

Airpark Community Advisory Committee (ACAC)

March 18, 2025

7 – 8:30 PM

Montgomery County Upper County Community Center
8201 Emory Grove Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20877



Attendees:

Members:

Bobbi Besley
Justin Bollum, non-voting
H Michael Brown
Aaron Kraut representing Councilmember Luedtke, non-voting
Jake Adler representing Ruben Rosario, non-voting
William “Skip” Reindollar
Karen Kodjanian
Lynne Stein Benzion
Dale Tuttle
Rony Ledany

MCDOT Staff Liaison:

Joe Pospisil

Guests:

Jeanie Bayer
Mollie Hilty
Barbara Fischer
Lorraine Lennon

Action Items

February 18th Meeting Minutes Approval

No modifications were proposed by committee members to the February 18th meeting minutes. Minutes were approved unanimously by the committee and posted on the [ACAC Webpage](#) on 4/15/25.

Reports and Announcements

Prior to committee discussion, the chair reiterated the duties of the ACAC were to serve as an advisory body. The ACAC is to summarize its findings on several issues in an annual report and make recommendations to elected officials. However, it does not have decision-making capabilities to implement any recommendations.

Update on FAA and MAA Requests

Mr. Pospisil updated the committee on the FAA FOIA request and possibility of having a FAA representative attend the April 14th ACAC meeting. It did not appear that there was movement on a FOIA request from the County Executive's Office. The FAA had yet to respond to the FOIA from Councilmember Luedtke based on correspondence with Senator Van Hollen's Office. When asked if request from another Montgomery County official could help get a response more quickly, Senator Van Hollen's Office indicated they did not believe it would be beneficial.

Senator Van Hollen's Office had also not gotten confirmation from the FAA that they would be able to send a representative to the April 14th meeting. If a representative would not be able to attend, the Senator's office requested that the FAA at least address the questions submitted by the ACAC prior to this meeting.

Mr. Pospisil did receive confirmation from the MAA that they would send a representative to the April 14th meeting and that they be sent questions in advance. In the response from the MAA they also outlined what their agency's responsibilities were with the following statement:

As a licensing authority, MAA's focus is on the safe operation of the ground infrastructure related to aircraft movement. As a funding agency, MAA's focus is on support of GAI's maintenance/preservation/improvement needs.

With this additional information, the committee determined it would develop questions for the MAA by the end of the week.

The committee discussed whether it would be useful if they sent a letter to the FAA directly or to elected officials to press upon them the ACAC's desire for a response from the FAA. As a committee focused on Airpark Operations and as residents, the FAA has a responsibility to acknowledge their request. There was some question if this would have any impact given the current political environment and administration.

The following motion was made after committee discussion:

The ACAC will write and send a letter to Maryland US Congressional representatives requesting their assistance with engaging the FAA to respond to questions submitted by the ACAC and to the ACAC's request for an FAA representative to attend one of its meetings.

This motion was unanimously approved.

Updates from Data Subcommittee

The Data Subcommittee reported that they were provided an estimate of \$8,000 by the flight operations data vendor, Flight Aware, to requested two amendments to the service it provides. This included a modification in how Touch & Go Operations are counted to provide a more accurate figures and the creation of a geofence for runway 32, which could determine when aircraft are not adhering to the noise abatement procedures. With this information the committee could recommended additional pilot training and possible penalties. No specific actions were voted on after this discussion.

Updates from Community and Facilities Subcommittee

When asked about potential updates for pilots on the noise abatement procedures, Justin Bollum, Airpark Manager, indicated he was trying to schedule an Airpark Users Meeting for the spring. This meeting, which is used in part to provide Airpark users (i.e. pilots, flight schools, etc.) new information, has been held annually in the fall. As part of a spring meeting, a reassertion on following the noise abatement procedures and possible new training material could be introduced. No date had been identified for a potential spring meeting.

Mr. Bollum indicated that he has discussed the noise abatement procedures with the largest flight school, Washington International Flight Academy (WIFA), at their meetings. More outreach to the other schools is necessary. However, based on how many of the flight schools operate it is difficult to hold them accountable for things like following the noise abatement procedures. Better monitoring of flights and pilots (perhaps with the assistance of a geofence) could help address other flight safety concerns.

Multiple committee members noted instances where aircraft were conducting pattern operations in low and no Visual Flight Rules (VFR) conditions. Flight schools operating under these conditions are teaching their students dangerous behavior. Mr. Bollum indicated that he has reported possible VFR weather minimums violations to the FAA; however, there appears to be reluctance towards enforcement, possibly due to staffing limitations.

Lynne Stein Benzion has continued to meet with Airpark area businesses to collect feedback about operating in the vicinity of the Airpark. She believes she has gotten a great deal of constructive input, both positive and negative, that will be summarized in the Annual Report.

New Business

Discussion was held on the need to move forward with the Annual Report. As a recap, the ACAC would need to address the following topics: 1) noise complaint and flight operation data, 2) safety concerns, 3) impacts on the Airpark Community and 4) review of facility plans. The committee chair had begun working on a draft. Efforts would be made to save a draft report using Microsoft Teams or Google Docs so that all members could have access to the same file.

Finally, it was noted that terms for two members of the committee, Dale Tuttle and Lynne Stein Benzion, were set to end on March 31st. Mr. Pospisil indicated he would check with BCC staff on whether these members could continue to serve until they are potentially replaced. He was also check on efforts to fill the position held for a representative from a flight school.

Community Input/Feedback

Two members of the community, Mollie Hilty and Nancy Shenk, provided in-person comments during the community input portion of the meeting. A copy of both of their statements is attached.

Following a unanimous committee vote the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 pm.

March 18, 2025, 10th Monthly Meeting of the Airpark Community Advisory Committee (ACAC)

Mollie Hilty, Hadley Farms Community, Gaithersburg, MD 20879

This is my 5th testimony to this committee. I do not know what else to say that I haven't said before. Some of you have taken an interest in Community concerns. I appreciate that.

In July 2023, I first noticed an increase in low flying planes over my home. Since that time on clear windless days I hear low flying aircraft flying in circular patterns continuously every 2 to 5 minutes. Week days, week ends, it never stops.

I have heard from this Committee these Flight Training Schools bring little revenue to the Airpark. If so, why does the Airport Management, Revenue Authority, Montgomery County Council promote them?

The FAA requires training flights to fly 1000feet above residential communities. Elevation of runway 14 is 493 feet, elevation of runway 32 is 539 feet. Are these training aircraft flying at ground level or sea level? Perhaps the Airport Manager can verify that these training flights are flying at the required altitude over Residential Communities.

There are so many planes in the air overhead that I would spend all of my time filing complaints. I choose only the violations to complain. For example: I heard these planes.

Saturday, March 15, 12:18am

Sunday, March 16, 7:45am

Monday, March 17, 1:40am, 6:50am, 7:10am, 7:40am.



Testimony to Airpark Community Advisory Committee March 18, 2025

I would like to take a moment to highlight an important issue to the community.
based on the current take off patterns at the airpark,

I am going to quote directly from the Vianair report from June, 2022 . On page 9 there is a specific recommendation to **Establish a "Preferential Runway Program"** The "Pilot Guide" (for Montgomery County Airpark) references Runway 14 as the designated "calm wind runway".

Input from the Airpark noted that this is specifically for noise abatement.

Rebranding this as a "**preferential runway**" (which is the common language when associated with airport noise programs) may encourage pilot conformance based on the understanding of why Runway 14 is preferred.

The Vianair report goes on to state that this existing effort should be highlighted in community outreach to ensure residents are aware of this and other efforts the airport is making in support of reducing community impacts.

It is not unusual for there to be in excess of 10-15 take offs in an hour from runway 32 which directly impacts several communities to the north of the airpark. I recognize that safety is paramount however, between Feb 22 and March 12, 85% of the flights departed from Runway 32 toward the North.... Many during periods when winds were less than 5 knots.

I am requesting that this committee recommend that this minor change in verbage takes place ASAP and pilots and training schools be made aware of this so as to limit the number of continuous take offs over specific communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Shenk

↳ & it also be
part of the "pilots
guide" for KGA1