

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AIRPORT COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COTTONWOOD, ARIZONA,
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 6:00 P.M., AT THE NEW COTTONWOOD COUNCIL CHAMBERS
LOCATED AT 1083 E. RIVERFRONT RD., COTTONWOOD, ARIZONA.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Moeny called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A. Roll Call

The recorder called the roll as follows:

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Moeny, Chairman
Bill Wade, Vice Chairman
Ron Baird, Commission Member
Vernon Reed, Commission Member
Jim Sutton, Commission Member

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Tripp, Airport Manager
Rosa Cays, Customer Service and Reservations Specialist, Recorder
Rudy Rodriguez, Deputy City Manager

B. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Moeny led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Approval of Minutes of December 6, 2023 (No meeting January 3, 2024)

Vice Chair Wade made a motion to approve the minutes; Commissioner Baird second the motion. Minutes were unanimously approved.

II. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS AND UPDATES

No reports or updates were presented.

III. OLD BUSINESS

1. Airport Noise Working Group roles/responsibilities update

Mr. Tripp shared what few changes were made to the roles and responsibilities of the Airport Noise Working Group, a subcommittee of the Airport Commission. He updated the commissioners on the status of the members of the working group and what was left to accomplish in the process. Mr. Tripp said the final vote would be scheduled at the March 6 meeting.

Vice Chair Wade asked if Embry-Riddle would have representation in the working group. Mr. Tripp confirmed they would, as would Yavapai College and Leighnor Aircraft. He said other airport experts would be brought in as needed.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Appointment of Airport Commission representative to the Airport Noise Working Group

Vice Chair Wade motioned that Chair Moeny be the commission representative; Commissioner Baird second the motion, which passed unanimously.

2. Interview of Cottonwood applicants for the Airport Noise Working Group

Mr. Tripp said three applicants were interviewing from the six who initially applied. He offered options for how to conduct the interviews and clarified that the same questions needed to be asked of all candidates, which the commissioners were given before the meeting. Chair Moeny began the first interview.

The first candidate was Carl Christopher Waak. Vice Chair Wade asked Mr. Waak why he wanted to serve on this airport committee. Mr. Waak said he has been in Cottonwood, on Airport Road, for 21 years, upwind and downwind, and understands the challenges as a resident as well as the business aspect of running the airport. He was in local government as a sheriff and has protected rights of citizens as well as those of the government.

Chair Moeny asked Mr. Waak if he was willing to put in the necessary time to serve; Mr. Waak said yes.

Chair Moeny then asked how he would assist the working group in helping improve airport noise mitigation efforts. Mr. Waak replied that research would be a priority and having the awareness that airport noise is an emotional topic. He said he could be unbiased, having enjoyed airshows as a kid and also being on the receiving end of airport noise from a resident's perspective. He added that he is not a "yes" man.

Chair Moeny asked Mr. Waak what expertise he would bring to the position. Mr. Waak touched on his personal history in Yavapai County since 1976 and said he feels "dug in" to the Cottonwood community. As a former homicide detective, Mr. Waak said he is very detail oriented and good at gathering facts and has a very analytical mind.

The next candidate, Joe Bob Grisham, was asked the same questions after he gave a short introduction. He said he moved to Cottonwood in June 2023 after he had visited the area for several years, and was aware of the airport two miles away, just not the consistency and intensity of aircraft using the airport. Mr. Grisham said he wants to work with Embry-Riddle and the airport community to bring harmony for all.

Recently retired, he has the time to commit to the group. He said he loves this community and wants it to be his home. He said he is an information gatherer and thinks this is key to educating the community to come to resolutions. Mr. Grisham said he is about the truth and facts and how to fix the issue, working together to come up with solutions that satisfy everyone. As for the expertise he would bring to the group, Mr. Grisham reiterated his strength as an information gatherer and researcher and said he wants to help each side, Embry-Riddle and the residents. He said with a positive mindset and forward thinking, the group can find answers and resolve many issues.

The third candidate was Robert Rothrock, who has been a resident of Cottonwood for more than 40 years. He said he has seen many changes in the city and has witnessed what riles up the community,

including the airport noise. He agreed that facts, not hearsay, would help find a solution, though it would not be easy.

As for the required time commitment to serve on the group, Mr. Rothrock said he was on the city council 2002–2006 even though he was teaching fulltime; he understands homework would be part of the job.

Mr. Rothrock said having been a teacher for most of his career, he had to find a way to reach a lot of people, youngsters and adults, by good listening and coming up with viable solutions. He said he is empathetic and has the ability to read people. He also served on the budget committee for the school district as vice chair and had to take into consideration everyone affected by the budget. Mr. Rothrock said he is good at finding common ground, which is the expertise he would bring to the group.

The commissioners submitted their votes, which Mr. Tripp collected at the end of the meeting.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Airport Manager's Report

Chair Moeny commented that it was a nice report. Vice Chair Wade asked about the status of the windsock. Mr. Tripp said it was in the design phase with no estimated time for completion. He said he would try to have an update from Dibble for the March 6 meeting. Mr. Tripp further explained the process and when the project would potentially be done.

Vice Chair Wade asked Mr. Tripp to provide his formula for how he determines the price of fuel at a future meeting. Mr. Tripp said he would provide this information once again and clarified that he is not looking at nearby airports to come up with a price, and Cottonwood currently has the lowest price around.

Vice Chair Wade acknowledged the grant process Mr. Tripp talks about and asked if in the planning, city officials would consider buying some of the land along the runway. Mr. Tripp said budget constraints guide decisions, so does he want airport improvements or to buy the land? Mr. Wade said the city needs to adequately plan for the acquisition of land. Mr. Tripp said he will bring this up at the next meeting about the airport capital plan with the city.

Vice Chair Wade said 37 people want a hangar at the airport and that Mr. Tripp had mentioned meeting with investors; he asked if anything became of that. Mr. Tripp said the meeting was postponed but the option was still open to talk with investors. Mr. Wade said the existing hangars have been a decent investment for the city and said customers would stand in line if the airport had new hangars. He said he wanted to see this explored.

Mr. Tripp told him he could make a motion about this, so the vice chair motioned that the commission bring this to council and request research into the possibility of expanding and developing hangars. Commissioner Baird second, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Tripp explained the status of those on the waiting list. A discussion continued between Mr. Wade and Mr. Tripp.

Mr. Rodriguez approached the dais, addressed Mr. Wade's comments, and explained how finances were handled in the past. He said he and Mr. Tripp could talk about it.

2. Airport Operations & Noise Abatement Report

There were no comments or questions.

VI. Call to the Public

Chair Moeny read aloud the ARS regarding the Call to the Public.

Ms. Carla Hill of Pine Shadows in Cottonwood clarified that Verde Valley Aviation Impact Relief (VVAIR), a group she is affiliated with, is not against the airport, unlike other groups addressing airport noise. She compared the 2018–20 reports to 2023 reports regarding airport noise and operations. She said 75 percent of air traffic is going north, and asked for a compromise with Embry-Riddle to alternate their paths every other day. Ms. Hill said neighbors to the south would not be please, but it is a burden that should be shared by everyone. She contacted Parker Northrup of Embry-Riddle via email who said Mr. Tripp could help make this happen within a day or so. She asked that this be pursued.

Ms. Hill then brought up the use of other airports in the area, which Mr. Northrup addressed by saying they would not incur increased costs for the students “if suitable training can be achieved more efficiently with lower flight time.” She asked the commission to consider landing fees and cautioned that people are reaching their boiling points. Mr. Tripp asked Ms. Hill to forward those emails so he can work with Mr. Northrup.

Mary Lou Rose of Mountain Gate in Clarkdale said she is concerned about the amount of low-level, repetitive touch-and-go operations mostly from Embry-Riddle near her home, Tuzigoot, the Verde River, and parks and trails. She referred to an FAA advisory and quoted highlights from it. Ms. Rose said even the FAA says places like this need to have noise tamped from low-lying aircraft as a concern for the quality of the environment, and that adherence to the practice is a practical indication for pilot concern for the environment. She said voluntary compliance is the problem with this and many advisories.

She stated “cooperative actions” by airport operators, managers, and others to publicize these advisories are encouraged, and asked if Embry-Riddle is teaching future students to ignore these advisories since they’re voluntary. Ms. Rose implored the commissioners and Mr. Tripp to share this advisory to stop low-level flights over Tuzigoot, the Verde River, and recreational areas in Cottonwood.

Mr. Art Alfaro from Clarkdale introduced himself as one of the three Clarkdale residents serving on the Airport Noise Working group and said he looked forward to working with everyone.

Future agenda items: Vice Chair Wade said he wanted to spend time with the realtors and the documents they use so people know there’s an airport in Cottonwood. He said people should be able to address an agenda item during a meeting. Mr. Tripp said we need to follow state open meeting laws and would need to get a legal opinion. He suggested Mr. Wade hold a public meeting so people can be heard. A brief discussion continued.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Baird moved to adjourn; Commissioner Reed second the motion. The regular meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.