

MUNICIPAL AIRPORTS AVIATION ADVISORY COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 10, 2022

**VIA Teleconference - Microsoft TEAMS** to listen in, to provide verbal comments or to ask questions, email [merrillinfo@ci.anchorage.ak.us](mailto:merrillinfo@ci.anchorage.ak.us) your name, phone number, and requested agenda item(s) no later than 09:00am the day of the meeting . The subject line should read "MAAAC Phone Testimony."

ATTENDANCE

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Stormy Jarvis, Chair

Dave Frazier

Philip Logan

Keenan Zerke

Michael Williams

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Michael McCauley

AIRPORT STAFF PRESENT

Dr. Ralph Gibbs, MRI Airport Manager

Amy Garcia, MRI Finance

BreAnn Brandlen, MRI Service Administrator

Julie Hixenbaugh, Commission Secretary

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Ralph Gibbs called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM.

**2. SELF INTRODUCTIONS**

Stormy Jarvis, interim chair asked the board members to introduce themselves. All present except for Michael McCauley.

**3. CHAIRPERSONS REPORT-** Dave Frazier made a motion to elect Stormy Jarvis as Chair, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Philip Logan. Motion passed unanimously. The election for a vice chair was tabled for the next meeting in May.

**4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Unanimous approval of the January 6, 2022, minutes. Motion to approve by David Frazier, seconded by Stormy Jarvis.

## 5. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT

- **MAAAC Update in Municipal Code**

Ralph introduced Brice Wilbanks, Deputy Chief of Staff in charge of the Boards and Commissions. Brice updated the body on the change to seat 7 of the MAAAC board, AO 2022-41 passed on March 15, 2022 for future appointments.

*There is established a municipal airports aviation advisory commission consisting of seven (7) persons, including one lessee of a tiedown or hangar located on a municipal airport [~~ONE MEMBER OF THE ALASKA AIRMEN'S ASSOCIATION, INC.~~], two owners of residential real property located within one mile of the boundaries of any municipal airport, one business person who has a place of business on land leased from the municipality at a municipal airport, one business person with a place of business in the municipality, and at least one FAA-licensed general aviation pilot.*

Email any questions to Brice at [brice.wilbanks@anchorageak.gov](mailto:brice.wilbanks@anchorageak.gov)

- **Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations**

Ralph introduced Curtis Harper, Assistant General Manager for the Alaska District FAA, email [Curtis.haper@faa.gov](mailto:Curtis.haper@faa.gov).

Curtis shared the FAA is putting together a focus RSAT (runway safety action team) to help mitigate the repetitive VPD issues happening at Merrill. Their intent is not to say what is right or wrong but to work together to identify the challenges and offer ideas to limit VPD's. The FAA would like to assist with cutting through some of the bureaucratic red tape. Curtis is meeting with Mr. Gibbs on Thursday at MRI to view the operations. There will be a RSAT meeting held at Merrill Field later in the summer.

Ralph informed the body the he not only has to answer to the FAA but also to City Hall on VPD's.

Chris Diggons, FAA Team Manager for RSAT western service, explained the reasons for the special focus RSAT at MRI. It was selected not just based on VPD's, but for elevated concerns about wrong services alignments (a number of flights coming in aligned on the wrong surface taxiway or a different runway) and other pilot-oriented stuff (the pilot is confused and they taxi the wrong route, cross the whole bar in the process or enter a runway without authorization). He stated MRI has had a steady stream of VPD's over the years and is trending down, so there appears to be some success.

Tom Candelario, FAA, credited success to Ralph and his team and also APD for bringing the VPD's down and getting them under control. He is looking forward to working with the MRI community to come together and brainstorm ideas to make MRI a better place to fly.

Keenan asked how a VPD is measured?

Chris Diggons answered, if you are in the movement area without a clearance or you are in the movement area contrary to your clearance that would be a surface incident. And then if you enter the area protected for the runway or the runway itself that would be a runway incursion. They are always watching the movement areas.

## 6. ORGANIZATION REPORTS

- MRI ATCT – None
- CAP –None
- AOPA – None
- Lake Hood- None
- AACAA-None

## 7. OLD BUSINESS- Election of Officer

- Discussed earlier in Chairperson's report

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

- **Vehicle/Pedestrian Deviations**  
Discussed earlier in the Manager's Report

- **Increase in fees**

Ralph gave the background for the increase asks to the commissioners. At the beginning of the year all the directors of the enterprises, were asked to go in front of the mayor and discuss how they were going to cut their budgets by 5%. Ralph explained to the Mayor that, I cannot cut my budget however through innovation we are going to increase revenue. The mayor and all his staff accepted his assertion that he would not cut the budget or could not cut the budget.

Ralph proposed to increase transient parking fees from \$6 to \$10 a day. And eliminating the 6 hours or less free parking. These changes will have to go before the assembly as they are codified fees. The increased revenue will go towards the operating budget for MRI. Eliminating the free 6 hours or less will capture flights from commercial operators using the field for passenger pickups. There was a discussion that free grace period promotes business use at MRI. Landing fees were suggested but are not an option for MRI.

Dave Fraizer tabled the increase and it was 2<sup>nd</sup> by Keenan Zerkel. It was unanimously agreed to table it to a later date.

Ralph had another proposed increase. He proposed the electricity rate for tie-down customers increase from \$15 to \$25 a month. The electricity for the runway and apron lights, tie-down spaces is billed a one, it is not billed individually per space from Chugach Electric.

Dave Frazier move to accept the motion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Keenan Zerkel.

There was a discussion about adding meters to the tie-downs, but the body did not think that was feasible. Most all of MRI tie-downs are electric.

Keenan asked when the increase would happen?

Amy Garcia explained that the managers office is changing over the billing software system for the airport. It would be feasible to make the change for 4<sup>th</sup> quarter billing in October. And give ample notice to customers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter mail out.

Mike Williams would like the board to review this electrical increase from \$15 to \$25 in a year from now and evaluate if it needs to be changed again.

Stormy asked if there were any objection to raising the price from \$15 to \$25, there where no objection, motion passed.

The electric rate increase will be implemented October 1<sup>st</sup> for 4<sup>th</sup> quarter billing. A 3-month notice will go out with the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter billing July 1<sup>st</sup>.

- **Operation Plan for Birchwood**

Ralph gave an overview of the request from the Mayor to study the transfer of Birchwood airport over to the City of Anchorage.

The state of Alaska has asked the Mayor to consider taking on management oversight of Birchwood and maybe Girdwood airports. The Mayor hired Bill Starr (he worked on this previously) to work on this transfer of power. There is a work session with the assembly on Thursday to present the idea. There would be a 12-month period in which MRI and the State of Alaska would work side by side then at the end of the 12-month period the State would hand over total responsibility to the City of Anchorage Airport's Department. In the interim, MRI would have input on AIP grants for Birchwood airport.

The only change that is happening right now is the change of name from Merrill Field to Municipal airports with AO 2022-40. The master plan for Birchwood has been put on hold, due to lack of public consultation.

Keenan asked how the Birchwood airport community felt about the transfer?

Ralph said it was about half in favor of the transfer, according to Bill Starr.

Ralph is confident in his ability to run both airports and submitted an organization chart and plan to the Mayor's team.

## **9. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- Karl Kisser was in favor for the electrical increase to happen in October given that at least 3 months' notice is given. He wished that the increase had had more public input, though.

## **10. COMMISSION COMMENTS**

- Keenan Zerkel asked how the VPD's are reported and suggested the FAA provide a comparison with other airports of comparable operations. He was not in favor of getting rid of tiedowns to address the buffer zones on the taxiways to help eliminate the VPD's. He stated there should be some sort of cost to commercial operators using

MRI for passenger pickups.

As for the Birchwood talks, he wants the Birchwood community involved and to have the state present the costs and revenues for the airport.

- Stormy Jarvis stated that she is in favor of having a charge to commercial operators that are only using MRI as passenger pickups.

#### **11. OTHER**

- Next Airport User Group Meeting April 6, 2022, 5:00PM, at the Airport Manager's office
- The next MAAAC meeting will be Thursday (First Thursday of the month) May 5, 2022 (TBA)

#### **12. ADJOURNMENT at 1:33 p.m.**