

**SONOMA COUNTY**  
**AVIATION COMMISSION**  
Minutes of the August 20, 2020 Meeting

*This meeting was conducted virtually over Zoom.*

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Marlon Young called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Marlon Young, Larry Carrillo, Art Hayssen, Jim McCord (left at 8:55), Tim Delaney and Del Starrett.

**Absent:** None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

*McCord moved with support from Hayssen to approve the July 16, 2020 Aviation Commission Minutes.*

**All Ayes:** Motion Carried.

**AIRPORT MANAGER REPORT:**

**A. Complaint Update**

Stout reported there were 227 aircraft related complaints in July from 42 individual complainants, an increase of 632% from 31 complaints received in July 2019. There were no non-aircraft related complaints in July.

Hayssen commented that 44 of the complaints were from one individual in Penngrove. Stout reported that some pilots have expressed concern over the letters they have received and in response staff revised the letter template to emphasize that the purpose of the letter is not punitive, but to inform pilots of the receipt of the complaint and encourage neighborly flying. Commissioners and Stout discussed the resources spent addressing complaints and the categorization of some complaints as outside of noise concerns and possible creation of policy by noise abatement workgroup to bring to the Commission regarding procedures to deal with such complaints.

**B. Tower Report/Update**

There were 5,409 operations in June 2020, a decrease of 38.6% from 8,807 in July 2019. Year to date, at the end of June there had been 31,102 operations, a decrease of 23.4% from 40,628 in 2019.

The tower has been receiving requests to extend their hours, including from the Airport. Stout reported that tower staff was sending a formal request to regional management to extend the tower hours.

Josh Hochberg from Sonoma Jet Center commented with his concerns about the continued reduced tower hours and suggested that with Cal Fire operations the restoration of previous hours was more important. He said that this was an inconvenience but foremost a safety issue. Hayssen said he and McCord had sent letters to FAA and encouraged Hochberg to do so and to encourage others to do so as well. Hochberg said that the head of his trade association had sent a letter to the FAA including examples of problems occurring and that he thinks the hours will be extended to 6:00 PM, however, he believes that the hours need to be extended at least to 7:00 PM if not 8:00 PM.

Craig Lucas, Tower Manager, reported that the tower staff is attempting to extend hours until at least 6:00 PM and he stated that normal evening hours (until 8:00 PM) may be resuming. Lucas was unsure about the restoration of the morning hours. While Lucas is waiting to hear back from the regional office, he stated that he expects to receive a directive soon. He has forwarded every piece of correspondence received regarding the hour and has pushed for the extension. The FAA is well aware of the current fires and knows that Cal Fire is flying in

and out of the Airport. Young said he believed Cal Fire had over thirty operations between 6:00 and 8:00 PM the previous day (August 19). Lucas was reviewing the traffic count from that time but stated that it looked like the traffic met the traffic count criteria for an extension of hours. Lucas said the only delay might be working with the union to give notice for changing shifts (7-day notice is required but able to be waived by the union).

### **C. Airline Update**

There were 11,724 passengers in July 2020, a decrease of 76.8% from 50,625 in July 2019. Year-to-date, through July the Airport had seen 118,602 passengers, a decrease of 53.9% from 257,188 in 2019.

Stout reported that passenger counts have leveled off. Airlines have been scaling back their September and October flight schedules. Load factors are increasing slightly and we will probably see slight increases through the end of the year. Stout has not heard back from JetSuite X on their potential operations out of the Airport. They are in partnership with a company pitching an FBO operation at the Napa airport. Breeze and Extra, new airlines that have not yet launched, have both postponed their start dates.

### **D. Projects Update**

- **Modular Tent Expansion:** The tent has been skinned and Q&D is currently working on the interior walls. The restroom has been framed and the systems installed. Next week they will begin drywall for the restroom and inside the tent. Project should be completed in the next four weeks. Will be a ribbon-cutting on completion.
- **TSA Check Point Move:** Has been pushed back to sometime between October 1 and October 15 due to change in when the equipment will arrive.
- **Terminal Improvement:** Draft contracts are in place for a September 1 date at the Board of Supervisors for the award of the construction component. Budget is just over \$31 million which includes contingencies, soft costs and construction. Due to around \$400,000 in savings in subcontractor bids the Airport will be able to add in some alternates. Construction should start first week of October. A stakeholder meeting will be held in September. Still planning to hold a groundbreaking, although may be virtual. All of our paperwork has been submitted on our last grant.
- **Solar Panels in Parking Lot B:** Appeal on glare study still with FAA. Airport is elevating the issue due to delays.
- **Landscaping:** In the process of changing providers.
- **Parking Lot:** finished sealing rental car pick up and return lots
- **Equipment:** Purchasing a crack seal machine that should accelerate some of our maintenance.
- **Rubber Removal on Runways:** Completed.
- **Potential 2021 Summer Projects:** Removing some of the eucalyptus from the south side of the Airport grounds; paving driveway to EAA; chip seal for Becker Blvd. to Sheriff's hangar.
- **Annual ARFF training:** Half of Airport Operations staff went this week and the other half going in two weeks.
- **New Commissioner:** Rick Duste has been recommended by Supervisor David Rabbitt to fill the District 2 vacancy on the Commission and that item is going to the Board on September 1 for approval of his appointment.

### **E. Runway Safety Action Team (RSAT) Update**

The FAA has had some internal meetings to come up with additional options that may help resolve this issue but is in agreement that physical modifications are needed. Airport and FAA are meeting on August 31 to discuss temporary and permanent fixes. Permanent fixes will include an update to the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and are probably four to six years away depending on the needed environmental for the chosen options. If the creek is not involved the environmental could be completed in as little as 18 months, but involvement of the creek increases that time to 24 to 30 months.

### **F. Sheriff's Garden/Jail Facilities**

Stout reported that the MOU is still under Counsel's review. The County going through the budget cut process. Hayssen commented that the facility is not being used at this time.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

None.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:****A. Noise Abatement Update:**

The noise abatement workgroup provided an update. McCord spoke with the outreach coordinator in Truckee. The Truckee airport district pays for the tower so they are able to dictate the tower's policies. In Truckee, every operation is a noise abatement operation. STS, on the other hand, would have to work with the tower to consider noise abatement procedures when directing aircraft.

Hayssen reported that within the next 7-10 days the workgroup will meet with operators to get their input. If STS can have anything close to the success that Truckee has had, we should see a big improvement in noise complaints.

Commissioners, Stout and Lucas discussed flight patterns for runway 14 and the tendency of pilots to use left traffic when the tower is closed, though the default is to use right traffic. Delaney asked Lucas about routing from tower. Lucas stated that, in general, the tower routing comes from prioritizing efficiency. McCord played a video he created with a right pattern instruction for pilots. Stout addressed recent noise complaints from the Silk Road area made when several different helicopter operators were doing training. If the Airport created noise abatement procedures for each runway, it could address all the most common causes of noise complaints, including helicopters over the Silk Road area.

McCord stated that defining flight paths was the first step in noise abatement efforts. Then we have to perform outreach to disseminate the information and achieve adherence. McCord said that when the tower is closed, an automated message could be played. Instructions to use a right pattern could be included in that message.

Stout suggested that the Airport could include a 15-minute training video for noise abatement in its requirements for badge renewals and/or provide access to the video through our website and request that pilots view the video. Commissioners discussed the merits of requesting or requiring viewing of noise abatement content.

Stout reported that he had met again with Alaska Airlines and American Airlines regarding noise abatement efforts. So far, no obvious solutions have presented themselves, however, the airlines are still open to making changes and Stout will continue to follow up. Two possible actions were discussed at the last meeting. The first was setting aircraft up for the instrument approach to runway 14 automatically from center so that a pilot would have to request a visual approach. The second was instituting a turn to a different heading after a departure from runway 32, i.e. 310°.

Stout also reported that he was working with Mead and Hunt to finalize the Airport's request to the FAA to review proposed changes to approaches. When the Airport submitted its request for the modified approach to the new runway 14 end, the FAA did provide a modified approach but it was not the exact approach requested.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

No new business at this time.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

**COMMISSION COMMENTS:**

None.

**ADJOURN:**

*Carrillo moved with support from Delaney to adjourn. All Ayes.* Meeting adjourned at 9:09 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jon Stout, AAE, CAE  
Airport Manager