

Municipality of Anchorage



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David Bronson, Mayor

***GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Briana Sullivan & Jennifer Wingard, Co-Chairs
Mike Edgington, Amanda Sassi, Guy Wade***

July 11, 2023

Alaska Department of Transportation
Aviation Leasing, Central Region
Attn: Vickie Ayala and Britton Goldberg
PO Box 196900
Anchorage, AK 99519-6900

Re: ADA-09547 Proposal to Lease State Airport Land at Girdwood Airport

DOT Aviation Leasing:

The Girdwood Board of Supervisors (GBOS) and Land Use Committee (LUC) held a joint special meeting July 3, 2023 to have a formal community discussion with Glacier Valley Lodge LLC (GVL) for additional information sharing regarding their Proposal to Lease State Airport Land at the Girdwood Airport (ADA-09547). The Airport Lease has been on multiple GBOS and LUC agendas since the original public notice was published in early May. The July 3rd meeting provided the first opportunity for discussion after closure of the competitive leasing proposal period, so GVL was able to share more detailed plans.

Thank you for extending Public Comment to July 13, 2023, which enabled GBOS and LUC to consider additional information from GVL. This letter acts as a supplement to GBOS' earlier public comments in our June 2, 2023 letter.

We welcome the continued engagement of GVL and their consistent commitment to working with the Girdwood community to find a successful outcome, for example, thru their letter of May 24 and attendance at LUC and GBOS meetings. We hope that, as the land owners, DOT&PF will also engage with the community to the same goal.

The most prominent community concerns remain:

- increase in traffic, both by road and by air, and especially heavy construction traffic along Mt Hood Drive associated with site preparation and construction

- the proposed project using all remaining land along the extended taxiway, therefore precluding other high priority aviation needs at Girdwood Airport
- the proposed lack of public process during the remaining development phases and the intent to develop without regard to local plans and processes.
- the community has continued concerns about the proposal's impact on recreation and viewshed.

Road access and traffic

Current access is via a narrow gravel neighborhood road, Mt Hood Drive.

Residents living on and near Mt. Hood Drive were adversely affected by the construction of the new hangars four years ago and these memories are still fresh on their minds. The proposed project has the potential to have at least the same volume of construction traffic. Furthermore, as business at the airport has increased, so has the vehicle and aircraft traffic. The current and proposed business growth will cause greater impact and worse traffic.

As stated in our prior letter, GBOS requests that a Traffic Impact Analysis is performed before any additional development at the airport.

The 2005 Girdwood Airport Master Plan and several community plans all anticipated an alternative road access to the airport as airport development increases, with an anticipated schedule that has already been exceeded. Construction of that alternative access should be completed before development of a hotel or lodge at the airport.

Airport improvements

Multiple airport users have expressed concerns that the proposal could limit the most pressing needs of airport users. They stated that Girdwood airport is currently beyond capacity for tie downs and transient parking. Leasing the remaining available land near the taxiway to one entity potentially limits the potential for more space exactly for tie downs and transient parking in the future. In fact, the 2005 Girdwood Airport Master Plan and subsequent Airport Layout Plans show additional aircraft tie-downs along the extended taxiway in the area of the proposed lease. The Airport plans do not mention a hotel. We request a requirement that a minimum of 20 additional public or leased tie-downs are constructed in the area of this project, either as part of the GVL development itself or by DOT&PF.

Public process and local plans

The community has considerable concerns that Alaska DOT&PF does not intend to follow local requirements for development. For a development of this size, Anchorage Municipal code requires community engagement during the pre-development phase and at minimum the issuance of a Land Use permit before any land disturbance.

In fact, Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC 21.09.040) defines specific zoning for Girdwood Airport with associated allowed uses, requirements and processes. A hotel is not currently an allowed use within the Girdwood Airport zone so a Land Use permit could not be issued. If this proposal was on any other piece of private or public land within Girdwood, the land owner and developer would seek local support for a code update to expand the use regulations. If the lease is approved, we encourage DOT&PF and the developers to seek an update to Land Use code and to follow the Municipal process.

In conclusion, the proposed development is a significant expansion of the airport which will require a new access avoiding residential neighborhoods. A development of an airport hotel should further support aviation uses and not preclude the needed increase in aircraft parking at the airport.

Finally, as an elected body of the Municipality, GBOS is unable to support a project which does not follow the required Municipal code whatever the merits of the project itself. Given the concerns raised above, and the fact that state policy and municipal code differ, if GVL obtains a lease, GBOS will work with DOT and GVL to make sure community issues are resolved before granting of a building permit. We urge DOT&PF to work toward finding a solution that respects community planning as embodied in the adopted local code.

Briana Sullivan

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GBOS Co-Chair

Mike Edgington

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GBOS Housing and Economic Stability Supervisor

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