

**MINUTES
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
AIRPORTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting of June 12, 2012
Montgomery Field Terminal Building**

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. H. Aldrich (Montgomery Field Aviation Lessee), Jackie Ander (Serra Mesa Community), Tom Dray (Montgomery Field Tower), Scott Hasson (Tierrasanta Community), Buzz Gibbs (Kearny Mesa Community), Bob Hitchcock (Brown Field Aviation User Group), Chairman Buzz Fink (Special Expertise), Rich Martindell (Special Expertise), Vice-Chair Chuck McGill (Montgomery Field Aviation User Group)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lisa Golden (Otay Mesa Community)

GUESTS PRESENT: Brian Armstrong, Gerald Blank, Joseph Gray, Bob Golo, Walt Harrison, Harry Kelly, Gary Mullen, Steve Nelson, Steve Oetzell, Tom Ricotta, Bill Schenkel, Duane Shockey, Jeff Stone, Bob Turner

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Cooper, Ernie Gesell, Brock Ladewig, Roy Nail, Wayne Reiter, Daphne Skogen, Mike Tussey

1. CALL TO ORDER – *Chairman Buzz Fink*

Chairman Fink called the meeting to order at 3:05 P.M. A quorum was present.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 8 meeting were approved, as written, with Jim Aldrich and Buzz Gibbs abstaining, due to their absence at that meeting.

3. PUBLIC INPUT

None

4. INTRODUCTION – *Airports Deputy Director Mike Tussey*

Mr. Tussey introduced two guests from the FAA, who were present: Brian Armstrong, FAA Western-Pacific Region, Manager, Safety/Standards; and Steve Oetzell, FAA Western-Pacific Region, Lead Certification Inspector. Besides his several years service as the FAA Airports District Office Manager, Mr. Armstrong has also managed several Los Angeles County General Aviation Airports, whereas Mr. Oetzell flew for Continental and worked at LAX, before assuming his position with the FAA.

Mr. Armstrong conveyed the FAA's focus on reducing runway incursions at airports across the country, and provided an explanation of runway incursions and surface incidents, as well as statistical data within the region. The Safety/Standards Office monitors incidents region-wide, and conduct special emphasis meetings at airports with airport management and users when there are more than two surface incidents at a particular airport. Montgomery Field has had five surface incidents so-far this year, which generated interest by the FAA, and resulted in this site visit. The purpose of the site visit is to explore measures to reduce the risk posed by surface incidents and enhance safety by making incremental improvements.

Mr. Oetzell elaborated on the observed trend that many surface incidents occurring at general aviation airports are the result of unescorted guests and visitors, who are unfamiliar with the airport configuration or operating rules, that have been given airport access through a gate by an airport tenant. He expressed empathy to airport users who are concerned about airport accessibility, and explained it is not the FAA's intent to impose mandates or exercise an autocratic position. It is important, however, to reverse the perception among users that Vehicle and Pedestrian Deviations (V/PD's) are innocent or innocuous.

Bob Turner asked if there were any statistics on what percentage of surface incidents resulted in injury or damage. Mr. Oetzell was unable to provide such a statistic, but indicated injuries and damage have occurred in the past as a result of surface incidents, and that it is difficult to measure success after safety measures have been implemented at an airport.

One guest felt the FAA was using a "sledgehammer" approach to fixing the problem at Montgomery Field. Mr. Armstrong explained that it was not the FAA's intent to employ such an approach; rather, a progressive approach was appropriate, starting with signage and marking improvements, and stepping up with gate improvements. He pointed out the FAA has made significant monetary investments at Montgomery Field with various projects, related to diminishing surface incidents, including a million-dollar perimeter fence.

Mr. Armstrong described one success story, where surface incidents were significantly reduced at Falcon Field in Arizona. That airport, at one time, had the highest number of surface incidents in the country. In that case, a public road was reconfigured so as not to cross a busy taxiway. Mr. Oetzell added it was important to consider fostering a culture of safety at the airport, rather than acquiesce to an acceptance of lower standards.

Mr. Aldrich opined that this was a numbers game, regarding the number of incursions occurring at airports, that if the FAA were truly concerned about safety, local pilots would be consulted prior to implementing new measures; and that it is immaterial what measures are taken at other airports.

MYF Tower Manager Tom Dray commented that some incidents are probably more serious than others; regardless, there are access problems at this airport.

5. DISCUSSION – *Vehicle and Pedestrian Deviations, Airports Deputy Director Mike Tussey*

Mr. Tussey pointed to two graphs depicting the number of V/PD's that have occurred at MYF since 2006. The numbers show a dramatic increase, with the 2012 year-to-date total (5) equaling the total from 2011. Two V/PD's this year were the result of Zeppelin operations on Rwy 5; those operations have been terminated at MYF.

Many of the recent V/PD's are the result of users giving the gates codes to visitors and guests, who were unfamiliar with the airport; proliferation of the universal gate code (originally intended for airport staff and emergency or law enforcement personnel); and malice aforethought, where airport users, who should know better, have intentionally and knowingly entered the movement area without permission.

FAA Grant Assurances require the airport operator to keep the airport safe. The enduring policy for the past 30 years has been one based on self-policing; for some, the call for self-policing was never heard. There is a perception, by some, that V/PD's are not a safety issue. In the eyes of the FAA,

V/PD's are a safety issue; they have the potential to be unsafe – an unsafe condition. Should an accident occur as the result of a V/PD, the airport could be held liable, having prior knowledge of a problem.

The primary focus of airport management over the past several years has been fixing runways and taxiways at MYF and SDM. The Airports Division grosses approximately \$5 million per year, and spends approximately \$4 million per year. About half of the remaining \$1 million is spent on mandated environmental programs. Hence, capital improvements can only be accomplished through FAA grants. Over the next three years, \$15 million in FAA grants are planned to be used at MYF, with \$20 million planned for SDM. The bottom line is: continuation of unabated V/PD's place future grants in jeopardy.

It is the desire of airport management to focus its attention on capital improvement projects, such as runway and taxiway rehabilitation, rather than formulating and implementing more regulation on airport users; presently however, the latter is necessary to accomplish the former. Airport management is asking the tenants and users to embrace the card reader system and a culture of safety, in order to reduce the number of V/PD's and protect future FAA grants.

Mr. Turner asked if there has been a change in the way incursions are reported. Mr. Armstrong replied in 2007-2008, the FAA adopted the ICAO definition for runway incursions, which counts any occurrence on an airport involving the incorrect presence of an aircraft or vehicle as an incursion. Previously, for an incursion to occur, the incorrect presence of an aircraft or vehicle required interference with an aircraft landing or taking off, resulting in a collision hazard or loss of separation. Mr. Oetzell added the definition for surface incidents in the movement area, separate from the runway, has not changed.

Airport management's plan of action to reduce or eliminated V/PD's includes:

- Increased education efforts – flying clubs.
- Gate code change effective July 2.
- Signage improvements.
- Install additional fencing.
- Fines imposed on violators, per the Municipal Code.
- Proximity cards for the gates.
- Vehicle Operator and Pedestrian Policy, and required acknowledgement prior to receiving gate card.

MYF Airport Manager Ernie Gesell disagreed with the perception by some that V/PD's present no safety risk, giving an example of when a Baron taxiing on Taxiway India struck a parked, red maintenance vehicle during day, VFR conditions, causing significant damage to both. The point being, vehicles and pedestrians do pose a risk to pilots and aircraft; and aircraft pose a risk to pedestrians and drivers.

Mr. Gesell provided details on the recently-installed fencing near National Air College West, the purpose of which is to prevent drivers from crossing or using Taxiway Golf while travelling between NAC and Spiders. Prior to the fence, a telephone pole had been placed and secured with stakes, as an interim measure. However, shortly after the telephone pole had been installed, a sub-tenant from NAC removed the stakes and moved the telephone pole; that sub-tenant is in the process of being evicted.

Mr. Gesell encouraged anyone having thoughts of by-passing the fence and diving on the taxiway, not to do so, as consequences for such actions are forthcoming.

Questions and Answers

Mr. Turner directed a comment to Mr. Oetzell concerning the over-use of stop signs in neighborhoods, causing people to ignore the signs. He then read a prepared statement, in which he discussed various topics including: His aviation background; the continuous tightening of aviation regulations since the PSA crash in 1978; the historical population of the U.S. versus the historical aircraft operations at MYF, and their correlation to surface incidents; the correlation of surface incidents before and after adding the fence, limiting access, and increasing governmental surveillance; the elite status of the aviation community; the perceived level of safety at various locations on or near the airport; and the ultimate goal of preserving general aviation.

Mr. Oetzell responded to Mr. Turner's statement by explaining the NTSB's close look at the history of V/PD's, and the airport's response, should a fatal accident occur at MYF. It is not a desirable function of the FAA to intrude upon the affairs at a general aviation airport, but it may become necessary when it appears self-policing measures are not working properly. The responsibility falls on everyone: tenants, users, airport operators and the FAA. Mr. Turner was concerned that the tighter access measures do not appear to be reducing deviations; rather, they are moving closer to a loss of privileges by everyone.

Mr. Armstrong added the FAA's main focus was to help solve the problem by providing assistance to airports, and improving the overall safety of the system. Some of this assistance comes in the form of financial aid – grants. With those grants come expectations, which are specified in the Grant Assurances. The FAA has invested \$11 million in improvements at MYF over the past 20 years, and the FAA would like to protect its investment. Last year, the FAA provided a grant for access control improvements, and the FAA expects the airport perform on that grant. That being said, the airport is neither close to being in non-compliance, nor are future grants in jeopardy at this time.

Mr. Gibbs mentioned that after the current perimeter fence was built, runway incursions and vandalism on his property decreased. Runway incursions were at one time prolific at this airport, even if they were not officially recorded.

Mr. Gesell added that the fence alone is not the solution – it requires cooperation of the users. If the gate code is given out indiscriminately by a user, then, should a deviation occur, the failure lies with the user, not the fence. The fence will manage the risk by keeping people out who do not belong on the airport. The risk will not be zero, but it will be managed lower than if the fence did not exist, as long as the intent of the fence is not circumvented.

Chairman Fink asked what part, if any, of the airport's action plan is objectionable. In response, Mr. Gibbs has volunteered to head a sub-committee to look into the details of the new measures and get input from the users. Volunteers do not have to be on the AAC to participate on the sub-committee.

- Vice-Chair McGill found no elements of the action plan objectionable.
- Chairman Fink's only concern was that a violation could be considered a misdemeanor.
- Mr. Aldrich finds the card readers objectionable.
- Mr. Gibbs suggested a backup to the card, should a user forget theirs.
- Mr. Hitchcock believes the fines would be ineffective, arbitrary and capricious, since there

haven't been any repeat offenders, up to this point. A more meaningful measure would be loss of privileges.

- Mr. Hasson felt the Airports Director should have the discretion as to how fines are issued.

Airport Noise Abatement Officer Wayne Reiter explained how noise fines are issued. Generally, it is a progressive process, where the first and second offenses result in a warning letter, or Notice of Violation, being sent to the registered owner. The third offense, or gross first-time violations, will result in a fine, and no misdemeanor is recorded. The Municipal Code is written to allow discretion in how fines are issued for noise violations. Education is the preferable and the primary means of obtaining compliance and the Notice of Violation letter is intended to educate pilots. Repeat offenders are rare, as evidenced by only one fine issued last year, and one other being issued this year.

Mr. Gesell added proposed fines have been perceived as a confrontational and punitive measure; it is neither the intent nor desire of the airport to punish people. The process to reduce V/PD's as been progressive in nature. The airport attempts to gather as much information as possible for each occurrence in an attempt to fix the problem.

Chairman Fink asked for volunteers to be on the sub-committee. Mr. Aldrich was the only volunteer. Anyone else interested may contact Mr. Gibbs.

Chairman Fink thanked Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Oetzell for attending the meeting.

Mr. Tussey announced:

- \$730,000 grant notification from the Department of Transportation for the design of Runway 8L/26R at SDM.
- \$1.2 million construction grant for Taxiway Golf and the northeast portion of Runway 5/23 at MYF.
- Runway 10L/28R project at MYF is scheduled to begin September 10.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Ander announced the Serra Mesa Library hours have been extended to include Monday afternoons. On Wednesday, June 13 at 4:00 P.M., there will be a program at the library for children who are out of school.

Mr. Gesell announced the arrival of our new Airport Operations Assistant, Michael McKelvey.

Mr. Dray announced NOTAM's for T-34 training flights operating out of NAS North Island and for crane operations near MYF. One 587' MSL crane will be operating for 2-3 weeks, while two other cranes will raise the circling minimums further. Mr. Dray reminded pilots to check for fire NOTAM's and to stay away from large columns of smoke, should a major brush fire occur.

Bob Golo asked where information on airport trust fund accounting could be found. Mr. Tussey replied that information is available on the City of San Diego's website as part of the annual budget.

The next meeting of the AAC will be Tuesday, July 10 at Montgomery Field. At that meeting, the AAC By-Laws will be reviewed.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 P.M, *thank you for helping with the tables and chairs.*

Respectfully submitted,
Wayne J. Reiter