

Airport Management Advisory Committee
Minutes of Meeting – March 16, 2021 at Town Hall

Arthur Malman, Chairman of Town of East Hampton’s Airport Management Advisory Committee (“AMAC”), called the meeting to order at 10 AM via Zoom meeting.

The following members of the AMAC were present: voting members: Munir Saltoun, Charles Ehren, Steve Tuma, David Gruber, Kent Feuerring, and Arthur Malman, and ex-officio members, Jeff Bragman, Councilperson and Board liaison for the AMAC James Brundige, Airport Director and Len Bernard, the Town’s Chief Budget Officer.

Absent were, Pat Trunzo III and, voting members, John Mak, a non-voting member.

Among others attending for all or part of the telephone meeting were Bill Dunn of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, John Kirrane of the Sag Harbor/Noyac Civic Association, Sherly Gold and Patricia Currie of Say No to KHTO, John Cullen a member of the Northville Civic Council and the Riverhead Noise Task Force, Alex Gersten, Director of Airports and Ground Infrastructure for the National Business Aviation Association (“NBAA”), Jim Stone, a resident of North Sea, Martin Diner, a resident of Sag Harbor, Erin Sweeny, executive director of the East Hampton Community Alliance, Jeff Smith of the Eastern Regional Helicopter Council, Carolyn Logan, Chair of the Wainscott CAC and other residents of EH and neighboring towns who have aviation interests and/or who have been working toward helicopter and/or jet noise reduction over their homes and other members of the public and media.

The agenda had been previously distributed to members and made available to the public by the town prior to the meeting.

The next meetings are SCHEDULED for the following Fridays, at TEN (10) AM:

APRIL 16, MAY 7, JUNE 11

Arthur Malman noted that it was likely that all these meetings would be on Zoom.

The draft minutes of the February 19, 2021 meeting, previously distributed to members, were approved.

Arthur Malman introduced Erin Sweeny, the executive director of the EH Community Alliance, who explained that she did not live in the area, gave her background and stated that she was in a paid position for the organization promoting the importance of the airport to the community and its economy.

James Brundige’s monthly update was distributed to members prior to the meeting and is attached as Exhibit A. He explained that the trends on operations, noting that Jets were up substantially in February 2021 over the same month in 2020, but while other operations continue to show increases in February 2021 over last year, they are not as sharp as previously.

Sheryl Gold described her continuing frustration at getting even the background of the three bidders for an environmental study at the airport and the unwillingness of the Town Board to discuss the design for the environmental study in public, despite an opinion of the Secretary of State that it should be.

Jeff Bragman said he had nothing further to report on any economic or other studies that should be available to help the Town Board make a determination about the future of the airport when grant assurances expire later in the year—but he emphasized again that there was no expectation that any such final determination needed to be reached merely as a result of such expiration in 2021.

Arthur Malman reported that he had circulated for member comments final revisions to the Town's minimum standards for aeronautical services at the airport and a cover memo—since there were no further comments both were approved.

Arthur Malman noted that after the helicopter crash into a NYC building last year by a pilot who was flying in bad weather without instrument ratings, and the crash of Kobe Bryant's helicopter under similar circumstances, HTO was now seeking to improve safety, especially in bad weather when pilots without instrument ratings or equipment seek special VFR permission to operate in and out of HTO in marginal conditions.

Jim Brundige explained that the town had begun an initiative to upgrade airspace around the East Hampton Airport to Class E when the Control Tower is not operational rather than Class G which it is now and is uncontrolled airspace. With the automatic weather station now at HTO and other upgrades in place, HTO could qualify under FAA guidelines for the upgrade. Class E airspace is controlled airspace that is managed through the Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) and has stricter cloud cover and altitude requirements than Class G.

With Class G, the only requirement for pilots flying VFR is to remain clear of clouds and maintain 1 mile visibility. When the HTO Tower is operational from May through the middle of September, the airspace in a 5 mile radius up to 2500 feet is Class D. No pilot may enter Class D without Tower clearance. If the pilot is not on an IFR clearance, meaning they are maneuvering their aircraft using Visual Flight Rules (VFR), the clearance from clouds is as follows: 500 feet below the clouds, 1,000 feet above a clouds, 2,000 feet horizontal from clouds and there must be at least 3 miles visibility. In addition, the pilot must maintain 1000 feet or higher above ground level (agl) until cleared for an approach and landing.

When the Tower is closed for the season or after hours, our airspace reverts to Class G, which has minimal restrictions and is uncontrolled airspace. The initiative to upgrade to Class E will, among other things, bring the cloud criteria up to Class D standards. What it means for east end residents is that pilots can no longer “scud run” underneath cloud layers to land at HTO without Special VFR clearance. When flying in Class E airspace, if the weather is IMC (Instrument Meteorological Conditions, meaning below 1000 feet cloud layer and 3 miles visibility), the pilot must request clearance from TRACON to fly an approach into HTO. This not only improves safety, but will reduce the amount of low level flying, both fixed wing and helicopters, approaching HTO.

The Town has endorsed this initiative and the application to the FAA was submitted last month. However the procedures are lengthy and the change to Class E for HTO may not be approved by the time the Tower closes in mid-September 2021.

Jim Brundige also recommended improving safety by increasing somewhat the period of weeks and the hours during the days when the tower is operational. However, Jim Brundige explained that FAA procedures for this change would take almost as much time and effort as was needed to originally establish the tower and it is unlikely that the approval from the FAA would not be forthcoming until 2022. Committee members endorsed this initiative and recommended that Jim Brundige seek Board approval to start the process.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted, Arthur Malman

AMAC Meeting
Airport Director's Update
March 12, 2021

		Source		Total Operations by type					
YEAR	Total Ops	Local	Transient	Piston Engine SE & ME	Turboprop Single Twin	Helicopters	Jets	Unknown Mode C	Seaplane*
2021									
Feb	890	494	396	604	38	154	94		1
		Source		Total Operations by type					
YEAR	Total Ops	Local	Transient	Piston Engine SE & ME	Turboprop Single Twin	Helicopters	Jets	Unknown Mode C	Seaplanes
2020									
Feb	834	506	328	624	16	144	50		0

Helicopters: up 7% Jets: up 88% Turboprop: up 137% Seaplane: up 100% Piston: down 3%

Total Ops in Feb 2021 vs Feb 2020 up 7%

Operations through February are up slightly, but not at the rate of January.

		Source		Total Operations by type					
YEAR	Total Ops	Local	Transient	Piston Engine SE & ME	Turboprop Single Twin	Helicopters	Jets	Unknown Mode C	Seaplane*
2021									
Jan	1,284	666	618	748	58	266	212		4
		Source		Total Operations by type					
YEAR	Total Ops	Local	Transient	Piston Engine SE & ME	Turboprop Single Twin	Helicopters	Jets	Unknown Mode C	Seaplane*
2020									
Jan	802	482	320	566	22	160	54		6

Helicopters: up 66% Jets: up 290% Turboprop: up 163% Seaplane: down 33% Piston: up 32%

Total Ops in Jan 2021 vs Jan 2020 up 61%

Operations through February 15th are up slightly, but not at the rate of January.

425 operations through Feb 15, 2021 vs. 388 operations through Feb 15, 2020. About a 9.5% increase.

{ALSO, TO BE ATTACHED BY THE TOWN TO ITS FILE COPY OF THE FINAL MINUTES ARE THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS PRESENTED TO THE MEETING}

None further at this meeting