

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AIRPORT COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COTTONWOOD, ARIZONA,  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2024, 6:00 P.M., AT THE NEW COTTONWOOD COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
LOCATED AT 1083 E. RIVERFRONT RD., COTTONWOOD, ARIZONA.

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**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

Tom Whitmer, City Manager

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Moeny led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**C. Approval of Minutes: March 6, 2024**

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

**II. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS AND UPDATES**

None.

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

**1. Landing Fee System Update**

Mr. Tripp advised Chair Moeny that he could table or discuss this item. Commissioner Baird thought it would be a good idea to table and suggested a subcommittee be formed to address this so everyone is better informed. Vice Chair Wade said Cottonwood would be the only airport in the Southwest with landing fees. Mr. Wade's understanding is that Embry-Riddle would pay the landing fees and continue to use the airport. He continued. His fear would be an increase in traffic.

Chair Moeny met with someone from Embry-Riddle who said landing fees would not slow down their use, nor would they change the scheduling to lessen the noise. Commissioner Sutton said he read that flight training is a commercial operation and that landing fees could be implemented on commercial operations only. He mentioned that when a "gentleman's agreement" was made five years ago, the noise was five times less offensive than now. Chair Money replied and the discussion continued.

Vice Chair Wade said much needs to be done to abate the noise and that landing fees are not the answer. Commissioner Sutton said Cottonwood Airport saw 50,000+ operations from Embry-

Riddle last year and that their use is only going to increase. He said the university is a nonprofit but made \$120 million last year and thinks “they should share”. Chair Moeny asked Commissioner Baird to collect information from other local airports. Chair Moeny tabled the item.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **1. Airport Capital Improvement Program Update (FY2025)**

Mr. Tripp updated everyone on the program. He referred to a spreadsheet on the screen (Tentative Airport Fiscal Year 2025 Special Revenue Funds, pg. 15 of agenda packet). He commented on the line items and the status of each.

#### **V. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

##### **1. Airport Manager's Report**

Vice Chair Wade asked if any progress has been made to obtain funding for new hangars; he said more than 30 people are waiting for a hangar. Mr. Tripp said he could put in a funding request next year but that other expenditures take precedence. He made suggestions as to what the public had options to do. Mr. Wade said last time the city invested in hangars was because it was profitable; maybe they can do it again. Mr. Tripp reminded Vice Chair Wade that the deputy city manager had informed the commissioners that we can look at this in the future, not now.

##### **2. Airport Operations & Noise Abatement Report**

Vice Chair Wade asked if a pattern for helicopters could be worked out with the helicopter companies in consideration of safety and noise abatement. He mentioned the accident in Flagstaff last year and doesn't want this to happen in Cottonwood. Commissioner Sutton said a helicopter flew over his house at 1:00 am last night and asked if they could fly another pattern when taking off. Mr. Wade said the city needs to avoid any liability and control how helicopters enter and exit the airport. Mr. Tripp asked Vice Chair Wade if he would like to lead a subcommittee. Mr. Sutton volunteered to be on that committee.

##### **3. Airport Noise Complaints & Issues: Public comment and discussion among commissioners regarding noise issues including noise complaints by residents.**

Chair Moeny was prepared to move on to the next item when Mr. Tripp reminded the commissioners why this item was on the agenda. Commissioner Sutton suggested the commissioners meet with representatives from Embry-Riddle on a quarterly basis and mentioned there was talk of a new runway in the region. Mr. Tripp reminded the commission they can do this on their own; a brief discussion ensued. Mr. Tripp reminded them of the Open Meeting Laws.

*[There was some confusion as to whether this was open to the public to comment or if the meeting had moved on to the Call to the Public. Chair Moeny let members of the audience speak.]*

Mary Lou Rose of Clarkdale said they have airplanes flying over every hour, not just one helicopter a night. She asked if the group of “right people” have met (Vice Chair Wade had suggested this at the March meeting). Chair Moeny said they have not. Ms. Rose asked if they would be meeting, to which Chair Moeny said, “Not at this time.” He said they were not having much success getting pilots together.

Leslie Evans of Clarkdale talked about the noise and how it has affected the enjoyment of her own home. She said tempers are getting hot, and people in Clarkdale are tired of carrying the brunt of problems with the Cottonwood Airport. Ms. Evans said the word is out that the airport does not have landing fees, so the use and noise will likely get worse.

Karla Erickson of Clarkdale said to the commissioners, "You must feel frustrated to see us all the time, but this problem isn't going away." She said she keeps hearing that everything is voluntary and asked Mr. Tripp what he is able to "manage." Ms. Erickson asked what "we" are allowed to manage and that the FAA keeps telling her to "talk to the [airport] manager."

Diane Schneider of Clarkdale brought up the "gentleman's agreement" and why there isn't legal documentation of it. She asked why the airport doesn't charge, and pointed out that FAA, ADOT, and the city charge for services. She said the airport is a burden on taxpayers.

*[The following community members commented on V.3.]*

Amy Loenstein said she has been in Clarkdale since 1990. She asked if any of the commissioners work at home and live under the airport path. She shared about herself and her background and work she's done from home, which she can no longer do because of the airport noise.

Ronnie Metz of Cottonwood said it was a beautiful place to live until last May, but that now the constant noise is horrible. She said it affects her mind and causes fatigue and stress, and that because her husband has dementia, they cannot move. She asked the commissioners to please do what they can about moving traffic to other nearby airports. Ms. Metz said she now has to wear sound-canceling headphones.

Hunter Bachrach of Cottonwood said he bought a home aware of the proximity to the airport. He said he had contacted Embry-Riddle about the Cottonwood Airport, and said if he had known about the 53,000 flights per year, he would have thought twice about living here. Mr. Bachrach said in his opinion, the goal for the airport is not to make profit. What can the commission do, he asked? He said it was hard to believe "we have no arrows in our quiver."

Laura Jones from Clarkdale asked what is subject to open meeting laws, and that if the "gentleman's agreement" really exists, this is problematic. Mr. Tripp explained the "gentleman's agreement" from May 2022 and said there were no backdoor deals. Ms. Jones interjected that it was not good to use terminology like "gentleman's agreement."

Mary Lou Rose requested a copy of the safety plan and asked what it was. She wondered where a student pilot lands if an engine goes out. She asked about insurance requirements and what happens if they slam into her house? Ms. Rose said eight students in pattern does not sound safe to her.

## **VI. CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

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

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Baird moved to adjourn; Commissioner Sutton second the motion. The regular meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.