

MUNICIPAL AIRPORTS AVIATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 6, 2007
Anchorage Fire Department Training Center
1140 Airport Heights
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Dick Armstrong
Rick Davis
Tony Follett
Allen Kemplen
Erin Marston
Paul Palinski

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Jason Evans

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

MRI Air Traffic Control Tower, Jack Schommer
UAA Aviation Technology Division, Rocky Capozzi
Elmendorf Airfield Operations, Kevin Cramer

AIRPORT STAFF PRESENT

David Lundeby, Airport Manager
Patrick McCormick, Finance Manager
Darlene Sivyer, Commission Secretary (343-6303)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Erin Marston, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the July 12, 2007 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.

3. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT

David Lundeby reported that he received one aircraft noise complaint during the past two months. He has not had an opportunity to follow up with this complaint from an Eastridge Condominium resident regarding an early-turn Campbell departure. Jack Schommer responded that he was aware of the complaint and that he spoke to the pilot.

Two Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations (VPD) occurred on Runway 4-22. The first incident occurred in July with two pedestrians crossed the runway to look at an aircraft; both pedestrians are pilots. The other VPD happened in August when a vehicle crossed the same runway; the driver was also looking at aircraft. All violators were apprehended and citations were issued. Three trespass incidents have occurred this year to date; five were recorded in 2006.

3. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT (continued)

Airport Maintenance has completed the asphalt crack-sealing project for this year. The tiedown aprons along the east side of Runway 16-34 were done this summer; the runways and other aprons are slated for crack-sealing maintenance next year.

Dave gave an update on all Airport projects. The apron reconstruction project south of Merrill Field Drive at Taxiway Golf is basically complete for this year. Next spring, we plan to continue this reconstruction project to the west of this location. When asked about the use of this apron, Dave responded that this lot will be a tiedown apron and that electrical service could be available to some of the new spaces. The lot will be paved in phases.

Dave informed the Commission that the Glenn Highway Reconstruction Project is moving forward. The State of Alaska plans to begin demolition of the Vern Air hangar and the Laser Wash building this fall. Stoddard's building and the municipal gray storage hangar (formerly the Polar Building) are scheduled to be demolished next summer. Utility relocations are planned to begin mid-September. To accommodate this work, a temporary security fence will be erected ten feet to the south of the sidewalk located on the south side of the frontage road. Future phone and gas service connects and maintenance will be easier to perform by moving these utility lines now. This work is expected to be completed by the end of November. Dave also noted that the State plans to advertise the Glenn Highway Project for bid this November or December; construction is scheduled to begin next spring. Dave will ask State representatives to present the project to the Commission before construction begins.

Carl Siebe asked about the status of the land acquisition to accommodate grant assurances for property affected by the Glenn Highway Project. Dave responded that a meeting is scheduled with the Fire Department for discussion about a land transfer. Denis LeBlanc added that the Fire Department is currently working on funding allocations in the event that the Training Center remains at its present location. When a Fire Training Center location is finalized, the transfer of property to Merrill Field will be addressed. Tony Follett asked if the highway project and subsequent land swap will have an effect on Merrill Field's budget. Dave responded that budget impacts are not anticipated.

4. ORGANIZATION REPORTS

A. MRI Air Traffic Control Tower

Jack Schommer reported that a new supervisor began working at the tower this past Tuesday and that a new controller will begin in October. These additions bring the number of employees up to full staff.

The air traffic count is up compared to last month. This diminishes concerns of the ATCT being downgraded into a lower category. Jack also noted that the number of aircraft accidents on the field was down this summer. The controllers continue having good communication with pilots and citizens about noise concerns.

A. MRI Air Traffic Control Tower (continued)

Allen Kemplen asked how rigorous it is for pilots to adhere to departure procedures. Jack responded that the FAA published patterns are guidelines that give best recommendations to follow. Allen referred to an outdoor Fairview neighborhood event in July whereby aircraft departing Merrill Field were not very high and were very disruptive to the civic function. Dave responded that event planners can coordinate with the air traffic controllers who will in turn adjust the aircraft traffic to lessen noise impacts. Jack Schommer noted that a public process has started for review of the airspace in the Anchorage bowl.

B. UAA Aviation Technology Division

Rocky Capozzi reported that the fall semester began August 27; although, student pilots have been flying throughout the summer. There are 101 students who have declared professional piloting as their major, but that number is expected to rise. Last year there were about 100 professional pilot majors. This year there are eight instructors. The University does not provide tail wheel or float instruction.

C. Elmendorf Airfield Operations

None.

D Lake Hood Seaplane Base

Andy Hutzel provided the latest publication of the Lake Hood Float Waitlist and explained that it takes about six years to get a float slip on the lake. He also handed out a map that provides Lake Hood business locations and contact information. The map also depicts a planned pedestrian trail which is scheduled for completion next year. The goal of the pedestrian trail is to eliminate occurrence of Vehicle Pedestrian Deviations (VPDs) that result from pedestrians not having clear directions around movement areas.

Construction has slowed down for the season. Echo parking is complete and there are about 20 pilots waiting for a tie-down space in this popular apron. Lease rates are slated to increase in 2008; however, tiedown fees should remain the same.

Erin asked Andy if they have a handle on the vegetation problem in the lake. Andy responded that the vegetation growth peaked around the middle of July and was being cut every day. Dick Armstrong inquired about the construction of permanent toilet facilities at Lake Hood. Andy replied that portable chemical toilets will continue being used; nothing permanent is planned. He added that a plan is being developed to recapture the eroding shoreline by building a retaining wall.

5. SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

6. OLD BUSINESS AND UNFINISHED ACTION

A. Camper Host

Dave gave a recap of the discussion during the last meeting regarding the proposed Camper Host Program. He also explained that the Anchorage School District and the Parks and Recreation Department have had fewer vandalism incidents in locations where this program is in place. He asked for direction from the Commission.

Erin asked how much vandalism is reported on Merrill Field. Dave responded that not many incidents are reported; most cases involve vehicles, not aircraft. Increased lighting and the installation of security cameras have helped. Tony Follett noted that Merrill Field has a larger foot print than a school, so more than one host would be needed. Dave agreed and added that he would need leaseholder buy-in before a program could be established. Rick Davis noted that he doesn't have a problem with Merrill Field setting up a program. Erin agreed that it would be worth more research. Dave agreed to review locations of higher vandalism incidents and will do some more research.

B. Proposed 2008 and 2009 Merrill Field Airport Operating and Capital Budgets

Dave began by noting that during the budget presentation in July, the Commission recommend two items be added and/or changed to the proposed budget. The planned land acquisitions were more clearly defined and taxiway access to the hospital was added to the described airport services. Most of the proposed expenses in the operating budget were in line with the budget assumptions later issued by the Office of Management and Budget except for the PERS contribution. This item caused labor expenses to significantly increase; however, the State of Alaska has allocated assistance to Municipalities to offset this huge labor expense. The result of this added expense and off-setting revenue is a net increase to the net income of the operating budget. Dave concluded by reminding the Commissioners that a proposed Budget Resolution is awaiting action.

Denis LeBlanc added that the MESA is an expense allocated by the administration which is required by law. The Municipality has an investment in Merrill Field and he urged the Commission to not approve a resolution which would recommend that the Assembly approve the Merrill Field Budgets with the exception of the MESA allotment.

Dick Armstrong noted that he still disagrees with the MESA concept and that the administration worked without it in the past. He stated that he believes if MESA keeps growing, Merrill Field won't be competitive with other general aviation airports. Denis responded that MESA is used directly in support of health and safety services. The Airport Commission does a great job and they should realize that the MESA amount is not a terrible burden; it shows partnership with the City. Paul Palinski said that he understands other municipal utilities can capture this expense from the rate payers. The leaseholders on Merrill Field pay property taxes, so they already pay this expense.

B. Proposed 2008 and 2009 Merrill Field Airport Operating and Capital Budgets (continued)

Erin stated that he is in agreement with Dick in that he doesn't like the MESA expense either; however, because it is the law, there is a proper way to contest MESA--not through a budget resolution. Dick rescinded his amended resolution and made a motion that the Commission support a resolution recommending assembly approval of the Proposed 2008 and 2009 Merrill Field Budgets as presented. Paul seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. Fairview Community Council Request

Erin reminded the Commission of a letter that he received in July from Darrel Hess, Chair, Fairview Community Council. The letter, which was distributed earlier to the Commissioners, asks the Commission to consider requiring all aircraft based at Merrill Field to have identifying numbers painted on the underside of the wings. The intent of this request stems from noise complainants being asked for the aircraft N number when they call to complain about aircraft flying outside established patterns. Large numbers on the underside of wings would allow these pilots to be identified.

Erin had not yet responded to the letter, because aircraft identification numbers are controlled by the Federal Aviation Administration, not local government. The Commission doesn't have the authority to require this change. Paul added that the time of the flight is also important. Dave reviewed the noise complaint procedures; date, time, location, and aircraft identification is very helpful information.

Allen Kemplen asked what control Merrill Field has over aircraft that are based on the airport. Dave responded that the aircraft shall bear a current airworthiness certificate issued by the FAA and have the appropriate radio for communication. Allen will relay this information to concerned citizens and Darrel Hess, and Erin agreed to also respond to the letter.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING AVIATION

Carl Siebe reminded the Commissioners that the Alaskan Aviation Safety Foundation is hosting the annual Safety Seminar on Saturday, October 13 at the UAA Aviation Technology Center, 2811 Merrill Field Drive. He encouraged all pilots to attend this informative event.

9. COMMISSION COMMENTS

Allen Kemplen advised the Commission to keep abreast of Capstone; a technology focused Safety Program in Alaska. The program could have an impact on Merrill Field as there could be a need for additional equipment installers, lease space, and trainers.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.