

CITY OF PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA
REGULAR MEETING OF THE AIRPORT COMMISSION

APPOINTED MEMBERS

Anna Dietrich, Vice Chair
Jeff Domich
Colin Perry, PAPA Rep
Marcus Margand, *Chair*
Thomas McGaw
Nancy Sasser

COMMISSION MEETINGS

1st Thursday of each month

City Hall Council Chambers

11 English Street
Petaluma, CA 94952



COUNCIL LIAISON

Karen Nau

STAFF LIAISON

Dan Cohen, Airport Manager

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MINUTES

Thursday, May 2, 2024
6:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER 6:02 PM

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Vice Chair Dietrich, Committee Chair Margand, Commissioner McGaw, Commissioner Perry, Commissioner Sasser, Councilmember Nau

ABSENT: Commissioner Domich

PUBLIC COMMENT

During General Public Comment, the public is invited to make comments on items of public interest that are within the Committee/Commission's subject matter jurisdiction and that are not listed on the current agenda. Public comments are limited to three minutes per person. Depending on the number of persons wishing to address the Committee/Commission, time will be allocated in equal shares totaling no more than twenty minutes.

PRESENTATIONS

The Petaluma Planning Department, Heather Hines, Special Projects Manager for Petaluma and M-Group Consulting Planner with other Planning team members presented the draft Transportation Policy Framework.

Commissioner McGaw commented that the FAA owns the Petaluma Airport and has many constraints and requirements to which the City must adhere. He then spoke about the history of the Airport and its significance to the community.

Commissioner Sasser added that zoning information is available online.

Vice Chair Dietrich spoke about medical first responder helicopters that routinely use the Petaluma Airport, and that there is technology being developed that will expand that effort. She added that "advanced air mobility" technology is emergent and refers to electric and

autonomous aircraft that will include significant safety, environmental, and economic benefits. Petaluma is well-positioned to be a key hub for these innovations, and it is important to add these upcoming aviation changes to the Transportation Policy. There will also be a need for upgrading Petaluma Airport's energy grid to electric, which will benefit ground vehicles, airplanes and the surrounding community. These things are well within the time horizon of the Transportation Policy report. The Planning Department's goal of carbon neutrality is supported by these efforts, but aircraft safety must be a priority. Trying to force old, conventional aircraft to use lead-free fuel prematurely could lead to death, so any environmental initiative should be additive to aviation safety.

Vice Chair Dietrich talked about connecting the Cross Creek development to Old Adobe Elementary School, which would create a walkable and bikeable pathway.

Commissioner McGaw commented that on one of the slides the Airport Master Plan was mentioned, and it has been updated several times. Any future updates would have to be reviewed by the Airport Commission, Manager Cohen, and tenants.

Commissioner Perry spoke about the crosstown Rainier connector, which could be a great connection for pedestrians, bike riders, etc. He has heard that the initiative is not moving forward, and he'd like it to be revisited. He then spoke about traffic circles and transportation to the Airport.

Councilmember Nau added that during natural disasters, emergency rescue planes come to refuel at the Airport, and it is important that we keep the Airport operational for this purpose. She then spoke about the need for a bus route connecting the west and east sides of Petaluma, and she would especially like a route that goes to the Airport. Additionally, Councilmember Nau spoke about the need for bike racks and drinking fountains at the Airport and the Fair Grounds.

Commissioner Sasser commented that the Airport Terminal building is aging, repurposed, and structurally substandard. She would like the General Plan to reflect a new Airport Terminal building that is structurally sound. Commissioner Margand agreed with this and pointed out that the terminal and surrounding area is the first impression pilots have of Petaluma, so we must improve the structure. He further spoke about the presentation slide that referred to sustainability policies and he would like to hear more specifics about that, and whether the Planning Commission is prepared to speak to the Airport Commissioners about defining those policies. Commissioner Margand emphasized the importance of safety when it comes to changing fuel.

Heather Hines responded that the General Plan might have a policy that states: Continue to explore innovations in aircraft technology. When thinking about upgrading the Airport Terminal we should also consider energy needs to allow the Airport to stay competitive.

Vice Chair Dietrich responded that her concern is about unintended consequences. There have been conversations about moving away from the safe aviation fuel that is available at the Airport

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now to the new unleaded option, without retaining the ability for an aircraft to use conventional fuel. That is very risky from a safety perspective. The kind of broad brush statements like Ms. Hines suggested can sometimes be applied in unintended ways by people who are not versed in aviation safety.

Chair Margand spoke about a presentation slide referring to "low carbon travel" and wants to temper expectations about what the Airport must accomplish for safety. A Special Projects team member clarified that the intent of that phrase was about freight vehicle fuel, not Airport fuel. Ms. Hines agreed and stated that she will add verbiage addressing Airport fuel and the primary importance of safety.

Commissioner Sasser commented that Avgas sales are a significant part of Airport revenue, so if the Airport starts carrying new fuel, patrons who want the old fuel will fly elsewhere to get it and this deprives the Airport of that revenue. Then Commissioner McGaw spoke about the FAA's approval for an unleaded high-octane aviation fuel, but the infrastructure required to produce and distribute it is taking quite a bit of time to implement. Their goal is to have it available nationwide by 2030, with locations in California as their first focus. Pilots who want to use it need a safety certificate from the FAA.

Chair Margand said that the aviation community would very much like to be a part of the conversation and to give the Planning Department input in getting our shared goals implemented. He then asked questions about statistics and housing in Petaluma.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Approval of Minutes of Regular Airport Commission Meeting of Thursday, April 4, 2024. No changes were noted.

2. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. COMMITTEE COMMENT

Council Update – Councilmember Nau spoke about the Council's future land use focus. The urban growth boundary will be on the ballot in November, and the City Council also worked on goals and priorities, and the traffic on D Street. There will be a Plan Fest at the fairgrounds on May 11, where the public will be able to go to each of the 14 stations and interact with councilmembers. Next they will work on the budget.

AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Hangar Rate Policy – Commissioner McGaw and Commissioner Sasser have drafted a tenant survey to find out how long the tenants have been at the Airport and how long they intend to stay, along with other topics. They will meet with Manager Cohen to discuss the results.

Councilmember Nau asked about the April Display Day, which took place on the same day as the Butter and Eggs Festival, and Commissioner Perry responded that they had over 150 people attending.

COMMISSIONER COMMENT

No comments.

STAFF COMMENT – Airport Manager Report

Manager Cohen discussed the Airport budget, which is at \$1.6MM revenues and expenditures. He then reported that the Airport is progressing on a power backup proposal, which is on the City Bid website. The bid closed on April 30, 2024 and the City may have already selected a solution that includes cost reduction.

Commissioner McGaw asked if the FAA has responded to the Airport's request for an update to Minimum Standards, and Manager Cohen replied that we have not heard yet.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

A. None

5. **ADJOURN** Meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m. The next Meeting of the Airport Commission is scheduled for Thursday, June 6, 2024.

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