

**THUN FIELD ADVISORY COMMISSION
DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY**

March 16, 2017

A meeting of the Pierce County Thun Field Advisory Commission (TFAC) was held on Thursday, March 16, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. at the Civil Air Patrol building, Thun Field, 16915 – 103rd Ave. E., Puyallup, WA 98374.

I. Call to Order & Welcome

Chair Keith Kemper called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm. Members introduced themselves.

TFAC VOTING MEMBERS	
Present:	J. Keith Kemper, Chair Douglas Miller, Vice Chair Mike Thompson Lyle Sindlinger Marshall Collins
Excused:	John Hurlbut; Shawn Pratt resigned
TFAC NON-VOTING MEMBERS	
Present:	Jim Downs, SHAC; Nichole Weber, SHAC
Excused:	Dan Roach, Pierce County Council District 1; Hugh Taylor, Pierce County Council Alternate
PIERCE COUNTY STAFF	
Present:	Toby Rickman, Steve Wamback, Lissa Smith, Cindy Willis
VISITORS	
Present:	Four members of the public signed the attendance sheet.

II. Approval of Prior Meeting Summaries

January 19, 2017 – Motion (Sindlinger/Miller) passed unanimously to approve the meeting summary as written.

III. Visitors and Petitions

(Public comments are limited to 3 minutes per person on non-agenda items.)

1. Tom Brown plans to have a Young Eagles' event at PLU providing introductory flights for kids. He said with the 300 people he expects, PALS want to charge him a big application fee,

so he reduced the number. Why does the County charge for a free event that introduces kids to aviation? Steve Wamback the application form and process have changed; in a 2015 amendment to the Comp. Plan, all special events now require an event application through PALS instead of the Special Use Application that Airports & Ferry required. For instance at TIW, the Gig Harbor Rotary used a private hangar for a fundraiser and they had to apply for a permit to conduct it; the application is routed to various agencies for review. All events require the application, but based on intensity, some review/fees may be waived. Lyle Sindlinger said it should be only a \$10 application fee for an event to bring kids to the airport. Steve said the \$1250 application fee seems steep to him also. Tom said 6-8 pilots are donating their time and planes. Steve said we're caught in the same permitting process as everyone else. Someone asked what if an event is held without a permit; Steve said they could possibly be liable for a civil penalty. Steve did a search and found the exact language in PCC 18A.40. A special event/parade permit requires a certificate of insurance for \$1 million with the County named as additional insured. The Event Applications are due 90 days prior to an event; any of three criteria will trigger review: 1) attendance of 150 people or more at any time, 2) if any part of the event occurs in the public ROW, 3) if the event requires fire, traffic control, or is on the water. Any event requires an application and PALS will tell you if you're eligible for any fee exemptions. Fees are \$1250 for the application, and there are other fees from the Health Dept., Fire Marshal, etc. Steve noted that in his regular job (Code Enforcement), we're reactive, not proactive; we don't go looking for violations-- only what's reported.

IV. Reports

- **Operations and Maintenance – Lissa Smith**

Jay was assigned to find out how much money was saved by using old conduit – \$80,000. Mike Thompson asked if that was spent on other upgrades. We'll have to ask Jay. Lissa said she put 800 pounds of cold mix around airport potholes this week; permanent paving fixes are on the list, but more patchwork may be required in the interim. Those potholes are on the driving roads; the taxiways and runways fared well over the winter and there are no issues with them. The AWOS is still not reporting on the ceilometer. The ceilometer is 15 months old and the computer board may have failed; she's working with the vendor and manufacturer to see if we can resolve the issue. She thinks a part has failed and has to identify the part so it can be swapped out. Mike Thompson asked if that affects instrument approaches; Lissa said she believes it does raise minimums. Mike said that could cost the County money over lost commerce.

Lyle Sindlinger attended the NW Aviation Show and picked up a flyer for someone who builds hangars; you can get a 10-hangar unit (with electric bi-fold doors, a man-door, roof, and gutters) for \$140,000. Add money for slabs, etc. and you're at \$600,000 for 10 hangars. The County is requiring \$1.3 million. Why doesn't the County look at this? Do one row per year for \$500,000. Lyle said these kits go up quickly; somebody should look at it. Mike Thompson said prevailing wage for union labor plays a big part. Rod Wetherbee said that typically union and non-union costs are nearly the same if the non-union shop hires quality people and pays them good wages. Keith Kemper wondered why the County wouldn't look at this option. Steve Wamback said the hangar project has been out bid three times. The latest bids closed on March 3 and a low bidder has been determined, but not yet awarded. The current plan is to have Bldg. D and E fully refurbished with roof, electrical, drainage, and doors. We need a supplemental budget request before awarding the job, and the

Executive's supplemental request for mental health and the homeless issue is first in the queue. We're trying to accelerate the project as much as possible as we have to award the project within 60 days of the bid opening. Whether we can award it without first receiving Council approval is yet to be seen. Steve said the estimated price for Bldg. D and E (20 hangars) is just under \$1.8 million including drainage, electrical, doors, and roofs.

- **Administration – Steve Wamback, Interim Administrator**

Steve officially introduced himself; he's been with Public Works since 1993 working in solid waste, recycling, and landfill issues; he also manages code enforcement for Public Works and PALS, and runs the County education program. At the end of January, he volunteered to assist in Airports & Ferry. Lauren Behm had baby girl on Feb. 22; all are doing well. We have a new County Exec and Councilmember; the reorganization of departments happened while we were recruiting for our administrator position; we did not fill it, so he volunteered as the Interim Administrator. He has no aviation background; his education is in environmental and controls. He did work as an intern for the NYC Dept. of Transportation removing illegal posters from ferries. He's not a pilot and has no ferry experience. He's just trying to help staff while we have no administrator or assistant administrator. We don't know how long this situation will last. Our new director will assess what to do next.

Keith Kemper asked about the Master Plan. Toby Rickman said we need to design the public involvement phase. We'll look at economic development for various land uses. The consultants will be developing a work plan; that will be designed after Lauren returns. Keith asked where we stand with filling the administrator position. Toby said we're analyzing our finances; there are lots of moving pieces to sort out including determining whether to reduce hangar rates at TIW which would result in reduced revenue if passed. The study on the fuel concession at PLU comes to \$75,000 from our budget. It's possible our facilities may be managed by another department, so that would tap into our maintenance revenue. We're trying to figure out if we can afford to replace the position; it's on hold until we can re-evaluate it this summer. Now we're working with our existing resources and staff to help our tenants.

Steve Wamback answered a question about the Weed Board; it's a special purpose district—not part of County government, appointed by the County Council. It operates under state law and serves Pierce County, but is not a County agency. As for the PLU hangar project, it won't be managed by Public Works; it's now under Facilities Management Dept. With our input, they put together the scope of work and the bid; they'll be in charge of construction and we'll have to pay them to manage it.

- **Commission Reports**

None.

V. Old Business

- **Non-Aeronautical Policy and Procedure Discussion**

Steve Wamback said the project to create our own non-aeronautical use policy has been ongoing for a couple years now. We sent out the revised draft of the policy document, along with minutes of the last TNAAC meeting, the FAA federal register announcement, and Q&A document to all interested parties on both airport lists. After hearing comments and talking to our attorney, changes to the draft policy from the January meeting include three

improvements: 1) rather than rewrite the FAA policy, we propose to adopt the policy by reference; 2) clarify that this applies to all aspects of the airport designated as an aeronautical use in the ALP—not just hangars; 3) rather than creating new policies and procedures, we propose to follow a three-pronged approach for any exemptions: 1) request a 3-5 year waiver for a specific use (with a 30-day opt out); 2) the County puts together a self-managed plan; 3) individual cases go through the FAA approval processes. One big change since last time is that the enforcement process is included. We didn't want to leave a question about how to get to enforcement. Steve noted a typo in Sentence 3 – it should say non-aeronautical use. It's important that we ask the Council to ratify the policy. We're not anticipating a regulatory relationship, but rather a landlord/tenant relationship governed by leases. We'll have an inspection protocol; we want this airport to be viable which means it's used for aviation. If we're successful in remodeling the hangars and working with other tenants, we'll have people banging on our doors. It's better to spend FAA money than ours, so we need to stay eligible for federal grants. We don't want to be the non-aeronautical police. We will work with the FAA on exemptions. The final document to the Council will have different format. While the department is allowed to implement rules and regulations, we must have the Council ratify the policy first. We hope to receive comments from the TFAC tonight and incorporate them into document before the end of March. On Page 2 of 2 in the next to last paragraph, we'll tweak it to read: "To enforce this policy and maintain eligibility for FAA grants, the Director maintains the right to conduct periodic inspections of county-owned hangars built while holding a ground-lease, and other lands and facilities designated for aeronautical use in the currently approved Airport Layout Plan. Such inspections will be conducted annually, with additional inspections scheduled as necessary to ensure continued compliance and eligibility." At the TNAAC meeting, there was discussion about the difference in quality between public and private hangars; Steve knows there are problems and quality impacts desirability. He acknowledged the issue exists, but has no solution yet. Toby Rickman said the point discussed was one of demand; a waiver would be considered if there's not an aeronautical demand for the space. There are vacancies at the TIW hangars; some non-aeronautical use might be allowed. There's not a demand for County hangars due to their quality. At PLU, we have a waiting list, but can't lease out some hangars due to their condition. If a waiver is requested and we look at demand, PLU might be treated differently than TIW. Toby said the TIW condo association said they knew of several hangars for sale – there is availability, but you have to buy not rent. Marshall Collins said some structures at PLU aren't safe to walk in, much less keep a plane there.

Keith Kemper looked at the TNAAC meeting summary (page 6) and the discussion about finances. He and some TNAAC members had a meeting with Dan Grimm on that topic. He questioned the reference to a statement that ferries can afford more because they're three times larger than the airports. Toby said the airports' budget for Operations is \$1.2 million and for the ferry system (depending on drydock costs), the budget ranges from \$3.5 - \$5.5 million. Lyle Sindlinger asked if the ferry pays for itself; Toby said the farebox recovery is approximately \$2.2 million/year. The ferry receives state and federal subsidies and money from the County road fund. Keith wondered why ferries are subsidized and aviation is not. Steve Wamback said the federal transit administration provides money for capital improvements for ferries. Highway grants help replace docks and dolphins. The ferry system is a County road or marine highway and is thus eligible for County road funds.

Mike Thompson said in the TNAAC notes, it talks about combining airports/ferries for the benefit of administration. Why do we have only one staff now? Toby Rickman said we have a full time O&M staff, a supervisor, and administrator position (currently vacant). Mike said the County's talking about the possibility of taking back the fuel concession. Self-serve doesn't mean self-sufficient. The airport is falling apart due to a lack of people and funds to maintain it. Steve Wamback agreed, but said the approved budget is what we have. TFAC recommendations to the Council for alternative funding sources would be appropriate. Mike said last fall we were asked to comment on the budget, but learned that the airports' budgets are set in February/March. We haven't seen anything for 2018 and it will be too late to comment. We need a budget that staffs the airports more appropriately. The advisory commissions need to be involved. Toby Rickman said we can bring a draft to the May meeting of what projected revenues will be for 2018. Budgets are not based on what the airports need, but what they can afford. There's a statutory barrier between funds; we can't spend County road funds on airports—it's illegal. Mike said the FAA policy/Section 2/pages 213-218 talks about the sponsor's obligations. The last one talks about the fee/rent structure and the obligation is to make the airport as self-sustaining as possible. The bottom line is that the Council needs to understand what airports do for the whole community by way of commerce and transportation; they can't expect us to pay for airports with leases/rents. The TFAC put forth a proposal to the Council for expanding the scope of the advisory commission because we believe we influence those areas. We have to draw from the surrounding community to be viable. Airport employers can't expect only airport dollars to service the airport. We need an airplane person as the airport administrator. We're airplane people and deserve respect, but are often ignored. Toby Rickman said these are valid points; if you feel strongly about them, formulate your thoughts and advise your elected officials. Staff doesn't make these decisions—the Exec and Council do. We're told what resources we have to allocate. Steve said Mike wants to see General Fund tax dollars allocated to airports. We're borrowing money to do hangar project—borrowing from ourselves. We have to pay it back. One tax revenue source is REET money paid when people buy properties; we receive about \$400,000/year. Toby said REET money can be used only for capital, not operations or staff—just for buildings, runways, and taxiways. Steve said budgeting is a year-round project. We have to identify staffing needs for 2018 during a two- week window through March 22. Lissa works almost exclusively at the airport, but 20% of her salary is covered by the ferry; the ferry pays 75% of most salaries. There's nothing he can say other than it's frustrating.

Keith Kemper said it highlights how important it is to have an aviation person in the administrator role; we need creativity to find new funding. Steve noted that the islanders pay road tax like everyone and we have an obligation to connect them to the mainland; our boat is their bridge. You don't want to argue that airports should be self-sufficient; it would be easy for people who aren't airport people to think that you should pay for yourself. People don't understand that airports do search/rescue and are economic engines. We're working to make them more viable. We are currently working with a non-aeronautical employer at TIW trying to move them to a parcel that doesn't have runway access and charge them market rate. We're trying to be creative. Developing the east side of the airport would help increase viability.

Marshall Collins said that in Chehalis, their airport has made amazing improvements. It's owned by the City of Chehalis and he asked about their funding. They have businesses close

by and that revenue maintains the airport. The east side of our airport is just sitting there. Toby Rickman said if the east side is accessible, it will have to be for aeronautical uses. TIW has a pet lodge on airport property; it's not runway accessible, yet helps subsidize the airport with rents. For TIW areas off 36th, we need to determine land uses that could pay rent. We're trying to work with our Economic Development Dept. to get grants. We're bringing sewers down 110th to spur economic development within the constraints of our capabilities.

Rod Wetherbee said the cost of infrastructure on the east side would be high; whoever goes to that side would stay there and vice versa; you can't drive across the airport.

Steve Wamback said he wished we could build a Walmart, Home Depot, and three car dealerships like Chehalis has. Back in 1999, Bob Snyder and Bruce Thun wanted to build storage units on the south side of Sunrise; however, the landfill was a federal superfund site and the airport was in risk of being shut down, so rather than build storage units, Solid Waste bought five acres and the feds backed off. We lost our buildable land and options for revenue. Meridian frontage would be very high compared to the east side. We want our airports to be viable. The TFAC chair will be meeting with councilmembers about expanding boundaries; it's been tabled for discussion. Dan Roach sponsored the amendment; TFAC members need to bring this message to them.

Steve Wamback said that for the Eagle Communications and Weed Board office, if they get identified as sole options for bringing aeronautical uses to each airport, we'd have to buy out their leases and improvements. We hope there are other solutions. We have to be consistent with the policy. Mike Thompson said the Weed Board building is listed as an aeronautical use on the ALP; that's correct.

Steve asked how the TFAC feels about the non-aeronautical policy. We will prepare a resolution to Council and capture these comments and present them. If the Council decides to hold a hearing, they will invite the TFAC to participate. Make your presence visible.

Doug Miller asked about enforcement points 4 and 5 with regard to a 30-day notice when there's a demand for hangar space; item 5 says 'property.' Steve said the item 4 reference to hangar space should be changed to broader uses on the airport. We have leases designating aeronautical uses. Item 5 is focused on when we do allow non-aeronautical use, we have to charge them market rate compared to a similar use off-airport. Doug said this is a good step forward; he agreed that having the enforcement policy as part of the document is great step.

Mike Thompson said last year when this was discussed, we were told we had to discuss items not in line with the FAA policy. It allowed the airport sponsor to enact deeper restrictions if it wanted; is that not the case? Steve said the last sentence in the FAA federal register document is the policy; everything else is history/Q&A. This policy has existed for quite a while. If we want to be eligible for FAA grants and use their money, we want them to approve it. If we apply for a grant, the FAA will check to see that we're balancing aeronautical and non-aeronautical uses. This policy is our statement that we intend to provide that info to the FAA for grant purposes. We could write a more stringent policy, but his preference is managing through leases and the landlord/tenant relationships. If we're

not at a high enough standard, we'll make the leases stronger. Doug Miller said leases should be more structured rather than a blanket policy for whole airport. Steve reminded the TFAC that there's no right for non-aeronautical uses. Mike Thompson proposed that Steve explain the intent in the policy.

Rod Wetherbee was asked about the fuel pump issue; it's not fixed yet. Another company came out, but the pumps are old and need to be replaced. We're waiting to hear back. Toby Rickman said a consultant has not been hired yet; we wrote the scope of work and need to go back to the Performance Audit Committee. A consultant will determine which options are viable and the best approach to use. Jet A fuel is not being considered.

Mike Thompson asked for an update on the signage program. He said the high bid was \$40,000 and overkill. A primary sign and map were to be considered. Steve asked staff to stop work on signage until we determined whether we had money for hangars; if we can't make hangars viable, we shouldn't do signs. As soon as he knows we can proceed on the hangars, we'll work on the signage issue. Keith Kemper asked what happens if we don't go forward on hangars. Toby Rickman said if we don't do hangars this time, they'll probably pull the loan on the hangar project; it's on life support now. It's been delayed twice already.

Mike Thompson said the FAA order, Section 2 talks about maintenance of the airport—you've got to do something with the buildings because you're letting an airport asset deteriorate. Toby said the federal government has rules to maintain the highway system, yet he's never saw them deny a grant. That statement won't govern whether we get a grant to do airport projects. We're at low risk, so we'll operate airports and get as much federal money as we can.

Rod Wetherbee, Spencer Aircraft, said there are major cracks on the ramp area. On another matter, he called Comcast because he was under the impression that Pierce County was trying to get owners to hook up. Comcast said no one has been working on this for two years. His business suffers from not having high speed access for online sales. He employs 20 employees. If you're interested in high speed access, email him; they need enough interested people on the field before they'll come in. Steve said he owes Rod a call and they'll chat about that issue.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

TO CONTACT THE THUN FIELD ADVISORY COMMISSION regarding any items on this agenda or any other issues:	
Call:	(253) 798-7250 (Airport Administration)
Fax:	(253) 798-2740
Mail:	Thun Field Advisory Commission 2702 South 42 nd Street, Suite 201 Tacoma, WA 98409-7322
Email:	pctfac@co.pierce.wa.us
Submit comments online:	www.piercecountywa.org/thunfield (click on "contact us")

TFAC Next Meeting

Date: Thursday, May 18, 2017
Time: 6:30 PM
Location: Thun Field, Civil Air Patrol Building
16915 103rd Ave. E.
Puyallup, WA 98374