

Airpark Liaison Committee

Minutes for January 28, 2015
3rd Floor Conference Room
Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Ave., Rockville, MD

Meeting start time: 4:00 PM
Meeting end: 5:31 PM

Committee members attending:

Howard Layer, Chair; Robert Anderson; Roy Bevington; Michael Boone; Andrew Bossi; Juan Cardenas; Steve Findley; Robert Gawler; Donald Gray; Russell Madsen; Keith Miller; Sandy Poe; Nancy Shenk; John Walsh; Jeff Zyontz (Staff)

Other County Staff attending:

Ramona Bell-Pearson; Catherine Matthews

Other Council staff attending:

Susan Mabie; Lisa Mandel-Trupp; Alexis Reed; Dale Tibbitts; Zac Trupp

- 1) Chairman Layer had everyone introduce themselves. He then described the function of the committee for the benefit of non-committee members and the press.
- 2) Keith Miller described Revenue Authority actions since the December jet crash, ongoing evaluations:

The NTSB report on the fatal crash is expected between 6 and 12 months from the date of the crash. Until that report is out, speculation on the cause of the accident is unproductive.

The crash caused the Revenue Authority to step back and review all its procedures for compliance with FAA and MAA rules, regulations, and procedures.

MAA is the State Agency that issues the license to operate the airpark. As part of the licensing process, the MAA conducts annual inspections of the airpark to ensure its compliance with State and Federal regulations. The MAA conducted a mid-year inspection at the request of the Revenue Authority. MAA review is expected shortly.

The Revenue Authority met with AOPA to review its procedures. A report from them is expected in the near future.

The Revenue Authority conducted meetings with pilots concerning the crash.

After the NTSB report is issued, Mr. Miller will ask the FAA, MAA, and AOPA representatives to answer questions at a community meeting.

No operational changes have been made since the crash and FAA does not recommend any changes until the NTSB report is issued.

Mr. Miller also provided a response to issues raised at the last Airpark Liaison Committee meeting:

Upon the request of the Revenue Authority, the FAA agreed to change the designation of the area north of the Airpark to Congested Area on all charts and maps. FAA noted that the changed designation will not change flight operations.

The FAA was asked about prohibiting all but emergency landings between the hours of 11 PM and 6 AM (39 flights in a year's time during these time periods). The FAA reported that they were not inclined to restrict flights in that manner. According to the FAA, no other airport has a restriction on the time of operations. (This latter fact was disputed by a committee member based on a call to National Airport. The committee member was told that National restricted flights between 11 PM and 6 AM. A check of National's scheduled departures on their web, however, had flights within the alleged prohibited time period.) Mr. Miller stressed that he would speak with anyone performing touch-and-gos during that time period to discourage them from doing so.

3) Questions/comments/suggestions from committee members

There was a discussion of a request to remove FAA's "reliever airport" designation. The problem was described as the possible attraction to the Airpark of jets unfamiliar with its uncontrolled air space. Mr. Miller said he would look into this possibility with the FAA; however, the initial response from governing agencies was, even if the designation is removed, it is unlikely to change any air traffic coming to the Airpark.

In response to a question about the possibility of prohibiting jets, Mr. Miller reported that airports were rated by the FAA by runway length, width, and weight bearing capacity, not the type of aircraft using the facility. There is no such thing as a jet free airport with a 4,200 foot runway (the length of the Airpark runway).

In response to a question about the possibility of getting a tower to control the airspace, Mr. Miller reported that there was no intent on the part of the Revenue Authority to seek such approval. A tower was previously investigated and

rejected by the Revenue Authority and the FAA. The lower traffic at the Airpark from the time of that research would further reduce the feasibility of a tower. At one point there were 160,000 take-offs and landings annually; currently, there are less than 50,000.

Mr. Miller was asked about reducing the number of approved flight paths around the airpark from 5 to a lower number. There was some conversation on whether a page in the noise abatement study represented approved flight paths. Mr. Miller will look into the matter but pilots are directed to use the patterns that satisfy the noise abatement program. Some committee members repeated their concern about the touch-and-go pattern that most impacts Montgomery Village East.

When asked, the representative from the Planning Department did not have any land use changes that would alter the situation of planes flying over homes. Staff noted that when approving the zoning for Montgomery Village East, the Council required notice to home buyers before closing. Some committee members said that notice was inadequate for a home purchaser who must wade through numerous documents at closing.

One member of the committee wanted an investigation regarding the possibility of purchasing homes immediately under the flight path. Staff indicated that it is possible to determine how many homes are so positioned.

The Council was asked to consider doing 2 things:

- 1) Have the Council/Revenue Authority conduct a community meeting immediately to inform the community on what is currently being done in light of the fatal accident (such as report on the various meetings that are being conducted, etc.) and to hear community concerns and suggestions. NTSB, FAA, and MAA representatives should be invited even if they do not want to show up before the NTSB report is finished. It is understood that the NTSB report is not available and will not be available for 6-12 months.
(The member who raised this claimed that the lack of such a meeting was insulting and disrespectful to the community.)
 - 2) Appoint a committee to make recommendations to change Airpark operations that focused on the intersection of risk mitigation, noise avoidance and FAA approved operations. This was suggested by a non-committee member. Staff noted that currently the committee's charge is only to share information and ideas; it does not vote and does not make recommendations.
- 4) Chairman Layer adjourned the meeting at 5:31.