

MUNICIPAL AIRPORTS AVIATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, July 8, 2021
Anchorage Fire Training Center, 1140 Airport Heights Rd., Bldg. A, Rm 1
Anchorage, Alaska

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Sharon Chamard, Chair
Jamie Patterson-Simes, Vice Chair
David Knutson
Terry Cartee
Chet Harris

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

None

AIRPORT STAFF PRESENT

Dr. Ralph Gibbs, MRI Airport Manager
Amy Garcia, MRI Finance Manager
Julie Hixenbaugh, Commission Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER

Commission Chair Dr. Sharon Chamard called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM.

2. SELF INTRODUCTIONS

Sharon asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Unanimous approval of the May 6, 2021, minutes.

4. CHAIRPERSONS REPORT- Sharon welcomed everyone back to the in-person meeting.

AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT

- **Supplement Additions**

With the help of the FAA Safety Team (FAAST), Ralph was able to make additions to the supplement at MRI, (1) overflight of airport buildings below 300 AGL (above ground level) was prohibited and (2) touch and goes, limited, to one takeoff, one landing between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM.

- **Noise**

There was 1 noise complaint from RNY 5-23. The gentleman requested a copy of the noise study. Ralph reminded all pilot to make power adjustments according to their manuals and the noise issues could be avoided.

- **Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviation (VPD)/Incursions**

There was 1 VPD, the violator was issued a citation for \$75.00 and will have to appear in court. Most of the violations have been from airports users.

- **CARES Budget**

Ralph said there will be one last CARES relief to the users on the field in January 2022, and to share the reduction with the tenants on your leasehold.

There have been preliminary meetings for updates to the airport owned buildings on Orca Street. We are looking to upgrade the facades of the buildings and other work to enhance the overall aesthetics.

FAA airports division has approved the purchase of The City Electric property. The money will be for the property purchase only, not renovation. After it is acquired MRI will put the property up for bid.

- **MRI Project Overview-MRI Road Construction**

Erik Jordt from HDL gave an update report on the Merrill Field road construction project. He thanked the users for their patience. The dynamic compaction should be completed by the end of the month weather permitting. And the project should be paved and opened from 15th to Airport Heights by the end of August. Please call him with any questions or concerns about the project.

Ralph added that HDL is acting as an interim assistant manager for the airport until a new hire is made for Alex's position. Alex's position has not been posted. Ralph is working on a reorganization for the manager's office. A new position description is being written but will need to be approved by the city before being posted.

Chet Harris acknowledged the logistics of keeping access open to the Whiskey users and thanked Erik's team. He asked if the runway 5-23 could open to flights if the crane came down earlier than the NOTAM states. Erik said the NOTAM is issued but maybe could make a NOTAM for each day. The light "X" and barriers would also have to be taken down.

There was a discussion with Chrystal Marks and Caleb Newville from ATCT, they said if a NOTAM is issued for closure of a runway then the runway is closed until the NOTAM expires or is cancelled.

5. ORGANIZATION REPORTS

- MRI ATCT – Chrystal Marks said they are working on making the 10 pm closure to the tower a permanent summer closure time. She remarked on the need for painting the runways and taxiways. There is a shortage of paint due to covid, Ralph reported.
Caleb stated the tower staff is doing outreach to reiterate to pilots to remember to use the Fly Friendly initiative.
- CAP –None.
- AOPA – Joe Darnell is doing a survey on hangar availability on Merrill, he will reach out to the manager's office.
- Lake Hood- None
- AACAA-None

7. OLD BUSINESS

Aircraft Registration Tax-Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) CFO and Assessor

Jack Gadamus, MOA Assessor, Travis Frisk, MOA CFO, and Daniel Moore MOA Treasurer attended the meeting to clarify some of the aviation definitions in the wording of AO (Assembly Ordinance) 2021-64. The AO 2020-96 was passed in the fall of 2020 and will be implemented January 1, 2022.

Jack Gadamus stated his goal for this meeting is to get a clear definition of commercial aircraft and making sure the fees are reflected correctly for helicopter and aircraft weights.

Jane Dale went on record to state ACCA is opposed to the definitions and ordinance and want it repealed and keep the old tax. She said the commercial operators at Merrill are already struggling to stay afloat and the extra burden tax might drive some of the operators to leave the city. The definitions are not standard with the FAA terminology. The flight schools should not be included in the commercial tax.

Daniel Moore said that the ordinance would exempt some 2,000 personal aircrafts and the tax would be on 472 businesses with multiple aircrafts and would be based on the weight of each aircraft. The median tax increase will be about fifty dollars.

Mike Spernak said the definitions of unscheduled and scheduled flights is not clear. The new tax structure is putting all the tax burden on the commercial operators and is going to drive them away from Merrill Field, thus hurting operational numbers for the airport to receive grants from the FAA.

Jack says the AO is trying to use FAA language. The goal of the new ordinance was to create efficiency and to follow in line with not taxing people's personal properties.

Joe Barth from Angel Aviation questioned why the tax burden is being put on a small group of commercial aircraft. All the exempt aircraft will still use Merrill Field but will be getting it for free now. He thought the fee schedule was simple before the changes and now it has created more work for city government.

Travis Frisk said good points have been made, and they will take the concerns back and discuss them. Whether or not it can be undone is another question. Today we are here to clean up the language and make it clear to all.

Josie Owen from Alaska Air Transit questioned which airports and planes are going to be taxed with this AO. She asked who got the fuel tax from Merrill Field? Ralph said that tax goes to MRI.

Jack shared that the larger scheduled airlines are taxed differently. All the taxes money goes to the general fund, nothing has changed on that. He does not want the tax to hurt businesses and can take a look at the tax rate tables.

Mike Schoder would like this AO to be repealed and back to the old, he does not see any resistance to the old tax.

Jamie said the definition should be changed to be "flight schools" not pilot schools.

Marshall Severson is in favor of just a straight flat tax that has worked well over the years but could be increased for inflation.

Daniel Moore said that the public process for this tax change went on for four months. It was designed to make the city run more efficiently. It will not be repealed; it was voted on by the assembly at 11-0. The rate schedule was based off Kenai's, but the city is flexible on the rate tables and the aircraft rates. He shared that the inflation rate on the \$125 tax would be \$200.

David Knutson asked what the range increase for businesses with many aircrafts?

Dan said the median increase is \$50 an aircraft. The highest increase for a business was from \$1000 to \$9000 a year. The intent is not to increase revenue

from this tax. The city would like to create equity fairness and efficiency. We are flexible on fee schedule and are open to changes on the rates.

John Weddleton from the Anchorage Assembly stated that the definitions on AO 2021-96 and is what will come before them on Tuesday the 27th, not the taxes.

Weddleton suggested that if anyone wants changes to work with Jack Gadamus and Dan Moore to draft a new document.

Travis did a quick analysis for Angel Aviation fleet and it came to an increase of about \$1300 a year for them. He reminded everyone that the tax on aircraft has not increase in 25 years.

Sharon brought the conversation back to the original discussion for AO 2021-96 on definitions. She asked if anyone on the MAAAC has any suggestions for definition changes other than changing the wording from pilot schools to flight schools?

Michael Schoder suggested it should be 1) on demand charters, 2) commuter flights and 3) flight schools.

Joe Barth asked why the MAAAC board is not trying to repeal this tax? Sharon and Jamie both said the MAAAC board did publicly oppose this tax change, but the city went forward with it. The discussion today was input on the definition changes for AO 2021-96 that will go in front of the assembly on August 27th. But will reiterate the MAAAC stance on AO 2020-96. This board cannot repeal an ordinance or schedule work sessions for the assembly. The MAAAC board provides input to the Mayor and Assembly on aviation related matters.

Sharon will draft these definition changes in a letter to the Assembly and reiterate their opposition to AO 2020-96.

8. NEW BUSINESS

None

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING AVIATION

- Terry Cartee stated that the city has not put any money into Merrill Field. The improvements have come from the FAA grants, leaseholders, and users on the field.
- Michael Schoder reported that ACE Hangars might prohibit helicopters from fueling on their leasehold due to on going problems form them. They are talking with the fuel vendor now. Prior to covid they had a person on site that attended to proper procedures but now it is a wild, wild west.
- Ralph said the FAA has selected a new site at D&D Airpark that could be used for helicopter fueling. And will work on building a concrete pad at that site.

10.COMMISSION COMMENTS

- Jamie asked when Alex Jumao-as position will be filled? Ralph answered, it is in the works, a new position description was written and was submitted to HR for approval before it can be posted.
She said two new commissioners were appointed to the board, Jamie Klaes and Stormy Jarvis.

11.OTHER

- Next Airport User Group Meeting October 6, 2021, 5:00PM, at the Airport Manager's office
- The next MAAAC meeting will be September 2, 2021, 12PM, Anchorage Fire Training Center, 1140 Airport Heights Rd., Bldg. A, Rm 1

12.ADJOURNMENT at 1:30 p.m.