



PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

AIRPORTS DIVISION

<https://edcgov.us/Government/CAO/airports/Pages/airports.aspx>

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COUNTY AIRPORTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes from the January 20, 2021 Meeting

Location: Virtually, via Zoom

I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:05 p.m. by Russ Sardina, Chair

To comply with protective requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was virtual, using Zoom, and it was recorded.

Participating members: Russ Sardina, Sue Bell, Jason Brand, Gary Vorderbruggen

Absent members: Ricky Branaugh, Chris Nelson, Mike Worth

Participating staff: Chris Perry, Sherrie Busby, Julianne Melchor, Jeremy Gutenberger, and Jessica Dillon

Guests (not all guests identified themselves): Jim Hogan, Rick Todd, and others

II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA: Russ Sardina made a motion to adopt the agenda without changes; Jason Brand seconded the motion. The Agenda was adopted without changes.

III. DISPOSITION OF MINUTES: Russ Sardina made a motion to adopt the minutes of the November 12, 2020 meeting; Gary Vorderbruggen seconded the motion. The minutes of the November 12, 2020 meeting were adopted without changes.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

V. STAFF REPORTS

WIFI - Placerville and Georgetown Airports: the WIFI is back up and running slowly; it is meant to be used for security cameras only. Jeremy Gutenberger reminded users to use other WIFI sources to access the Internet. He invited pilots to use the Placerville office WIFI for filing flight plans. Jeremy anticipates the speed will be improved by AT&T in the near future.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Both Airports: Chris Perry and Jessica Dillon toured the Placerville Airport with Russ Sardina. Chris thanked Russ for the tour; it was enlightening to see the challenges and opportunities and it helps him perform his job better. Chris Introduced Jessica, who has replaced Lauri Stutts; Lauri retired in December. Jessica will be handling the airport leases. Chris is anticipating a tour of the Georgetown Airport in the next few weeks and will reach out to Gary Vorderbruggen and Scott Herring to participate.

- a) Airport Benchmark Study – Chris and Jessica have begun contacting the airports agreed upon for the benchmark study, partially done by Creighton Avila in January and February 2020. Because data that is a year old is insufficient for presentation to the Board of Supervisors, they are contacting the original 24 airports on the list; he has added 12 others that were suggested by committee members. The benchmark study questions are comprehensive, and include comparator questions related to other aspects of airport management, as well as leases and fees. Gary expressed concerns about how long it has taken to complete the study. Chris said it is unfortunate that Creighton’s departure and the length of time since he gathered the initial information has resulted in the need to redo some airports, but this is necessary to get good, fresh results.
- b) Hangar Ground Leases – three leases were approved by the Board last week. Chris added the option of two ten-year renewals to these leases; the two ten-year options will be added to all leases going forward, and Sherrie Busby confirmed that other recent approvals included the options (no leases were approved that do not contain this option). Chris is open to good ideas and having well thought-out discussion with users on concerns about leases and other items. Staff have begun internal discussions on the process to attempt to discover efficiencies to reduce the length of time it takes to complete leases. Chris described the current process, which starts with lessees submitting all required items, including insurance documentation, to staff. The lease is then reviewed by Risk Management, and then County Counsel. If Risk Management and County Counsel sign off on the lease, then it goes to the Board; the process of placing an item on the Board agenda takes between one and two months, depending on the scheduling of other items by the Board Office and the CAO’s Office. The whole process involves many steps, but Chris is determined to find ways to speed the process.
- c) Insurance Requirements – Chris spoke with Risk Management regarding the automobile insurance requirements; Risk Management is not likely to change the requirements. Gary pointed out that automobile insurance, particularly at the rate required by El Dorado County, is not required at two other airports he contacted. The requirement adds significant cost for airport users. Jim Hogan asked why it is not required for those using tie-downs. Chris clarified that insurance is required to drive on the Airport, whether from hangar owners or those using tie-downs. Gary indicated insurance requirements need to be looked at, and the issue is tied to the benchmark study; he asked how quickly that will be done, as the timing is critical and he and other users would like to be given a completion date and have information shared about the questions that are being asked. Chris committed to having it done by August because that is what the Board specified for a report back; however, he is aiming to get the study done by the next regular meeting. Chris can’t provide more data at this time; he intends to provide the committee with complete information from all airports when the study is completed. Chris will not hold up the study to include airports that are not responding. Chris is sensitive to the long time that users have been waiting for the study to be completed. Jim Hogan expressed concerns about clauses in his proposed lease, for

example, he isn't allowed to sublease. He is also concerned about the hold harmless and indemnification language, and language allowing the County to access his hangar without notice at any time. He said the language is one-sided and protects the County at the expense of users. Chris explained that the same indemnification is included in all contracts with the County, not just airport leases. Chris encouraged users to share their concerns with leases, and County staff will bring these issues forward for discussion with County Counsel and Risk Management. Chris reminded everyone that the County has vulnerabilities, and a duty to protect taxpayer funds. Rick Todd expressed concerns about excessive requirements for insurance and indemnification (especially since it is one-sided). He suggested bringing the issue to the Board, which has the authority to set policies related to these issues instead of discussing these policy issues at the department level. Scott Herring expressed concerns about insurance requirements and access, particularly related to trucks coming on the Georgetown Airport for deliveries (they have daily deliveries). He suggested the committee should make a recommendation to the Board, as they set the policy and direction for staff. Russ pointed out that the County doesn't have a current economic plan for the airports; this message needs to be reiterated for the Board, as without a plan, assets (airports) are underutilized. Scott indicated that users were not notified of rate increases, and so users were unaware that the Board was requested to approve fee increases in 2019. Chris indicated that the County has an economic manager, Kyle Zimbelman, housed within the Planning and Building Department. He is willing to involve Kyle in discussing a development plan. The County's economic development plan is Elevate to El Dorado (on the County's website). John and Nicole McCormack requested specifics on the benchmark study, stating that it should be transparent and the questions should be shared with users, and also shared that if there is no demand, then fees should be reduced. Chris indicated the benchmark study is an internal document and he is not ready to share it tonight. Benchmarking is used regularly and constantly by El Dorado County and other government agencies; this is the third Chris has participated in since he started with the County. It is mostly an internal process, and widely used within government agencies. Questions and results will be shared with users when the study is completed. Dan Hacker expressed concerns that the recommendation from the airport committee as a result of the fee study meeting held at the Experimental Aircraft Association six years ago was not what the Board approved. The recommendation from the airport users was not the plan adopted by the Board; the Board increased fees at the highest level.

Placerville Airport:

- a) Tank cleaning for 100 low lead and Jet A fuel tanks; repair float system on 100 low lead tank – Jeremy updated the quote request with additional information two weeks ago; he is still waiting to receive the quotes. This will be expensive.
- b) Fuel Dispensers – Jeremy indicated the same company will be used as for the tank cleaning, and this process will also be costly, but is needed. He suggested this item be added to the next agenda for an update.

- c) Beacon – Sherrie Busby discussed the priority of the beacon and the AWOS with the FAA. The FAA has recently moved beacons up in importance on the national priority list and Sherrie’s contact wants to pursue the upgrade of the beacon this fiscal year, although he hasn’t confirmed it yet.
- d) AWOS – the FAA will not advance this project; it remains on the schedule for the fifth year out.

Georgetown Airport:

- a) Airport Access – Jeremy would like to meet with Gary to discuss moving the fence to enable upgrading the front gate at the road; Gary will meet Jeremy tomorrow.
- b) Tree Removal – Jeremy will draw out a plan on an aerial map as the first step. Jeremy plans to use Growlersburg to drop trees that are in the overrun area; however, blackberry bushes growing around the trees are an obstacle and will need to be removed first, preferably by staff as a better use of time.

- VII. ACTION ITEMS: Gary made a motion to have a meeting in five weeks (at 6:00 p.m. on February 24) to discuss progress on the benchmark study and its implementation, with specifics; Russ seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The committee agreed to change its meeting time to 6:00 p.m. Chris suggested publishing meeting dates for the rest of the year. Russ suggested March 24, May 19, July 21, September 22, and November 17; if special meetings are needed in between regular meetings, they can be scheduled when the need arises. Gary suggested adding links to airports on Elevate El Dorado to use what other Counties have done. Russ mentioned that an economic study is required every seven years for the airport; the last study was done in 1990 for the Placerville Airport and the County and Caltrans participated in that study. The economic impact of the airport in that study was identified as \$27 million and 177 jobs.
- VIII. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS: Gary asked for information on how airport users were notified of this meeting. Sherrie Busby responded that emails were sent to users who have provided staff with their email addresses. Russ indicated that notices are posted at the Placerville office and at Georgetown. Gary will talk to Jeremy tomorrow about updating the user list. Gary said everybody at Georgetown appreciates what Jeremy does. Gary suggested routing questions or comments through the airport website, or through email to Jeremy. Gary would also like to add “safety message” on the agenda, as the first item.
- IX. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA: AWOS at Georgetown, fuel dispensers at Placerville, benchmark study, insurance requirements (Jim Hogan’s requested meeting with County Counsel), hangar leases.
- X. ADJOURNMENT: Russ made a motion to adjourn; Gary seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 p.m. The next meeting is a special meeting, scheduled for February 24, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.