City of Oceanside Airport Public Forum
June 5, 2001
Draft 2 notes by: Kevin Wolf kjwolf@dcn.davis.ca.us, 530-758-4211, fax 758-2338

Note: These notes are from me as I recorded the information and remember it. They have not been reviewed nor edited by city staff. In a few places, I have added comments or questions from me that seem logical based on the discussion, but were not said. Overall I try to write notes as statements of fact wherever applicable. These are draft notes so do not take the statements as true until the second draft. I expect that as participants and experts review the notes, they will inform me of any errors or clarifications that I need to incorporate. By writing the statements as facts, it forces participants to either make changes or, by default, agree with the statements. My experience is that this method of drafting notes results in a quicker agreement on basic information. Gaining such agreements on facts is the core of good communication. I look forward to your comments and clarifications. Kevin Wolf

I. Useful contact information:

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II. Problems that residents identified with the airport.

Note: *The forum was focused on problems that some Oceanside residents have with the operations of the airport. This was not a forum in which the benefits of the airport were detailed. Nor was this forum a "vote" on the severity of the problems. It was an opportunity for all sides to share information, attempt to clarify issues, and identify possible solutions. KW*

A. Noise

1. Discussion about noise in general.

a. Ambient noise is background noise such as a freeway. People living in an area with a high level of ambient noise can still be affected by airplane flights overhead and hear them as very loud. Higher ambient noise levels can make it more difficult to measure noise from airplanes.

b. One way in which noise is measured leads to a downplaying of the severity of the noise from individual plane flights. When noise is averaged over a 24 hour period, the occasional high spikes of noise caused by individual actions such as plane flights can be "lost" in the averaging which may show the area as not having an above average noise problem.

c. Point source noise. When planes take off, land, rev up, and fly near a ground observer, they create a point source of noise that rises above the ambient noise levels.

d. Repetitive point sources. When planes fly over or from a location over and over but separated by

time, this becomes many times during "repetitive."

e. Cumulative noise. When planes are idling at the airport and others are taking off and/or landing, the noise accumulates and creates what some call a "circle of noise". This can be more irritating and louder to residents.

2. Noise from airplanes.
a. Flying planes make noise. When planes stay within the designated flight path, their noise does not affect residents as much as when the planes veer from the flight path and fly over or near someone's residence. There are many reasons why planes might veer from the designated flight path. These include:

i. A marine layer may cause pilots to turn sooner than the flight path designates.
ii. Larger planes need more room to turn and may come closer to the edge of the flight path.
iii. Pilots wanting to fly to particular locations may leave the flight path sooner to get there quicker.
iv. Some residents believe that many pilots doing touch and goes do not want to follow the flight path because it takes too long.
v. Some residents believe that some pilots are lazy or unwilling to make the effort.

b. People on the ground hear less noise from planes that are flying higher than planes that are flying lower. During take-offs and landings (both real and practice), planes have to fly low.

c. Pilots that “touch and go” their planes cause noise near the equivalent of planes that actually land or take-off. Pilots that "touch and go" may often practice this multiple times in a single flight. This practice can multiply the landing and take-off noise even though not many planes may be actually landing and taking off.

d. In general, larger planes cause more noise than smaller ones both because of the size of their engines and their flight paths. Larger planes also have an extended flight path, which may bring them closer to homes than smaller planes.

e. Plane flights have increased at the Oceanside airport in recent years in part because of the success of the flight schools, the good economy, and increased numbers of visiting planes.

f. Flights in and out of the airport can occur seven days per week and at all hours. This results in noise from planes that can occur at almost any time. (Some residents stated that they would be less bothered by airplane noise if there were periods when no flights occurred.)

g. The more planes that idle at the airport at one time, the louder the background noise becomes. Idling planes combined with planes revving as they maneuver and prepare for take-off can significantly raise the ambient noise emanating from the airport.

h. Most planes have older style engines, especially training planes in flight schools. The FAA has not been supportive of advanced engine designs that could lower noise emissions.

i. Planes could be less noisy if their owners took care to keep them properly tuned up and if they flew and taxied using quieter techniques. For example, engines can be tuned to reduce propeller slap. Most planes do not need to use 100% of their turbo chargers.

3. Airport noise problems are exacerbated in a number of ways.
a. The city has allowed housing to be built in areas close to the airport. These homeowners can hear

the noise more than those far away can. Will the City continue to allow homes to be built near the airport and flight paths?

b. Many (all?) newer homes built near the airport or flight path have a flight navigation easement on their property and all owners are supposed to know about this before buying their property. Some airport supporters believe that the easement should prevent these property owners from complaining about airport noise. Some of these residents believe that they have a right to complain when pilots veer from the flight paths or from operational guidelines whether or not there is an easement on their property.

B. Safety from plane flights

General background

a. There have not been any accidents from flights leaving or flying into the Oceanside airport (ever or in the last few decades?)

b. Pilots are the first people at the scene of an accident and are motivated not to take risks. Plane accidents often result in death to the pilot.

c. The airport is unregulated which means there is neither official policing nor restrictions of when planes can fly in or out. Thus it is unknown whether pilots flying in foul weather or at night are qualified to do so.

d. It is not illegal to fly over schools as long as the pilot is at the correct height.

2. Safety concerns include the following:

a. Pilots are allowed fly in the marine layer and at night.

b. Pilots can fly over schools (2?) and parks.

c. Some homes are on hills and may be in more danger than those close to the ground, especially at night and in marine layers.

d. Student and inexperienced pilots are more likely to have safety problems than experienced pilots have, and the Oceanside airport has a lot of student and new pilots.

C. Financial Concerns for the City.

Background

a. The city owns the airport and holds all the master leases for pilots, airport businesses and flight schools.

b. The city has the ability to regulate the airport and its businesses and establish rules beyond those established by the FAA.

2. Concerns

a. Is there a financial liability to the city if accidents occur?

b. Could the city become liable if homeowners need to be compensated for any property value losses that are caused by the effects of the airport on their homes? For example, could a lawsuit force the city to install noise abatement solutions such as insulation and double pain windows on homes that are affected by airplane noise?

c. What is the City's budget for the airport? How much does the City invest in the airport annually and what income does it make?

d. Do home values decrease around the airport and thus does the City lose property tax income from depressed valuations?

D. Property Values

1. Background

a. Property values may be positively or negatively affected by the airport and airplane flights. One person said that values go down 24.7% around airports. Another person stated that property values around the Oceanside airport have increased because of the airport. A number of participants said that they bought homes in the area to be near the airport.

2. Concerns

a. Homeowners may experience lowered property values for homes over which planes fly.

b. To reduce noise, homeowners may have to invest in expensive soundproofing.

E. Pollution

Background

a. Planes create exhaust when idling on the runway or in flight. Exhaust is a pollutant.

2. Concerns

a. Air pollution causes health problems especially for those with asthma and other sensitivities.

b. Exhaust can smell bad.

F. Drug drops at the airport?

1. Background

a. Because the airport is unregulated, there is no record of who flies in or out.

b. Planes can fly in at night without be accounted for.

c. There is no evidence that the Oceanside airport has ever been used for drug drops.

2. Concerns

a. If drug drops were occurring, there could be violence and additional drugs in the community.

b. The city could face additional liabilities.

III. Possible Solutions for Noise

(Note: Some of these solutions could also improve safety and resolve concerns in this area.)

A. Improve communication.

1. Residents could better learn what are the legal flight paths, elevation flying rules, and how to judge whether a pilot is straying from these.

a. Residents extended an invitation and a number of pilots accepted it to join the residents at their homes when they expected flight path violations. The pilots could help the residents understand height and distance and the residents could show what they thought were plane violations.

b. Some pilots extended an invitation and some residents accepted it to join them on a flight so that they could learn what pilots do when they are properly following the flight and height guidelines.

c. It may important to have a designated flight with a trusted resident (e.g. someone from the abbey) in attendance while the pilot flew the outside edge of the flight path. Observers on the ground could then learn how to better judge whether a plane is in violation of height or flight guidelines.

d. The city could produce better information about flight paths, flying elevations and other rules and guidelines. The city could locate homes with problems and map them. From this map they could attempt to substantiate problems.

2. Residents would like a better way to report concerns and suspected flight violations. This could involve a designated answering machine and an ombudsman.

3. All sides seem to believe that more data would help clarify problems. For example, just how many flights come in and take off per day, how many touch and goes occur, how many night flights occur, how many pilot fly when there is a marine layer. It might be possible to have the Southern California Trade Con (?) track flight paths from the air for a day and provide independent verification on the percentage of flights that veer from the flight paths.

4. Oceanside pilots and flight schools could be encouraged to paint their registration number in large type face under the wings so that ground level observers could better identify planes. (The FAA says they can't force pilots to do this and neither can the city. It was unclear if the city could give preferences in leases to individuals and businesses that painted identification numbers on the underside of their wings.)

5. A committee of pilots and residents could be formed to meet on a regular basis to attempt to work through problems and advance solutions. The Seawind Flight School offered to use their offices as the meeting location. One of the early objectives of such meetings could be to educate residents on the existing rules

B. Have an airport manager (and noise technician)

1. The airport used to have an airport manager but has been operating without a manager for about four years. (Note: How well did the airport operate under this manager? What went well and why did the airport end having a manager? If a manager is reinstated, the City could learn from its past management efforts as it redeveloped a manager job description, etc. KW)

2. A manager could also act as the ombudsman to whom residents could direct their concerns. At present there is no one designated by the city for that role. A dedicated phone line to the airport manager's office could be set up to provide residents with easy access to either a person or an answering machine.

3. There did not seem to be opposition to a manager from the pilots and airport businesses at the forum.

C. Enforce Rules and Guidelines

1. The FAA provided good news and bad news on the enforcement front.

a. Pilots during landing and take-off do not have to follow elevation requirements.

b. Once a plane is airborne, any prosecution and fines have to come through the FAA. The city cannot give fines. The FAA cannot give fines to pilots who violate flight paths.

c. The City can enforce more rules than the FAA. Its primary tool is to not renew a pilot or a

business's lease at the airport. There is little the city can do about visiting pilots, unless they plan on staying. An airport manager can use a variety of techniques to enforce city rules.

2. Educate pilots through every means possible about flight paths, height limits and other guidelines. Educational means can include:

a. Place educational signs at prime locations on the runway.

b. Record height and flight path information on the ASUS radio announcement loop to which incoming pilots listen

c. Publish information in magazines that pilots read. Publish the information in the Airport Facilities Directory.

d. Pilots could educate each other by radioing violating pilots when they observe them and informing them of the desire of the Oceanside pilots and airport to strictly adhere to the rules and guidelines.

e. If problem planes were identified by pilots or others, warnings and special educational efforts could be conducted for these pilots.

D. Operational Changes

1. Do not allow the Oceanside runway to be used for touch and go training either by flying schools stationed at the airport or by pilots flying in from other airports.

2. Install permanent noise monitors at different locations. Use the data to link to planes flying in or out at certain times. This might provide evidence to potential violations. Most pilots use a radio and call into the airport when flying there. This is recorded on a continuous tape from which time and pilot can be identified.

3. Implement a curfew.

a. Have the curfew extend from sunrise to sunset or 8 am to 8 pm, or something similar.
b. Do not allow flights to occur at night or early in the morning.
c. Do not allow flights on Sundays. Have one day per week of quiet.

4. Screen pilots who permanently park their planes at the airport. If they have violations or complaints against them, the city doesn't have to give them a lease or allow them to park their plane there.

5. Increase the altitude rule from 1000 feet above the ground (not sea level) to 1200 feet or higher This would result in an increase in the distance needed to attain or descend from the higher altitude. This proposal had general support from the pilots in attendance. The FAA can't require higher altitudes, but the city can for pilots that lease from or park at the airport.

6. Reevaluate flight paths to determine if they are too tight for many pilots to follow. Is there a flight path that would do even better for residents wanting to hear less noise? If larger planes consistently have to fly outside of the flight path, consider banning them from the airport.

7. Some suggested that a way to reduce noise and increase safety from flights in and out of the airport is to shut down the flight schools. (It was not clear how many student pilots are active at any one time among the schools.)

8. Restrict flights when the marine layer would cause planes to veer from the designated flight path.

E. **Infrastructure Changes**
1. If the runway was extended another 1000 feet or so to the east, planes could gain a higher elevation before coming to areas with homes.

2. The City pays for sound insulation of homes bothered by the noise from plane flights.

3. The City pays to remove homes in the flight paths. (Given that most (all?) of these homes have a navigational easement, could the city be forced to do this?)

4. The City stops allowing more homes to be built anywhere where the owners might later complain of noise from plane flights.

5. The City could prevent the airport from growing and increasing the flights and noise problem.

6. A tower with radar could be installed at the airport. Through this evidence could be gained to prosecute violators. More control could be gained over airport flight operations. (Note: The city looked into this years ago but the insurance costs and liability were too high for it to be pursued.)

F. Prosecute, Fine, Punish Violators.
1. The FAA says video, photographers and other technological devices will not hold up in the administrative law courts. These instruments can be rigged to create false evidence and thus are not allowed.

2. Trained experts such as the CHP or a person hired by the airport/city can provide expert testimony that will carry in the courts. (Note: Could the airport manager or a city hired security force such as Santa Fe Security gain the necessary training so they could act as expert witnesses?)

3. The City could revoke leases and parking privileges for repeat violators where the FAA may have a difficult time prosecuting. The City could also use its power to revoke master leases with airport businesses to ensure that they did their best to uphold the spirit of the rules and guidelines with their clients.

IV. Possible Safety Solutions

A. Pilot safety
1. Do the flight schools contribute to a safety problem because of their contribution to the number of inexperienced pilots flying in and out of the airport?

2. Would restrictions on flying at night and in fog and foul weather reduce the chances that accidents might occur?

B. Schools
1. Could the City implement a "zero tolerance" policy against any pilot flying over a school? If a pilot was documented as flying over a school, could the city pull the pilot's lease? (The FAA says the City can though gaining documentation on this is difficult.)

C. Other suggestions.
1. Could the airport install flashing beacon lights on the tops of buildings at high points around the city and airport so that planes at night and under foggy conditions could have a warning light?

V. Other issues.

A. Identify and quantify the benefits of the airport to the economy of the city.

1. Include tourism benefits.
2. Include home value benefits. How many people live here because of the airport?
3. Identify and quantify how many businesses are here because of the airport. How many jobs are associated with these businesses?
4. Is the airport an underutilized asset for the community and if more fully used, would it bring more funds and economic growth to the city?

B. Determine and publicize the cost/benefit ratio for replacing old and building new hangers.

C. Evaluate the importance of the airport to the city's transportation plan.

a. What would be the impacts to transportation in the and around the city if the airport wasn't there?

VI. Meeting Evaluation

A. What could be improved?

There wasn't a resolution on how to come together to take the next steps. There was some positive action items suggested, but nothing resolved.

2. There wasn't time to discuss the city finance issues.

More graphics and visuals (e.g. maps with flight paths) would have helped.

There is a danger that the city council could read these notes and determine that all sides are presented on the value of the airport when this only focused on problems and solutions to those problems.

What went well?

Good open dialogue among stakeholders.

All sides educated on many levels.

Good ideas were presented.

Facilitation was effective.