

**TACOMA NARROWS AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING SUMMARY**

Thursday, September 14, 2017

A regular meeting of the Pierce County Tacoma Narrows Airport Advisory Commission (TNAAC) was held on Thursday, September 14, 2017 at 6:30 PM. The meeting was held at the Tacoma Narrows Aviation hangar, 1302 – 26th Ave. NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98335.

- **Call to Order & Welcome**

Chair Bob Felker called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM. Commission members introduced themselves.

TNAAC VOTING MEMBERS	
Present:	Bob Felker, Chair Brad Pattison, Vice Chair Michael Murphy Kurt Grimmer Larry Fickel Wiley Moore Laura Fox – arrived at 6:37 pm
Excused:	Hal Cline, Terry Lee, Brian Durham
TNAAC NON-VOTING MEMBERS	
Present:	
Excused:	Michael Perrow, City of Gig Harbor; Derek Young, Council District 7
PIERCE COUNTY STAFF	
Present:	Jay Simons, Operations & Maintenance Supervisor Lauren Behm, Interim Administrator Cindy Willis, Office Assistant
VISITORS	
Present:	Eight members of the public signed the attendance sheet.

- **Approval of Prior Meeting Summaries**

By motion (Grimmer/Murphy), the meeting summary for July 13, 2017 was approved unanimously.

- **Visitors and Petitions**

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

None.

- **Reports**

- Jay Simons, Operations & Maintenance Supervisor, provided the O&M report. The garbage bin move will be completed by the end of October; it's going to the SE corner of the parking lot, and will take 3-4 parking spaces. When the new building is done at Tacoma Narrows Aviation, the fence will be moved with a new pedestrian gate in the observation area. The fence will be moving north in the next couple weeks. We fixed the sprinkler system which had been damaged by tree roots; we will have green grass in the spring. Last week, PAVCO had a spill of 5 gallons of Jet A fuel. Don't ever wash a spill down the drain. Call 911 if a life is in danger, then call airport staff. Spill kits are located at both fueling areas.
- Lauren Behm, Interim Administrator, provided her report. Our scheduled Nov. 9 meeting has some conflicts: Lauren will be out of town and there's a Seahawk game that evening; is there an interest in moving it to a different week? Motion (Grimmer/Fox) passed unanimously to move the meeting to November 2. Lauren will begin class again in January that meets on Thursday nights, so we may wish to consider another night. The consensus was that Tuesdays work; we'll discuss details later.
- Tower Report – Bonnie Malgarini, control tower chief, said there were over 10,000 operations in August (66,480 operations so far this year); that's four months in a row at that level; she attributed it to an increase in student pilots; there are also students who come from Thun, Auburn, and Renton, as well as ILS practices. These numbers reflect operations between 8 am-8 pm only, so there are more than that (includes overflights). Bonnie suggested we might want to develop some arrival/departure procedures as business increases—informal, not mandatory. Renton has them. They'd be developed in conjunction with pilots. Student pilots tend to drift and we need to keep some separation. Wiley Moore spoke in favor of the idea and is willing to help. Bob Felker asked about federal funding for the tower; Bonnie said she is not afraid of being closed down due to the increase in business. We're at 50 percentile nationwide. Staffing: Nicole is leaving and Dave from Boise starts next week. To the question of why we have so many student pilots at TIW, Bonnie replied that the tower staff is patient with students and don't have as much jet traffic; we also have ILS and many airports don't. Jeff Stillwell complimented Bonnie and her staff; they do a wonderful job of blending jets in with other planes. There was applause for the tower staff.
- Commission Reports
Larry Fickel reported on Movie Night; last year we had almost 400 people on a cold night in August. This year, it started raining 20 minutes into the movie; many people stayed away because of the weather, and we had only about 200 people, so that was disappointing. We had a great food truck and were more organized. We appreciate the Juranich brothers. Brad Pattison thanked Larry for doing the event; it keeps the airport as a positive asset for the community. Larry said he loves to see the young kids at the airport.

- **New Business**

- Hangar Rate Study – Michael Transue apologized that Murray Brackett from Valbridge was unable to attend and present the report. He can be here Sept. 20, 25, 27, or Oct. 2 to meet

with the TNAAC. Michael encouraged questions be provided to him, orally or in writing, so Mr. Brackett can be prepared to speak to them. The Performance Audit Committee (PAC) accepted the evaluation two weeks ago.

Michael Murphy asked about timeliness for budget purposes. Lauren said the Executive will release his budget Sept. 19; it's typically adopted by Thanksgiving, although the charter requires it by the end of November. Michael Transue said there will be opportunity to provide recommendations to Councilman Derek Young to get it into the budget; however, earlier is better. November 2 would be cutting it close. We will send out a Doodle poll tomorrow and request your responses back ASAP.

Larry Fickel said comparing TIW with SeaTac and Boeing Field isn't comparable; they're huge airports with higher costs per sq. ft. If he were to buy a fourplex in Gig Harbor, he wouldn't use the Seattle area for comparables. Michael said he'll ask about comparables in the formula.

Michael Murphy wondered why they didn't use Shelton airport; that's more of a comp. Brad Pattison said he knows a plane owner who pays \$215 for a nice hangar at Shelton. TIW has trashy hangars, no fire protection, wood frames, leaks, and doors that don't work well. TIW hangars are called average in the report when they aren't at all.

Brad Pattison said the study design is horrible and a disgrace; that the County accepted it shows a measure of incompetence. Valbridge should have been blind to the cost and used accurate comps. He believes the report was highly biased and thinks someone in Public Works planted a pre-supposition that the rates shouldn't go down. The TNAAC proposed hangar rates be lowered by 25% and that's still higher than Bremerton. We have only 63% occupancy while others have waiting lists. The study conclusion is bogus and borders on dishonesty. Michael said the report was authorized by the County Council and Performance Audit Committee (PAC); Public Works was not engaged in the specifics of the contract and it's not a Public Works report. Brad said Public Works should look at the report and say it's wrong.

Larry Fickel asked if the PAC had unanimously accept the report; yes. Michael Murphy asked what it means when a report is accepted. Michael Transue said the PAC contracts out for work; they ask vendors to offer honest, fair reports. We get the report and the PAC accepts it as valid and properly done; an opinion is not offered by the PAC.

Larry Fickel asked how many trips Valbridge took to review the facilities; two. He said he hears lots of complaints about hangar quality. Michael said Valbridge did they look at the condition of the hangars, doors, leaks, etc. He's certain they saw and compared qualities with other airports.

Larry Fickel asked Jay what he showed Valbridge; Jay said he showed nice hangars as well as those in disrepair; with sheetrock and no sheetrock; and with doors harder to open. Jay took Valbridge around and walked through the hangars one afternoon. Michael said they also drove around the airport on another visit.

Michael Murphy will put his comments in writing. Based on the condition of the t-hangars, he was surprised at the average rating in the report. Valbridge spent lots of time on comps to other industrial facilities; you can't justify rate increases based on warehouses in Fife—that's not a real comp. Michael didn't like that there was no discussion of occupancies at other facilities; Michael Transue said that's discussed in the tables – the others are all full. Michael Murphy said the tables are too small and illegible. Michael Transue will try to get a better version. Michael Murphy said raising rates isn't conducive to filling it up.

Wiley Moore drove around with Jay today to get better picture of the airport; he agrees with Brad regarding the report; it's not scientific or well done and should have been a blind study to existing rates. We don't have a waitlist and only 65-67% occupancy; that didn't ring well with him.

Laura Fox said supply and demand drive value; everyone else is full and we're not, so it's counterintuitive to raise rates.

Brad Pattison said when we unanimously voted to put the rates more in line with what was reasonable, Public Works was quite opposed to any changes; he can't imagine they'd select someone to do a study without telling them to keep the rates low. He wanted to make a motion to reject the study based on the methods and results; other commission members said to wait until we hear from Valbridge.

Michael Murphy asked if a public agency can offer rate incentives. Lauren said the Code includes wording that says the Public Works director can offer incentives. Michael Transue said they must apply to everyone.

Commission members explained that their angst with the study was not against Michael Transue.

Public Comment

1. Chris Johnson said the study should have considered vehicle traffic to get here, having to cross a toll bridge, and population density. It's a no-man's land for parking airplanes. He said rates should probably be lower.
 2. Bruce Hinds has been on the airport for 17 years. Speaking of demographics, has there been any study done on where TIW tenants live? Airports in Port Townsend and Shelton were not included in the study. The study should consider supply/demand; the vacancy rate speaks volumes.
 3. Bonnie Malgarini said maybe we could plot plane owners to see where they live; maybe there are too many hangars for the surrounding population. Thun Field hangars are in disrepair, but are full; they are also cheaper. Brad Pattison said surrounding airports have hangar tenants who reside in Gig Harbor.
 4. Chris Johnson said people may choose TIW because the expertise for airplane repair is better.
- Airport Signage
Lauren said the quotes came back for Thun Field signage and it's about \$7000 for 4 signs (business directional). With that budget in mind, that's something we can do out here. We might want a different aesthetic at TIW, so might spend a bit more. We have volunteer help

offers from George Swift, and from Al Abbott who is a FOTNA member and owns a marketing business. We'll continue to work on signs and will present for TNAAC recommendation, ideas, and input before purchasing anything. Signs will be located in several places around TIW.

- Grass Landing Strip – Lauren has been working with Bonnie Malgarini; we have approval from the tower and Risk Management to allow test flights of the strip as it is now; some people have walked it and said no regrading is necessary. We'll start test flights and work with WSDOT Aviation regarding corner markings to designate it as a landing strip. When completed, we do outreach to let folks know it's available. Bonnie said the tower needs Pierce County to say yes in writing; then we have to have a panel of subject matter experts to come up with procedures for getting to and from the strip. No one can land on the runway if someone is on the turf. We need answers for some grey areas before creating procedures. If a pilot doesn't know the procedures, he can't use the grass strip. Maybe we could have only landings on the grass with departures from the paved surface. We'll have to get procedures approved from Bonnie's company and the FAA – that's a 6-month procedure from the air traffic side, so the sooner we start the better. Several present volunteered for the test. Bonnie said we can set up a time to start testing as soon as we get the letter from Pierce County. Bonnie's only day now for testing would be Wednesdays after 5:45 pm. Contact Bonnie if you're interested in helping set up the procedures. Bruce Hind says there's already been lots of discussion about what would have to be done; he'd be happy to notify those interested parties. Bonnie wondered who decides when it's too soggy. Bruce Hind said the Juranich brothers might have information; he's walked it off; it should be checked thoroughly for FOD. Bonnie said use of a grass strip would be at the pilot's own risk; you can choose the runway if you don't like the sod. Larry Fickel asked if grading is required. Lauren said we don't think so, but need to walk it first, and then do test flights. Brad Pattison asked if landings would be allowed only during tower operation; Bonnie said that's up to the pilot. Lauren noted that it happens at Thun (no tower). Larry Fickel said this grass strip is exciting and gives a gold star for the airport. Brad said that the tower is supportive is essential. Bruce Hind asked about delineation of the grass area; Jay said there would probably no lights, just some marking so know where the runway is.
- Playground near RAZ – Larry Kanaster presented his findings regarding the possibility of adding a playground near the RAZ. He compared TIW and the playground at Bremerton Airport (Playground Creations put it in). Having a playground combined with the RAZ would bring in families, more interest to the airport, business for the Hub restaurant, and could be used for parties. Local flight schools might advertise orientation flights. He provided pictures of Bremerton's area and the differences with our area – lower left is the view from ramp area; the gate is unlocked at all times. Differences to consider: Bremerton has open access to the ramp/we don't; Bremerton has more space. The RAZ has a speaker system for listening to the tower. Future plans for the area: once the Tacoma Narrows Aviation building is finished, they'll fence from the RAZ to their offices. Limitations of TIW area: A septic tank exists limiting building in the area. Jeff Stillwell said the tanks could be removed; they won't being used after the first of the year and are used now only to empty lavatory waste. Larry Kanaster said the gate access to the ramp through the chain link fence will be removed. Jay Simons said there are no immediate plans for the grass area. Larry said we could put a playground inside the RAZ, but it would be small. The fence could be moved toward the septic tank to provide more space; if the tank is removed, that's even better so

we could have the playground separate from the observation area. The biggest issue is the FAA; we'd need to change the ALP; it's designated aviation use only. Playground concerns include liability, maintenance, and clean-up. The cost for Bremerton's playground installed was \$150,000. Chris Donahue from Play Creations is here if you have questions.

Michael Murphy wondered since the Master Plan is complete, would we have to do formal plan amendment? Lauren said WSDOT would allow a pen-ink amendment. The ALP is not under PALS' jurisdiction/ just the FAA's. A Master Plan amendment would not be necessary to change designation of this area—an ALP amendment goes through the FAA only. She said that Dennis Hanberg (Planning & Public Works Director) is supportive of economic development projects at TIW. Larry Fickel asked if the land is designated for anything the County plans to do; Lauren said not officially. Larry Kanaster wondered if there's more Rotary money available; Lauren said we'd have to have a specific project in mind, but it's a possibility. Chris Donahue said that site prep work is the biggest cost, including moving fences. We did a full installation in Bremerton, but there could be cost savings using volunteers. Wiley Moore was impressed with the rubber surface. The County could help with grading. Jeff Stillwell said the existing gravel road along the east fence will be paved up to the public parking lot. Lauren said Bremerton enhanced its public viewing area, so worked out its issue with the FAA; it's already on their ALP as non-aviation use. At TIW, the area behind the RAZ is still designated as aviation use. We have FAA approval for an interim use for the RAZ; we need to make it permanent. Larry Fickel favors it, but doesn't want to waste time and money if the FAA will say no. Brad Pattison said we have a good argument to improve integration with the community and support future of aviation. There's no down side. Wiley asked if there's a periodic review of the ALP; Lauren said we can go to them FAA whenever we want changes, and can include several issues in one request. Lauren said the FAA has said no, but she's not giving up. Maybe we can band together with other airports in a campaign to petition the FAA. Her next step is to talk to the FAA manager. If we had some backing from the community and other airports in Washington, we could make a valid case. She suggested the TNAAC write a letter; she'll provide the name of the FAA contact. Someone suggested getting support through the local paper newspaper. Larry Kanaster has several articles on the Bremerton playground. The Bremerton area is used a lot. We have a covered area; Bremerton doesn't. Thanks to Larry Kanaster for his research.

- Wings & Wheels Update – Lauren met with Tacoma Events Commission representatives; they estimate there were 2700 people at the 2017 Wings & Wheels (W&W); that's a record number for attendance and car show entries. The Linenko's are leaving TEC (they also do the Tacoma Freedom Fair). At the board meeting in October, they'll decide if they want to continue doing W&W. We're supportive. We could do it ourselves. John Smutney, air boss for the show, said other consultants could bring in an airshow. There's a conference in Seattle this fall to meet these consultants. Lauren said they make a fairly good profit on the event. With an average of \$15/ticket, that's \$40,000 in ticket sales with more money for cars and vendor space. They do have to pay the performers, but there's an economy of scale with Freedom Fair (they fly out of TIW). Pierce County currently does not get any revenue from W&W, but we might negotiate a new contract with them. Jeff Stillwell hosts most participants and said W&W is huge for the community; it would be a significant loss if not continued. Motion (Murphy/Pattison) passed unanimously to recommend that Wings & Wheels continue.

- Economic Development Task Force – Lauren said this hasn't come together as quickly as planned; we're looking to begin meetings in January 2018.
- Thanks to Hal Cline and Laura Fox – Both are leaving the TNAAC. We currently have applications sent to the Exec's office. Brad Pattison wondered if anyone representing Tacoma Narrows Aviation has applied; no.
- **Adjournment**

The chair adjourned the meeting at 8:24 pm.