

.MUNICIPAL AIRPORTS AVIATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, January 5, 2017
Anchorage Fire Training Center
1140 Airport Heights Road, Building "A" Room 3
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Powell, Chair
Jamie Patterson-Simes
Greg Pearce
Terry Pena

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Sharon Chamard, Vice Chair*

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

Delbert Cox, MRI ATCT
Greg Stoddard, UAA

AIRPORT STAFF PRESENT

Paul Bowers A.A.E., Airport Manager
Darlene Sivyer, Commission Secretary (343-6303)

1. CALL TO ORDER
Commission Chair Jim Powell called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.
2. SELF INTRODUCTIONS
Jim asked all attendees to introduce themselves and tell of their association with Merrill Field.
3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING
Minutes of the November 3, 2016 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.
4. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT
Airport Manager Paul Bowers provided a report on the following topics.
 - A. Noise
Paul noted that noise complaints are primarily due to rotorcraft operations, which although fewer than in the past, will likely be ongoing.
 - B. Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations (VPD)
Paul reported there were a total of 12 VPDs in 201--none during the final quarter of the year. There have been no deviations so far this year.
 - C. User Group Meeting
The last MRI User Group Meeting was held on January 4, with 9 participants and the airport manager. Among other items, the proposal to reduce the width of Taxiways Alpha and November was discussed. The next scheduled User Group Meeting is April 5, 2017. The meetings are held with the airport manger the first Wednesday of each calendar quarter, 3:00 – 5:00PM at the Airport Manager's Office.

* excused absence

D. Ongoing Bird Control

Local ravens continue their bothersome activity. Maintenance personnel continue to haze and take birds when possible.

E. Leasing Update

- The **Chaz Aircraft Painting** facility, located between the ATCT and Wings of Freedom hangar, is very near completion. The painting facility can accommodate mid-size aircraft such as a Dash8, Saab340 and a DC-3. The leaseholder hopes to be open for business January 2017.
- Construction of the 60' x 60' hangar on the **Jay Hawk** lot has begun. The ground is being prepped now winter construction so the hangar can be completed this spring.
- The 14,500sf hangar on the **A&W Services** lot is finished. The building contains one commercial hangar on the north side and six adjoining stacked hangars on the south. The hangars are being rented, not sold.
- The new hangar facility on the **North Edge** lot is complete. The addition adds two 6000sf units to the existing 4500sf building. New siding was applied to the existing structure to match the addition giving the appearance of one building.
- **Alaska Aircraft Innovation LLC (AAI)** was the successful bidder to enter into a new long-term lease with the Municipality/Merrill Field for the former City Electric property located at 819 Orca Street. The company will manufacture carbon-fiber aircraft parts and expand to building carbon-fiber aircraft in a few years. AAI will manufacture and test aircraft on Merrill Field and will likely partner with other airport business that can provide services such as Airframe & Power Plant, flight schools, hangar rentals, etc.
- **Alaska Air Transit (AAT)** was the successful bidder for a lease of the former Quonset hut (Kontor) site. Their plan is to build two hangars to accommodate two Pilatus Porter and two Cessna Grand Caravans. Company office space will be included in the hangar, and development plans will accommodate business expansion. AAT currently employs 16 people and provides regular service to, among other areas, the North Slope.

F. Project Updates

The **Security & Lighting Upgrade Phase 3 Project** is substantially complete with punch-list items being addressed. The project entailed fencing improvements, reducing the width of Taxiway Kilo on the north side of Runway 7-25, installing a parochial fiber optic cable on the north side of the field to support security camera data transfer, and camera and gate operator upgrades. MRI vehicle gate operators are now for both ingress and egress on each vehicle access gate to aid in the elimination of vehicle/pedestrian deviations.

The **Taxiway Q Dynamic Compaction Phase 5 Project** area that included compaction of the landfill underlayment of portions of TWY Q and Golf apron is 3/4 complete. Completion of the project is on winter suspension and will be finished early 2017.

The **Taxiway Bravo Project** which included construction of the missing segment between Taxiways Mike and Quebec is complete. Lighting was also installed on the east side of this uncontrolled taxiway.

The **Runway 5/23 Lighting Project** (RWY lights and lighted windsock) has been delayed until 2017. Because the gravel runway is a snow covered runway in the winter and snow depths are unknown, runway lights will be 30" tall and located 20' from the shoulder of the runway, which is higher and wider than typical.

The **Merrill Field Airport Master Plan Phase 2 Project** is complete and is awaiting MOA acceptance. Paul stated the only significant change in this updated plan is the identification of Land Use Alternatives that addresses the potential development of a (medical) office leasehold in concert with relocation of MOA snow storage and 'Sitka Street Park' areas. The greenbelt west of Sitka Street will remain. The complete Master Plan document is available on the Merrill Field web site.

The **Taxiway Segregation Project** will better segregate existing Taxiways Alpha and November from the apron edges. Paul noted that most vehicles inadvertently cross these taxiway edge lines and FAA then reports the incidents as a VPD. The current concept plan is to reduce taxiway widths to 60' (from current 75'). The forfeited 15' would accommodate the creation of an approximate 10' wide vehicle lane which would abut the aprons and a separation area will consist of elongated islands with grass and blue taxiway lights. The islands would be located between the vehicle lane and the relocated taxiway edge. FAA wants these islands to be placed across from the taxiway interlinks to preclude aircraft direct taxi onto the taxiway. Repainting of all airfield taxiway and runway lines, plus apron edge drive lanes (effectively the entire airfield) would be part of this project, which is anticipated for 2017 construction.

Mike Schoder introduced himself as a long-time Merrill Field pilot and former Airport Advisory Commission chair. He noted that he agreed with Paul in that a resolve to the VPD problem is needed. He also noted that drivers moving between lots on the north side of the field tend to drive along Taxiway Alpha because of the inconvenience of entering and leaving lots via 5th Avenue. Drivers who travel between lots located along Taxiway November could easily use Merrill Field Drive rather than driving along the taxiway. Mike sees the proposed plan as creating a high-speed drive lane that invites pilots to drive along the taxiway rather than using the road system.

Air Traffic Controller Nathan Midthun commented that the reduced taxiway width would not allow some aircraft to pass in opposite directions. He has seen as many as 5 aircraft queued up on TWY November waiting for fuel at ACE Fuels; in that instance a King Air would block a Cessna or other small aircraft from taxiing by. Commissioner Jaime Patterson-Simes commented that she has been in the number 6 position on the taxiway while waiting for runway clearance, and there would be a problem if the taxiway was narrowed—it gets congested with the current width. She also commented that this configuration might turn pilots away from MRI. Mike noted that he attended the recent MRI Users Group meeting and the attendees seemed unsupportive of this proposal. Mike encouraged airport management and the MAAAC to vet this project thoroughly, that planning coordination is needed with Merrill pilots; all should proceed cautiously.

Commissioner Terry Pena inquired about the possibility of installing embedded lights along the taxiway. Paul explained the difficulties of snow removal with embedded lights.

Jim asked Paul why this project was initiated and for the status of this project. Paul responded that this concept was devised to reduce VPDs that occur from vehicles driving on Alpha and November taxiways. He added that the project is in the concept and preliminary design process. Jim advised Paul to go slow and check with other airports to find out how they handle this problem. HDR Master Plan Consultant Carl Siebe noted that during the Master Plan update several alternatives to alleviate this problem were brought forward and this is the concept that rose to the top. Jim said that he would like to see more information about this impacts of this project and asked that this topic continue to the March meeting.

Busy Summer Construction: Paul finished his report by noting that the 2016 construction season was substantial and it looks like 2017 will also have significant airport projects as well.

5. ORGANIZATION REPORTS

A. MRI Air Traffic Control Tower

Delbert Cox, MRI ATCT Supervisor, informed the Commission of increased Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS/drones) in the area. He explained the hobbyist guidelines issued by FAA and the criteria for UAS operation that are used commercially. A certified commercial operator can request to fly inside of Merrill airspace with authorization; should that happen ATIS will be used to provide information for the pilots. Hobbyists are supposed to call any airport within 5 miles of their operation before proceeding. If the airport receives any questions, Del recommended the supervisor's telephone number be provided, 907-271-3047: Del or Ryan Gould are available to help.

B. UAA Aviation Technology Division

No report.

C. Civil Air Patrol

No report.

D. Elmendorf Airfield Operations

No report.

E. Lake Hood Seaplane Base

No report.

F. Bryant Army Airfield

No report.

6. OLD BUSINESS AND UNFINISHED ACTION

None.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. Begich Middle School Aviation Program

Merrill Field pilot Bill Quirk presented a document containing information about the Begich Middle School (BMS) Aviation Program. Bill met with Eric Symmes, BMS Elective Dept. and discussed the 'Build a Plane' project. Currently, the school introduces the principles of aviation to students by teaching them how to build model airplanes donated by a local hobbyist. Bill briefly explained the nationwide Build A Plane (not models) program and hopes that Begich Middle School will return to building real aircraft to attract youth who are considering career paths in aviation.

In a show of support for Begich Middle School returning to the Build A Plane program as intended, Bill asked the Commission to send a letter to ASD Superintendent Dr. Deena Paramo. Bill provided a drafted letter for signature. Jim had several questions regarding the Build A Plane program centered around liability associated with aircraft reconstruction that would accrue to the school and asked that this topic be continued to the next meeting for further discussion.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING AVIATION

None.

9. COMMISSION COMMENTS

Two MAAAC Seats Vacant

- Member of the Alaska Airmen Association
- Owner of residential real property located within one mile of the boundaries of any municipal airport

Two seats on the Commission are currently open. Alaska Airmen Association Director Corey Hester announced that he has submitted his application to the Mayor's Office and is looking forward to joining the Commission. Paul mentioned that he has spoken to an acquaintance who lives within one mile of the airport about filling this vacant seat; he is considering.

10. OTHER

None.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

