

MUNICIPAL AIRPORTS AVIATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 1, 2007
Anchorage Fire Department Training Center
1140 Airport Heights
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Dick Armstrong
Rick Davis
Tony Follett
Erin Marston

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Jason Evans
Allen Kemplen

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

MRI Air Traffic Control Tower, Jack Schommer
UAA Aviation Technology Division, Ron Preston
Elmendorf Airfield Operations, Kevin Cramer
Lake Hood Seaplane Base, Andy Hutzel

AIRPORT STAFF PRESENT

David Lundeby, Airport 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 September 6, 2007 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.

3. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT

David Lundeby reported that two Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations (VPD) occurred since September. One vehicle drove across Runway 4-22 and one pedestrian walked across Runway 7-25. These incidents bring the total to date to five; two of these occurred at R/W 7-25 and three were at R/W 4-22. The total number of VPDs in 2006 was five.

Airport Maintenance has been busy preparing snow removal equipment for the winter season. The airport has acquired new pieces of equipment, a grader and a sand truck. The sand truck is equipped with a device that injects de-icing fluid into the sand, and it is outfitted with a belly blade.

3. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT (continued)

Dave gave an update on the Glenn Highway Reconstruction Project. ACS and Enstar are currently performing underground utility relocations between Concrete Street and Reeve Blvd. The work has been completed at the intersections and the work now involves excavating on the south side of the frontage road. The job requires one traffic lane closures with flagmen. The utility work should be completed by the end of November. The former Vernair hangar was to have been demolished by the end of October; it should be removed soon. The Alaska Laser Wash building and the old Polar building are scheduled to be removed next spring. Stoddard's building will be removed when their new facility is completed.

The FAA has installed a weather kiosk in the lobby at the Airport Manager's Office. Dave invited and encouraged pilots to come and use the new flight-planning aid.

Dave announced that the Municipal Assembly approved Mayor Begich's reappointment of Erin Marston to the Commission. He thanked Erin for his willingness to serve another three-year term as a representative of the Alaska Airmen's Association. Dave also noted that Paul Palinski's term expired on October 14; he thanked Paul for his dedication to Merrill Field and the citizens of Alaska. A Commission Resolution thanking Paul for his service has been drafted. Erin read the Resolution, which was unanimously approved by the Commission. Dave noted that one Commission seat remains vacant for an owner of residential real property located within one mile of the boundaries of any municipal airport.

4. ORGANIZATION REPORTS

A. MRI Air Traffic Control Tower

Jack Schommer introduced controller supervisor, Scotty Auton. Scotty comes to Merrill Field with a great pool of experience.

Jack noted that the traffic count is down and the tower is operating at below the current designated grade. If the count does not improve the tower might be down-graded; however, he is hopeful the traffic count will increase.

The controllers are preparing for winter operations. They recently met with airport maintenance personnel to familiarize the groups with communication during the snow removal process.

Lastly, Jack noted there will be an update in the winter Alaska Supplement publication.

Erin asked Jack if statistics show the decreasing number of operations is nationwide. Jack responded that he doesn't have national stats, but he is almost certain that the increased cost of fuel has had a significant impact on the number of flights.

Carl Siebe inquired about the comments received on the FAA airspace redesign project. Jack replied that Merrill Field has good input; however, there hasn't been a lot of turnout for the public meetings. Jack provided a brief description of the proposed changes that would impact Merrill Field and added that the project is statewide, not just a local redesign. The goal is to streamline transitioning through the airspace while maintaining flexibility. It is a lengthy process, and we should expect no changes soon.

B. UAA Aviation Technology Division

Ron Preston reported that the student pilot program logged 275 flights last month--120 more than the same period last year. The program is expanding, and he thanked the controllers for their assistance with student pilots.

C. Elmendorf Airfield Operations

Kevin Cramer informed the Commission that there was a Wing exercise last week. The last of the C17 aircraft will arrive tomorrow; eight of these aircraft are assigned to Elmendorf. The F22s continue to arrive. Kevin noted that the F22s seem to be louder; however, they can utilize a shorter runway. Environmental studies were conducted before the aircraft were approved to arrive at the local Air Force base.

The main runway is scheduled to be closed for a 60-day period next summer. The dates for the Elmendorf Open House and Air Show scheduled for next summer will be announced in December by the Public Affairs office.

D Lake Hood Seaplane Base

Andy Hutzler provided the latest Lake Hood newsletter and he drew attention to the scheduled General Aviation Pilot Meeting. He also mentioned that several pilots have received telephone calls from a State of Alaska, Department of Transportation consultant. The consultant is conducting a survey regarding pilot interest in utilizing a float plane base at Eklutna flats should one be developed.

Ron Stroman, Chief of Statewide Aviation Leasing, reported that there are 259 statewide airports. Recently, the FAA has placed strong emphasis on runway incursion issues which impacts funding for future projects. These health and safety based mandates have created much concern about grant and state funds needed to keep airports certified and safe. Furthermore, State of Alaska security regulations need to be changed to match FAA and Transportation Security Administration regulations. This situation has prompted the State of Alaska proposed lease rate increases which could be adopted as early as January 1, 2008.

Dick Armstrong asked Ron if he knew the amount the proposed lease rate increase and how the increase would be calculate. Ron responded that rent reviews and an appraisal process would be used to calculate the market rate.

Dick asked for more information on the Eklutna Floatplane Base survey. Carl Siebe responded that the consultant is currently conducting an economical feasibility study. From a business perspective, it needs to be determined if there would be enough users of a new floatplane facility to make it a feasible development.

5. SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

6. OLD BUSINESS AND UNFINISHED ACTION

None.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. Storage in Aircraft Tie-Down Spaces

Terry Cartee noted that he has parked in the Whiskey apron near the ski/gravel runway (RWY 04-22) for about a year and a half. He went on to describe the problem he encounters each winter because there is no place to store items that are routinely needed, such as aircraft wing covers. Terry added that he would like to secure a storage box in his tiedown space, but he understands there is a problem because it is difficult to enforce the regulations not allowing storage of flammables. Terry explained that when flying, the only way to secure items that are typically used with the aircraft is to carry items to and from the vehicle parking area, which is not convenient. Terry requested that storage boxes be allowed in the tiedown spaces or that a storage area near the tiedowns be developed.

David Lundebj explained that the reason storage boxes are not allowed in tiedown spaces is because it is difficult to manage what is stored in the boxes. Flammable items are of extreme concern, as is actual security of the box and the conflict they might have with snow removal operations. Dave described the parking environment at the ski/gravel runway is not much different than that of flying into a remote location during the winter. Items there would also have to be carried to and from a secure location.

Dick Armstrong inquired if there would be much demand for a locker type of structure. Terry responded that anything other than a storage container in the tiedown space would be inconvenient because pilots would have to trudge through the snow. Andy Hutzel added that Lake Hood does not allow anything other than aircraft in the tiedowns; storage containers and other items are prohibited. Dave concluded the discussion by stating that Merrill Field does not have the staff or time to inspect the contents and security of storage boxes.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING AVIATION

Heather Hasper announced that the Alaska World Balloon Challenge will be held in conjunction with the 2008 annual Fur Rendezvous winter festival and the Iditarod. The organization offers a continued education program for high school physical science teachers in the Anchorage School District addressing Aviation History in Alaska and the Physics of Ballooning. Student involvement is encouraged through a ballooning science curriculum and 'ballooning demonstrations' given at local schools. The organization might be available to make a presentation about the upcoming events to the Commission during the January, 2008 meeting.

9. COMMISSION COMMENTS

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 PM.