

Independence State Airport Master Plan Update Planning Advisory Committee Meeting #1 Issues & Opportunities, Existing Conditions, and Aviation Forecasts

December 6, 2017

City of Independence Library: Independence, Oregon

6:00 to 8:30 p.m.

-Meeting Summary-

Attendees:

Oregon Department of Aviation: Mitch Swecker, Jeff Caines, and John Wilson

WHPacific, Inc: Mike Dane and Dave Nafie

Planning Advisory Committee Members: See sign in sheet

Public Attendees: See sign in sheet

Welcome and Introductions

Meeting opened at 6:05 pm, with a brief introduction from Mitch Swecker. Mitch briefly explained the status of the previous master plan and the State's goal of asking the community to participate in the development of this Master Plan Update. After the PAC was asked to introduce themselves, a brief discussion on the lines of communication, planning ground rules, and the meeting format of being focused on the PAC, with opportunity for others in the public to speak later in the meeting, was discussed with the intent to keep things moving as there was a significant amount of information to cover. The purpose of a master plan, as well as the elements of a master plan were presented in addition to the planning process and schedule.

Area Information

Airport History: The airport history through a sequence of slides that depicted the history of development that has occurred on the Airport and Airpark since its beginning, with a particular focus on development since 1994. In summary, it was presented that there are 65 Hangars on the Airport at approximately 160,000 SF, 2 FBOs and 1 EAA Hangar at approximately 36,000 SF, and 184 TTF homes in the Airpark. The slides depicted the growth of 5-6 Airpark homes per year since 1994 and 1-2 hangars on the Airport per year since 1994.

Airport Role: The information on the Airport's National, State, and local role was presented. The only additional information not covered, but provided by the PAC, was the potential role of the Airport during a Cascadia Quake or similar emergency situation. The Planning Team indicated it would go back and give additional consideration to the role of the airport during a state-wide emergency situation.

Community Data: A brief presentation on local socio-economic data and trends for Oregon, Polk County, and Independence. Independence and Polk County in recent years have grown faster than the State of Oregon while income in Polk County, and presumably Independence as well, has grown at approximately

the same rate as the State, but the Average Annual Income in Polk County is significantly lower than within the State of Oregon. PAC Member and Independence Economic Development Planner Shawn Irvine echoed the information on the slides showing growth in the community and confirmed that it is the community's goal to grow and not be stagnant. He mentioned the significant regional opportunities for Polk County due to the proximity to population centers.

Summarized comments from the PAC and public include:

We are a growing community, things are happening, downtown is growing, industrial base is growing, don't want to stagnate and the community is actively trying not to, Polk County as a region has a lot of opportunity due to geographic location, proximity to other population centers and employment bases... there is a lot to work with in the community. The goal of the community is not to become a bed-room community, but it is still a larger piece of the economical puzzle.

The Airpark is a melting pot, a true neighborhood. Lots of retirees, but some kids. The dream is to build a plane in your hangar and fly it out on a state-owned runway.

Airpark and airport has grown... There are many in the community that still work, and many that are retirees. The majority are probably retirees. One draw, is the mix of people on the Airpark. The Airpark has a strong network of people with a diverse background. The Airpark is a draw in and of itself to the community because this Airpark is a text book example of what an Airpark should be.

Relevant Studies: Discussion and presentation of the relevant studies that have been and will be utilized, reviewed, and incorporated in to the Master Plan as well as a brief discussion of incorporating the Airport Master Plan in to the City and County Comprehensive Plans.

Environmental Data depicted was focused on local climate data and some environmental conditions and the relationship to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The most notable issue identified by environmental experts and addressed during the meeting was the Streaked Horn Lark and its presence at the airport. The birds have been seen here. Development will need to identify impacts to the population/habitat and be prepared to mitigate.

Landside

Land-Use: A discussion on zoning and land use compatibility in the area adjacent to the Airport included the base zones in the area such as heavy industrial to the east of Stryker and light industrial south of Hoffman as well as the airpark residential zone and the airport development district, which appear to be compatible with the Airport and Airpark. A brief discussion on the existing overlay zones in place with the City identified that there may be some minor deficiencies in the zoning code that need to be resolved at the local level.

Utilities: Existing utilities such as water and sewer in the vicinity of the Airport were presented. The focus on utilities was how the existing water and sewer facilities were adequate, but any future expansion West of the Airport would require extension of both sewer and water lines. Questions still remain on the best approach to extending these facilities to the areas yet to be developed.

Drainage: Drainage issues on the airport were discussed in greater detail due to flooding that has occurred on the airport in previous years. There have been a number of maintenance projects, ODA has spent \$35,000 on maintenance and the City has also spent money on maintenance projects. Further study is needed to see what improvements may be needed in the Airpark, more than is scoped for this master plan. Public comment indicated some facilities are undersized for their function, especially under the RR tracks. Not enough rain has fallen this year to judge whether drainage works better. No other problems were identified.

Fencing/Security: The Airport is not enclosed with fencing, but does not appear to be a problem other than wildlife issues that have occurred. Some believe this is the most secure airport in the state because of the residents and community atmosphere. Unauthorized or lost vehicle/peds are spotted right away and challenged. Gates will be the biggest challenge to securing the airport as it may limit access by the airpark residents and to the businesses. On-Airport business owners indicated they were not consulted when the new existing gates went in and that they needed to be if any future plans call for fencing/gates. Many believe that adding fencing and gates is a solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

Access/Parking: Access to the Airport is provided from Hoffman Road on to Airport Rd. Existing parking areas were presented and PAC members indicated the aerial photo does not identify the additional 20 parking spots identified as overflow parking.

GA Terminal Area: Information related to the Star duster Café, fuel storage, FBOs, and the EAA were presented. Planning team was corrected on the actual size of underground fuel tanks operated by Independence Aviation as 2 x 10,000 gal tanks; owned by Marici and Robin Reid. Recently expanded EAA building has 11,500 SF including meeting space.

A PAC discussion on fuel at the Airport ensued. Mitch pointed out that a Cascadia event airport would want jet fuel. The discussion moved towards Mogas survey estimates provided by the State that indicate the number of gallons of fuel sold at auto gas stations that end up being used in airplanes. An 11-cent flowage fee is refunded to the state based on those estimates, over \$200k per yr statewide.

Pilots can apply for a refund of highway taxes from Mogas receipts as well. May not cover the admin costs to recover.

Robin Reid Aviation indicated there were potential difficulties installing Mogas on the Airport due to insurance concerns about misfueling.

TTF, HOA, and Hangars: A discussion of the symbiotic relationship between the Airport and Airpark was addressed by focusing on the 7 through-the-fence (TTF) access points. These TTF access points will serve as the primary means to keep the Airpark in mind as an essential element of the Airport Master Plan. While the plan is focused on the Airport facilities, the physical and social connection to the Airpark cannot go unmentioned or forgotten. A discussion of the remaining sites available for development on the Airport and Airpark followed. The topic of fencing/gates and security at the Airport/Airpark was discussed again. It appears that many in the Airpark community are against gating the taxilanes while others prefer it.

Airside

Airside Facilities: Existing airside facilities including signage, lighting, taxiways, apron area, tie-downs, runway pavement and marking, and visual approach aids such as PAPI and windsocks were presented. No AWOS. After the presentation of existing facilities, the discussion was focused on pavement condition and ODA Pavement Management Program (PMP). The PAC indicated there were some cracks, grass in cracks, and birdbaths. FOD issue along south taxilanes occur due to the gravel access roads. A non-FAA solution will be examined by ODA. Maybe paving.

Helipads: The question was asked if existing helipads meet airspace requirements per FAA criteria. Planning team indicated they would go back and confirm and include in narrative.

FAA Design Standards: The FAA Design Standards section began with a brief presentation on how standards are determined based on critical aircraft and existing runway approach procedures. The direct entry from the north side of the apron to the runway was identified and discussed but the conversation was focused on the RPZ and relocated threshold/inline taxiway due to proximity of Hoffman Road. The current Runway 34 threshold is set so the 20:1 approach surface clears Hoffman Road and fencing. Grandfathering of existing condition of roads/RPZ is acceptable until changes are implemented. A changing departure RPZ or lower visibility instrument approach (if from south, which is unlikely) would be triggers to resolve this issue. The identified issue could result in shorter runway and a reconfiguration of the connectors. Potential solutions for these issues will be discussed in the facility requirements and development alternatives section of the Airport Master Plan.

The apron area Taxilane Object Free Areas (OFA) were presented and discussed. After the meeting and during individual discussions with airport operators, the southern portion of the apron area was identified as an area that may require additional investigation. The planning team indicated they will provide additional analysis and detail on the operating environment on the south portion of the apron area.

Airspace: The airspace discussion revolved around the introduction of an Instrument Approach Procedure (IAP) being introduced to the airport. Previous planning efforts identified the need for and IAP and during the scoping process it was anticipated that getting a GPS IAP in to the Airport would be an opportunity to pursue. However, during the PAC discussion it became apparent that some members of the PAC were not in favor while others have indicated they would like to see an IAP at the Airport.

A summary of the PAC discussion indicates:

Some instrument pilots like the G airspace so they can take off without visibility mins and pick up radar in the air.

One commenter stated that powerlines would disqualify the airport from getting an approach. Others want the best IFR facilities available to make the best use of their equipment.

Critics say that Jet A and instrument approach would change the small character of the airport and make it less desirable for new pilots.

Flight schools would also be impacted because currently only 1M/clear of clouds is all that's required. Class G airspace offers that competitive advantage.

Administration and Financials: The planning team presented existing data on airport administration and maintenance services provided by ODA as well as the state and federal compliance laws directed at Airports. Additionally, 5 years of historic financial data as well as the next 5 years of forecast data were presented.

Aviation Forecasts

The forecast discussion began with a brief overview of the purpose, the phasing (5-year, 10-year, 20-year forecasts), the types of forecasts (based aircraft, operations, and critical aircraft), and the methodology that will be used in developing the forecasts.

Local historic trends from on-airport/airpark hangar growth identified 5-6 new hangar homes and 1-2 airport hangars since 1994. Data from the FAA Terminal Area Forecast (TAF), which is the official FAA forecast of aviation activity at the Airport, was also presented to the PAC. The PAC confirmed TAF data (in as much as they were able to) that on average nearly 3 out of 4 operations are itinerant. The ongoing baseaircraft.com count being conducted by ODA was discussed. Currently the number of based aircraft was 198 with 190 single-engine aircraft.

AVGAS Fuel data, obtained from ODA, for the Independence State Airport was presented and the PAC indicated that the sharp increase in fuel sales for 2012 is due to the decline in the price of fuel. PAC members indicated that Independence offers the cheapest AVGAS in the State which may explain why the sales have continued to grow. The comparison between statewide fuel trends and Independence fuel trends was then discussed. The growth of fuel at Independence could be attributed to the cheaper cost of fuel as well as the destination of the Airport, Café, and Airpark environment.

A summary of the national trends in aviation was presented.

The existing critical aircraft was discussed with PAC. The PAC confirmed that there are currently not enough B-II (small) aircraft, or an increasing demand from B-II (small) aircraft that would dictate planning for B-II (small) at this time. However, that does not preclude the possibility that someone may decide to base a B-II aircraft at Independence at some point in the future.

The PAC commented that if the airport doesn't have an instrument approach, the B-II aircraft will not base here and also that B-II aircraft may not be coming in as often as they would due to the lack of services such as JetA, runway length, and an Instrument Approach Procedure. It was explained that the B-II traffic demand has to show up before you must react to it and expand facilities to accommodate B-II. This type of expansion is not a decision that can be made ahead of time, except to protect for future ability. PAC members discussed the option of a regional approach to airport planning indicating that the B-II airport is Salem and Independence should remain as B-I (small). However, it was also pointed out the FAA and State are not driving the direction with respect to design aircraft.

The conversation then transitioned to based aircraft forecasts and the starting point of 198 aircraft based on recent updated counts provided by ODA. The consultants recommended a growth rate in

between the historic based aircraft growth rate of 1.8% and the TAF of 1.4%. There were no objections from PAC members.

Due to the lack of hard data on operational count information, the planning team facilitated a discussion with the PAC to understand the number of operations that may be occurring at the airport.

When asked the question, “how often does an aircraft land at Independence Airport” the PAC discussion indicates that on summer weekends the airport is quite busy. It can be estimated that landings occur every 8-10 minutes. Operations are much busier in the morning, and once the restaurant closes operations drop off quite a bit at which time the glider traffic increases. It is expected that glider operations will continue to grow. In a conversation before the PAC meeting, Marici Reid indicated that her glider operation had to be relocated to Independence from McMinnville (MMV) due to the MMV runway closure this summer. The operation worked well at Independence and they expect the operation will permanently be based at Independence resulting in an increase in summer operations.

The operations discussion concluded with agreement that on average the annual operations are somewhere in between 37,000 and 44,000, which is consistent with the average forecast Operations Per Based Aircraft (OPBA) of 205 and within an acceptable range of the TAF operational growth rate of 1.7%. It is possible that, based on fuel sales data and the increase in glider operations that operations could grow faster than the TAF.

Next Steps

The next steps of the planning process were presented including the schedule, the release of a draft narrative report, and the PAC Meeting #2 tentative date.

Public Comments

Any plans to improve the access roads on the north side? Past Gable’s home? John W says they have graveled, but not involved as south side. May look for ways to cost effectively improve.

The lot in front of restaurant needs repair.

The developer paid for plenty of infrastructure, was used to match grants.

This airport should be for small aircraft, a haven, don’t push them out with larger planes. Inst approach and Jet A will make that happen. Great place for students, getting into aviation.

Do we declare a B-II or whatever and then let them in?

Does this master plan project seek to increase the funding levels/profit and thereby will identify projects that drives growth and higher revenues?

The cost of the lots has gone up because of scarcity. Two lots on the state property go unused based on small lots, setbacks, etc.