security personnel at the Airport. Aivaliklis confirmed that the complaint had been forwarded and that they had reached out to TSA and the local TSA on this matter.
- Stout provided an update on the Bay Area airports' efforts regarding unleaded aviation fuels. Some airports are progressing faster than others, but challenges with delivery and supply chain remain. Reid-Hillville Airport, for example, only offers unleaded fuels, while other airports like Watsonville and Livermore have started offering unleaded options with varying levels of demand. Stout explained that controlling the fueling system at airports makes it easier to offer unleaded fuels, but it is more complicated for FBOs due to product liability issues. Discussions also touched on the price sensitivity of pilots, with some willing to pay extra for unleaded fuel and others not interested. They are also exploring sustainable aviation fuels interest through an online survey but have not received many responses yet. There are concerns about unleaded fuels' shelf life and product liability, with some manufacturers not approving certain unleaded fuels for use in aircraft. Finally, Stout mentioned that while progress is being made, it will likely take a couple of years before the widespread adoption of unleaded fuels, with a 2030 deadline to replace leaded fuel.

E. Future Board Items

Stout reviewed the list of Future Board items and noted the 2025 significant items Calendar has not been published.

ACTION ITEMS:

None

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Limited Maintenance Providers/Access

Young reported that the questionnaire was finally emailed to Airport staff and hopes it will be distributed before the end of the year, with discussions potentially starting in the new year. He also mentioned reading an AOPA article on the same issue regarding maintenance, which came out around the same time. Young noted a delay in the implementation of an interpretation

about IA (Inspection Authorization) supervision, which required IA's to be always physically present. He believes this interpretation will likely be dismissed, as it is not sustainable. Young explained that the AOPA article discussed the challenges of maintaining specialty aircraft, including the lack of specialized providers, limited availability of parts, and insurance constraints. It also highlighted the struggles of FBOs with overhead costs and the disparity in labor rates, where auto technicians can earn significantly more than aviation techs.

B. Jail/Road Yard Update

The appraisal has been received and provided to Director Hoevertsz, with next steps pending. Efforts are ongoing to straighten Ordinance Road and modify the S-turnout, aiming to open up more development areas in the garden, which would impact the amount of land available to the jail. Young asked if the goal is to determine the current market value, either through in-lieu services or rent assessment. Stout responded that this is still under discussion but noted that the Airport pays over a million dollars annually to various entities for services, regardless of whether the payment is in cash or applied to a bill, will satisfy the payment requests.

C. Aviation Commission Review

Stout reported that the Board is interested in reviewing the governance of the Aviation Commission, noting that the last update was in 1976. Research has been conducted on how commissions at similar-sized airports operate, comparing them across various locations including Everett, Bellingham, Eugene, Redmond, Medford, Santa Barbara, Arcata, Redding, and Stockton. The research excluded airports governed by airport authorities, such as Monterey. Hayssen and Young emphasized the need for aviation expertise on the Commission. The possibility of merging the Aviation Commission and ALUC was discussed, but legal issues suggest they must remain separate. Further discussions are planned for the first quarter, with the Board's preferences shaping future recommendations.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

NONE

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No email or chat comments received before or during the meeting. Young opened comments to attendees in person.

Monique Parish, resident of Occidental, Ca, expressed concerns about the increased number of flights over West Sonoma County, acknowledging that while they are not opposed to air travel, they have noticed the rise in air traffic and have submitted concerns. They inquired about the outreach efforts made to engage the community. Parish also requested data on the distribution of flights during a typical week, particularly those originating from San Francisco, and sought information about idling flights, noise abatement measures, and quiet hours. Additionally, they asked how community members could express concerns and explore alternatives, noting their confusion after being redirected by the FAA to the Airport. Finally, they requested more information on potential future flight pathways and their impact on the community.

Andrea Orit, resident of Occidental, Ca, addressed concerns regarding the RRHED departure path, which now passes directly over their home. They shared personal experiences growing up near the Van Nuys Airport, where loud aircraft noise was a constant, and noted how they moved to West County 20 years ago to enjoy the quiet. Recently, they observed a significant increase in air traffic over their house, particularly following the approval of the new RRHED path earlier this year. Using a flight radar app, they confirmed the growing frequency of flights. Orit raised several questions, including when the departure study for RRHED will be completed, how the public will be informed of the results, and whether alternative routes over less populated areas like the 101 corridor have been considered. They also inquired about the decision-maker for the RRHED path and how the public can provide input and asked about the expected implementation of new arrival paths 14 and 32.

Jeremy Epperson, from Sonoma Aviation, shared their experience attending the NATA Conference, where they participated in a session about no-lead aviation fuel. They highlighted the importance of the ASTM standard, which will address insurance requirements, recalling an incident from the early 90s when Chevron was held responsible for faulty 100 low-lead fuel, potentially threatening FBOs. The speaker noted a rivalry between Swift and GAMI, with GAMI concerned about his intellectual property being taken by Swift as they compete to establish the ASTM standard. Epperson also mentioned a recent incident at Oshkosh involving a twin-engine Baron, where one engine used avgas and the other used no-lead fuel. The no-lead fuel bladder failed, leading to concerns about safety, despite the issue being caused by the bladder and not the fuel itself.

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Hayssen in response to the comments from the public, stating that both he and the Airport have made efforts to engage with West County residents, including in-person and online meetings. He mentioned a meeting with about 40 local residents, including a group led by a neighbor Milan, and noted his familiarity with the area, having walked the Redwood Grove off Fitzpatrick. Hayssen emphasized the ongoing outreach efforts, including discussions with multiple local groups and meetings regarding the approach study. He acknowledged the limitations of airspace regulations and the FAA but reassured that significant time and effort have been invested in addressing the issue, including responding to emails and phone calls.

Young, in response to the comments from the public, suggested that attending meetings, either in person or virtually, is a good start to keeping informed. He acknowledged that what can or can't be done is a challenging aspect of the issue.

Jasper explained that the FAA designs the airspace and procedures affecting airports, and while airports can influence the process through new designs, it is ultimately the FAA that controls changes. The approach feasibility study, involving public outreach, third-party consultants, and coordination with the FAA, aims to improve the situation. However, the process is slow, and changes depend on FAA approval. While there has been progress and the airport is actively engaged, the timeline is uncertain, with some aspects out of the Airports control.

Jones acknowledged the complexity of the airspace system, especially in the Bay Area, which must integrate multiple airports and systems. He noted that the approach study by Cignus will recommend changes to procedures, which will then go to the FAA for approval. He emphasized that this is a slow process, as the FAA must analyze and process the changes, with the timeline uncertain.

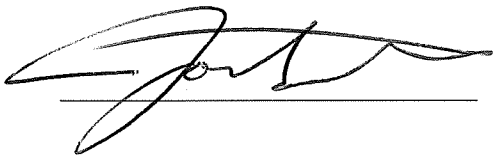
Stout explained that the FAA designs airspace procedures, including the RRHED, which was created without input from the Airport. Despite the Airport's efforts, including working with Cignus to improve the procedures, the FAA controls the process and has not been receptive to changing altitudes. The Airport is working within FAA guidelines, and any changes must comply with their procedures, which are slow and complex. The Airport is conducting outreach and considering feedback, but it could take years to finalize and gain FAA approval. The next step is to present the design for Board approval, expected in March or April.

Young added that while the Airport is covering the costs for the studies and work with Cignus and the FAA, it is not using general fund tax dollars. Funds are being provided by the Airport that could be allocated for other projects.

ADJOURN:

Hayssen moved with support from McCord to adjourn. All Ayes. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Stout", written over a horizontal line.

