ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT
Dick Armstrong
Sharon Chamard
Terry Pena
Jim Powell, Chair

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT
Jim Cieplak *
Don DeVoe, Vice Chair *
Greg Pearce *

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES
MRI ATCT – Brian Ochs, Manager
Lake Hood Seaplane Base – Tim Coons, Manager

AIRPORT STAFF PRESENT
Paul Bowers, Airport Manager
Alex Jumao-as, Assistant Airport Manager
Darlene Sivyer, Commission Secretary (343-6303)

1. CALL TO ORDER
Jim Powell, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

2. SELF INTRODUCTIONS
Jim asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING
Minutes of the July 11, 2013 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.

4. AIRPORT MANAGER’S REPORT
A. Gate Numbering Complete
Paul reported the vehicle access and pedestrian gate identification project is now complete. Signs providing the gate number and location have been attached to each commonly used gate. This will make it easier for those who have a problem or emergency to report their location to responders. Funds for this project were provided by an FAA Airport Improvement Project (AIP) grant; the airport’s share of the expense is 3.125% of the signage cost.

B. Noise
Paul noted there have been multiple noise complaints regarding helicopter operations. A tentative meeting has been scheduled in early October with helicopter flight school operators to discuss glide paths and expeditious travel over residential areas. Terry Pena recommended Evergreen Helicopters and Jay-Hawk Air be included in the meeting; Paul committed they would be invited.

* excused absence
C. Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations
There have been several VPD incidents this year. Paul provided incident details when a female individual walked across Runway 7/25 from Slipstream Hangars to Spennak Airways; she was detained and APD issued a citation. Paul noted the intent is to issue citations ($75 fine) for such violations and to encourage recipients to share/spread work of such citation.

D. Leasing
At this time, the Aero Tech site is the only Merrill Field leaselot available for leasing. The ADEC has determined that the contamination remaining on site does not pose an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment and no further remedial action will be required. Site test wells have been sealed.

F. Project Updates
Alex Jumao-as reported that two summer projects are nearing completion. The Security Camera project includes the installation of 17 high-definition cameras and the apron lighting upgrade. Utilizing fiber optic cables, images captured from the new cameras will be recorded 24/7; the recording component has a storage capacity of up to 30 days. The multi-phase overhead apron light conversion from halogen to LED phase will upgrade the lights south of Runway 7/25 and north of Merrill Field Drive from Spennak Airways to UAA.

The Medevac Apron Reconstruction project is completed except for pavement striping. Alaska Regional Hospital is eager to use the improved site.

Alex also reported that FAA has approved AIP grant funding for two new projects: one is the Electrical Vault Upgrade for airfield/navaid lighting and the other is Snow Removal Equipment (SRE) Acquisition. The Electrical Vault upgrade project was advertised for bid early this past summer in anticipation of FAA grant receipt, so coordination efforts are now underway with the low-bid contractor, Swanson General, to secure the bid price that we received in June. The SRE (snow blower) has been ordered and is expected to be delivered late next summer for use in the 2014-2015 snow season.

The Master Plan project is proceeding; Alex encouraged interested parties to visit www.merrillfieldmasterplan.com for current updates. Carl Siebe, of Master Plan consultant HDR, added that photography and noise study results have been delivered. Alex explained the complete Master Plan contains 10 to 12 elements. Phase 1, which includes the first four elements, is under contract to HDR. The HDR contract may be extended to include Phase 2, or this portion of the Master Plan project may need to be re-bid.

Brian Ochs asked where the helicopter operations are defined in the Master Plan. Paul explained that capital improvements and noise parameters are reflected in the Master Plan; operational issues (such as what operations are where) are not.

G. Other
On September 20, 7:00AM to 8:00AM, the Fire Department will be conducting a training exercise that includes a multi-vehicle burn in their lot at the east end of Merrill Field. Details will be sent to Airport users prior to the event.
G. Other (continued)
Dick Armstrong asked if we have calculated the energy savings garnered from the conversion to LED apron lights. Alex responded that the exact savings for this application is unknown, but noted the real benefit are reduced outages and reduced labor remove and replace costs. Dick also asked about the camera resolution. Alex stated the new cameras provide a remarkably clear HD image, especially compared to the analog units with cameras at the airport entrances able to focus on a vehicle license plate. Leaseholders will be notified when the system is operational and given a password to access images captured from cameras germane to their lots/operations.

Rob Swenson asked if there has been any discussion about increasing the aircraft weight limit for operations at Merrill Field and added that he submitted this question/suggestion when public input was requested for the Master Plan. Rob explained that as technology changes some aircraft may have additional payload capabilities. Alex responded that HDR is compiling alternatives and another public meeting will be held soon. Rob asked if people who submit questions will be notified of scheduled meetings. Carl Siebe noted that HDR has received several questions regarding aircraft size and weight; all suggestions are reviewed. He added that meeting information will be sent to Rob. Dick Armstrong also asked if there has been any discussion with FAA about increasing the weight limit that defines small or large aircraft. Carl responded that there are many conditions that need to be considered when changing aircraft weight categories, such as pavement strength and runway and taxiway widths and separations. Paul noted the latter is generally the governing factor regarding “weight” category.

5. ORGANIZATION REPORTS
A. MRI Air Traffic Control Tower
Brian Ochs noted that the recent fatal accident on Merrill Field identified several vulnerabilities that exist with current accident response procedures. A meeting will be held to work out problems that occurred; safety is a major concern. Paul added that he has proposed holding semi-annual or quarterly table-top exercises to keep response procedures at the forefront.

Brian also reported that a meeting regarding noise from helicopter operations is tentatively scheduled for October 2 at the tower. Meeting invitations will be sent to helicopter operators.

Due to the annual traffic count, there is a possibility that the number of hours the tower is open in the summer might be reduced. Currently the tower closes at 12:00 midnight; if the reduction is mandated, the tower could be closing at 10:00 p.m. There are a minimal number of operations from 10:00 p.m. to midnight.

Brian also asked that pilots not call the tower when there is an accident on the field. The controllers are very busy conducting response activities and do not have time to speak to curious pilots.

Lastly, Brian asked that the Merrill Field website be updated by removing the link to the FAA airspace page. The FAA site is being updated, and that site is currently unavailable.
B. UAA Aviation Technology Division
   No report.

C. Elmendorf Airfield Operations
   No report.

D. Lake Hood Seaplane Base
   Tim Coons reported the Anchorage International Airport Storm Drain project is not yet complete, and construction continues on the Lake Hood ramps. The construction has created a shortage of wheeled tiedowns and soon pilots who have aircraft on floats will be in need of tiedown spaces. Pilots have been advised to check with Merrill Field for availability.

   A long-range improvement project would rehabilitate the Alpha and Bravo aprons by bringing them up to the Echo parking standards: lighting, paving, electric service and improved drainage.

   The Ted Stevens ANC Master Plan project is near completion. When that process is done, the Lake Hood Master Plan project will begin.

   A Lake Hood Users Group meeting will be held on Thursday, September 26 at 12:00 noon at the Aviation Heritage Museum.

E. Bryant Army Airfield
   No report.

6. SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Sharon Chamard provided a written report to the Commission on the Merrill Field Campground. She explained that a question was posed about the possibility of making improvements to the transient campground area so it would offer amenities similar to the camping air park area at Fairbanks International Airport. Sharon volunteered to gather information about the feasibility of this potential development and gave an overview of the information in her report. Details included the current amenities, utilities, planning documents, apparent demand, and improvement rational.

Sharon’s report noted the current transient campground area includes 13 aircraft tiedown locations, each with a grassy patch for tent camping. Several picnic tables are placed near the pilot shelter where electricity is accessible, one portable toilet is available during the summer months; however, there is no running water at the site. Campground improvements are mentioned in the 2000 Merrill Field Master Plan, but there is no mention of the campground in the Business Plan/Updated Strategic Plan 2012. Based on the usage and revenue data gathered and presented in the report, it does not appear that there is a demand for additional campsites. The current number of spaces is adequate to handle a higher demand, if it existed. It is unlikely that cost of improvements such as a toilet and shower facility would be funded by FAA Airport Improvement Project grants or airport capital budgets as the area might then be considered incompatible land use. Sharon concluded that at this time, no improvements should be made to the campground area.
6. SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)
   Chairman Jim Powell thanked Sharon for her informative analysis. Dick said that he agrees with Sharon’s conclusion. Paul also thanked Sharon for her comprehensive report and agreed with the outcome.

7. OLD BUSINESS AND UNFINISHED ACTION
   None

8. NEW BUSINESS
   None

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING AVIATION
   Karen Bretz, Boards and Commissions Director, reported that the Mayor has recommended the reappointments of Jim Cieplak and Don DeVoe to the Airport Advisory Commission. The Mayor’s recommendation will be presented to the Municipal Assembly for approval.

10. COMMISSION COMMENTS
    None

11. ADJOURNMENT
    The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.
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