

MUNICIPAL AIRPORTS AVIATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 6, 2014
Anchorage Fire Training Center
1150 Airport Heights Road, Building "C" Room 4A
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Powell, Chair
Dick Armstrong
Jim Cieplak
Don DeVoe
Terry Pena

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Sharon Chamard, Vice Chair *
Greg Pearce *

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVES

MRI ATCT – Gary Kingsley, Front Line Manager
UAA Aviation Technology Division – Rocky Capozzi, Director
Elmendorf Airfield Operations – Noelle Scala
Bryant Army Airfield – Erik Johnson, ATCT Chief

AIRPORT STAFF PRESENT

Paul Bowers, 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.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the September 4, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved.

4. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Noise

Airport Manager Paul Bowers reported that the number of aircraft noise complaints has noticeably dropped off. Notwithstanding the overall reduction, in response to a recent Fairview resident recommendation that aircraft using older technology be moved to Birchwood, Paul provided a detailed response with explanations about noise decibel ratings, noise contour maps, and propeller physics. Essence of the issue comes down to pilot operation of the aircraft—not age of the aircraft.

B. Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations

Paul reported that reducing Vehicle Pedestrian Deviations (VPDs) is an ongoing effort at Merrill Field, and we are consistently educating airport users about the operations areas and communication with tower personnel.

4. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT (continued)

C. Leasing Update

Chuck Miller, Lot 7C Leaseholder, reported the municipal building permit for the aircraft/auto paint facility has been delayed, and he will miss his weather window of opportunity to lay a foundation. Hence, construction start is delayed to spring.

Four hangars in the Janssen Hangars LLC project on Orca Street have been erected and interior work is now being done in these units. Material for the remaining five hangars was damaged in transport causing a delay; however, new material recently arrived and construction of these five units is now also proceeding.

D. Project Updates

The Security & Lighting Upgrade Phase 3 project will start in 2015 and is funded by FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant funds. It is anticipated the project will be advertised for bid in January with a project start date in May. Security improvements on the north side of the field include the installation of fiber optic cable, fencing upgrades, camera installation, and Taxiway Kilo modifications.

- Fiber optic cable will be installed from Stoddard Way to the west side of Wilbur Circle. The cable will satisfy needs for transferring camera image data as the existing wireless system is unreliable.
- The fencing portion of this project will focus on upgrading the fence along 5th Avenue. Present plan is to add a curved extension atop the existing vertical stakes which will add about two feet to the existing fence height. The street-facing curved sections will be black to match the existing posts. A black 'rub rail', which will protrude approximately 4 inches, will be attached to the concrete wall to eliminate snow removal equipment rubbing directly against the concrete. Sections of three-stranded barbed wire will be added to the top of the existing chain-link fencing. Plans for the fencing upgrades have been submitted to the MOA Planning Department for approval.
- Security cameras will be installed on the air traffic control tower to provide Runway 7-25 surveillance.
- The Taxiway Kilo connection between TWY Alpha and RWY 7/25 is approximately 350 ft. wide. This section of Kilo will be reduced to match the width of the section on the south side of the runway. RWY 7/25 will be closed during this modification work; however, the work is planned to be done in early May during nighttime hours. This smaller taxiway footprint will reduce the time it takes to remove snow from the taxiway and will reduce times when only a portion of the taxiway is cleared. Jim Powell noted that this large area has been routinely used for run-ups: Paul responded that the reduced size will not preclude doing run-ups parallel to the runway, and TWY Alpha east of Kilo remains available for such use.

E. User Group Meeting

The Airport Manager/Airport User meetings, held the first Wednesday of every quarter at the Airport Manager's Office, appear to be working well for airport users interested in communication with airport management. The next meeting is planned for January 7, 2015. 3:00PM – 5:00PM.

F. Ongoing Bird Control

Paul noted that bird species visiting the airport has seasonally changed from seagulls, to geese, now to ravens. Efforts to reduce bird activity are ongoing.

5. ORGANIZATION REPORTS

A. MRI Air Traffic Control Tower

Gary Kingsley, Air Traffic Front Line Manager, reported that airport management is again planning to close Taxiways Hotel (north side only) and Juliet for the winter season. Paul added that these taxiway lights have been removed and a NOTAM will be issued informing pilots that the lights are out: barricades will be placed when actual closure occurs.

Gary also noted that the winter weather taxiway conditions will be reported on ATIS. He urged pilots to be aware of snow removal vehicles that may be transmitting on a different frequency than they are listening to.

Gary announced several ATCT staffing changes: he is transferring to a new "lower-48" FAA job soon; Tower Manager Brian Ochs has accepted a promotion to a regional FAA position and will be leaving Merrill in early 2015; Scott Eastepp, Front Line Manager, will be leaving Merrill tower when he retires next February; and one of the controllers is also retiring. Gary noted that Brian will be on the hiring committee, and they will do their best to fill the positions with proficient and capable people.

B. UAA Aviation Technology Division

Rocky Capozzi, Aviation Technology Director, reported that UAA has added a twin engine aircraft to their training fleet. The plane will soon be sporting a UAA Sea-wolf logo. Rocky also noted that flight training time has increased by 600 hours compared to last year. No operational issues exist.

C. Elmendorf Airfield Operations

Noelle Scala reported that a 'night flying' training exercise for the week of November 12 is scheduled.

D. Lake Hood Seaplane Base

No report.

E. Bryant Army Airfield

Bryant ATCT Chief Erik Johnson reported Bryant Army Airfield is still Class D airspace. Jamie Patterson-Simes asked Erik about the average number of flight operations each day at Bryant. Erik responded that there are about 70 operations each day. Erik went on to explain the no civilian landings or stop and go regulations which make it a challenge to obtain approval to operate at BAAF.

6. SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

No report.

7. OLD BUSINESS AND UNFINISHED ACTION

None.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Campaign to Increase Tiedown Utilization at MRI

Paul began by explaining that this spring there were 431 reported aircraft on MRI leaseholds and as of November 1 there were 301 aircraft in tiedown spaces rented by the Airport. He referred to a slide presentation for related details such as rate comparisons between area airports: Anchorage/Lake Hood, Fairbanks, Birchwood, Palmer and Wasilla. Paul also mentioned that MRI has a waitlist with 18 names for drive thru spaces with electrical power. Plans are to add power to more drive thru spaces to accommodate demand, but Paul pointed out this upgrade would not be cost effective in the short term. He also noted MRI has not had a concerted marketing offer, per se, to convince pilots to tiedown here. Some suggestions include a non-MRI tiedown user introductory rate and/or a discount for paying a full year in advance. Dick commented that any price reductions should be carefully considered vis-à-vis adverse impact revenue to leaseholders who rent tiedowns. Paul noted that rates at Lake Hood have not changed since 2003 and presently undercut MRI rates; however, the underway Lake Hood Master Plan may recommend increasing Lake Hood rates.

Jim thanked Paul for gathering this information and recommended the Commission form a Special Committee to explore ways to increase private and public tiedown utilization at MRI. Jim appointed Sharon Chamard to chair the committee: Jim Cieplak and Dick Armstrong volunteered to serve on the committee.

Paul concluded by noting that Merrill Field offers many services that are not available at other local airports. We should and likely will expound on these attributes to attract tiedown customers as part of the Special Committee findings.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING AVIATION

None.

10. COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commission Chair Jim Powell mentioned that several members will be unavailable to attend the scheduled January 8, 2015 meeting and asked if there were any objections to moving the January meeting to Thursday the 15th. The consensus was to meet on January 15 depending on venue availability. (Secretary's Note: Room 4A at the Fire Training Center has been reserved for the January 15 meeting.)

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

