

Airport Management Advisory Committee

**Minutes of Meeting –May 17, 2019 at Town Hall**

Arthur Malman, Chairman of Town of East Hampton’s Airport Management Advisory Committee (“AMAC”), called the meeting to order at 9 AM.

The following members of the AMAC were present: voting members: Charles Ehren, David Gruber, Steve Tuma, Kent Feuerring, Gene Oshrin, and Arthur Malman and non-voting ex- officio members: Sylvia Overby and Jeff Bragman two Councilpersons and Co-Board liaisons for the AMAC.

Absent were voting members Munir Saltoun and Pat Trunzo III and non-voting members, Len Bernard, the Town’s Chief Budget Officer and James Brundige, Airport Director.

Among others attending for all or part of the meeting were Gail Simmons of the East Hampton Aviation Association, Jeff Smith of the Eastern Regional Helicopter Council (“ERHC”), David Petersen of Long Island Aviation and Brittany Davies and Alex Gertsen of the National Business Aviation Association and Teresa McCaskie of the Southold Town Helicopter Advisory Committee, by telephone open line, as well residents of EH and neighboring towns who have been working toward helicopter noise reduction over their homes and other members of the public.

The agenda had been previously distributed to members and made available to the public prior to the meeting and additional copies were distributed to attendees.

After discussions, the next meetings were SCHEDULED for the following Fridays at Town Hall, at 9 AM:

**JUNE 14**

**JULY 12**

**AUGUST 16**

**SEPTEMBER 13**

**OCTOBER 11**

**NOVEMBER 15**

**DECEMBER 6**

The draft minutes of the April, 2019 meeting, as previously distributed, were approved, except that Sylvia Overby asked that the minutes be clarified to reflect that it would be the Town’s airport fund and not the town’s general fund that was losing money from unleased airport property that was available for non-aeronautical use and she may follow up with some other minor clarifications; Arthur Malman said he would not finalize the minutes for a couple of weeks if there were any further clean ups from anyone.

Arthur Malman noted that Frank Dalene had sent Jim Brundige a list of hundreds of helicopters which his research indicated had turned off transponders, but that, as Jim Brundige started to randomly check them on the logs of a more sophisticated tracking system that the airport was using, Jim Brundige was found that this was not the case. Teresa McCaskie stated that FAA personnel had told her that pilots were turning off transponders. Arthur Malman corrected her, based on a discussion previously reported with the FAA which itself clarified that while pilots COULD turn off a transponder no one at the FAA office thought that pilots WERE, in fact, turning off transponders.

Jim Brundige had sent charts to the ERHC that he and the controllers had developed indicating adjustments to flight paths on the voluntary Sierra helicopter routes that would have helicopters landing initially south of the main runway on the numbers of old runway 4-22 or runway 16-34 to minimize interference with fixed wing aircraft down-wind legs and approaches when the airport was busy—minimizing some of the concerns voiced by the prior chief controller, Bruce Miller. Once the helicopters were on, or hovering just above, one of the two runway numbers, they could be handled by the tower just like any other aircraft and hover or taxi to the terminal as traffic permitted

Jeff Smith and Gene Oshrin explained the multiple down wind leg and approach patterns and how they differed among jets, seaplanes, small fixed wing aircraft etc. so that this new proposal could ease some traffic safety concerns.

However, Jeff Smith noted that only one helicopter could be on, or hovering above, each of the two runway numbers at one time based on physical space constraints and this could result, at busy times, with more helicopters in a holding pattern.

Jeff Bragman stated that he did not feel that the town board members were equipped to make decisions on preferred control tower procedures for helicopters and other aircraft and town should be relying on Robinson Aviation, the controllers and the Airport Director who do have the expertise.

Arthur Malman asked if helicopters could also be landed on the LI Airways pavements that were south of the main runway but not presently in use and whether a temporary repair service could be operated there. David Petersen explained that LI Airways was employing him without any duties at the present other than to be in the facility. Meanwhile the Krupinski estate, which controlled LI Airways was determining what should be done with the facility which was no longer actively used, but that he had not been privy to discussions between the estate and potential assignees of the lease.

Arthur Malman explained that, based on the review of the LI Airways lease by members of the AMAC and John Jelnicki, acting town attorney, as David Gruber had pointed out at a prior meeting, the LI Airways lease required that the facility be used for FBO activities—which is not the case at present while the estate is determining how to proceed. The Liaisons were asked whether they had been involved in any discussions with potential assignees of the LI Airways lease and they indicated that they were not in a position to share confidential negotiations when and if they occurred. When asked whether they would be interested in supporting continued FBO activities on the site, they indicated that it would be a decision for the entire town board when and if a proposal was made to the town.

Teresa McCaskie complained that helicopters were still overusing the northern route as versus the Sierra route and felt that the helicopters should go northwest beyond Orient Point before crossing to the south.

Jeff Smith explained that the ERHC was encouraging helicopters to use both routes equally. Jeff Smith also explained that, to reduce the repeated helicopter noise over limited number of homeowners when the helicopters were flying from the Northern route to HTO on pre-determined paths, the idea that he, Jim Brundige and the controllers had come up with for this summer would be to encourage pilots to fly scattered routes to HTO from the Northern Route.

Jeff Smith was asked if helicopters that came in on the Northern Route could be asked to leave by the Sierra Route and those that came in on the Sierra Route could be asked to leave on the Northern route---and if that could be enforced by the control tower. He indicated that the controllers were directing traffic and were not set up to keep this record or to direct alternatives not required by safety; it would be up to the helicopter companies to instruct their pilots accordingly, while recognizing that route choice was ultimately that of the pilot's based on safety, traffic and other considerations. Nonetheless he, the Airport Director and the ERHC would see how this idea could work.

Teresa McCaskie also asked why HTO could not pick up helicopters earlier with radar. Jeff Smith and Kent Feuerring explained that some airports were being equipped with "fusion radar" devices but none have been installed yet at or, or as far as anyone knew, when it is planned for HTO. In response to the cost to install fusion radar at HTO, no one had an exact figure but it was felt that it would not exceed by much what the town was already paying for its tracking system. Fusion radar and how it would affect HTO could be followed up at the next meeting with Jim Brundige who could not be present for this meeting.

It was also explained that, separate and apart from any discussion of fusion radar, an FDIO box--which would allow HTO controllers to share data with TRACON, without a need for a telephone call, could also facilitate more efficient operations, but that the FDIO box was installed at the cost and on the schedule of the FAA and could not be installed without the FAA's approval.

In reply to a question of whether the helicopter companies would be equipment constrained if demand increased even further for flights between NYC and EH, Jeff Smith indicated that, the helicopter companies were not equipment constrained and, if there were increased demand, increased equipment would be assigned to provide additional helicopter service.

On leasing, Sylvia Overby reported that, although no serious negotiations were underway for leases for any of the airport's vacant land, discussions were underway with a couple of charter or booking companies for desk space in the terminal and that "for lease" had been approved by the town

board and the signage was now being worked on by Tony Littman, the Department Head of Buildings and Grounds, which would producing one or more of the signs.

Arthur Malman reported that while, following up discussions at the last meeting, he and Pat Trunzo had been invited to lunch by Ron Price and had gotten some ball park estimates from him for limited consulting services with respect to reviewing Bruce Miller's concerns on helicopter approaches and, separately, improvements to the present airport layout to improve efficiency, the Liaisons had indicated that the town was not interested in engaging a consultant for either at this time.

A discussion ensued on the benefits to improving the efficiency of airport facilities and operations to bring aircraft in and have them take off as smoothly and quickly as possible. For example, it appeared that the airport fund had ample funds to cover the cost of a fusion radar system (although the cost/benefit and any roll out schedule would await further discussion with Jim Brundige) and the town could seek congressional support to encourage the FAA to get an FDIO box for HTO, especially since the cost to the airport for the FDIO box would be zero.

A concern was raised again that proposals such as installing fusion radar and pushing for an FDIO box would be seen by many residents as increasing traffic at the airport,

David Gruber, pointing out that he was well know for his interests in reducing airport noise, indicated that this was misguided. Traffic to and from HTO was not dependent on capacity but rather on demand.

The present capacity of HTO, without any needed maintenance or improvements could handle many times the present helicopter and jet traffic. In the few recent years when helicopter and seaplane operations did not steadily increase, it reflected an economic downturn which deterred demand increases for only a short time. Unless there is another economic downturn or federal action, it is highly likely that seaplane and helicopter activity for HTO will continue to increase. If HTO operations were improved, aircraft could be brought down more quickly and, perhaps, with a greater margin of safety.

If it takes 4-5 hours to drive from NYC to EH on a Friday afternoon and 45 minutes to fly by helicopter or seaplane, those who can afford to fly will not be deterred from doing so if the flight could sometimes take 50 minutes because of a possible delay in a holding pattern—by contrast, the residents around the airport would be adversely affected by even more noise and aircraft engine emissions for a more extended period if aircraft are not being landed as quickly as possible.

No further information was reported on the Part 161 process.

Alex Gertsen of the National Business Aviation Association introduced himself and said that the NBAA was very interested in the HTO noise problems and wanted to help in any way possible. Arthur Malman said HTO welcomed any ideas but, as far as anyone knew, the only way to meaningfully reduce noise was to cut down the number of flights which air travel providers and the FAA seemed to have no interest in doing.

The Airport Director's report is attached as Exhibit A.

The meeting adjourned at 11 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur Malman

## **Exhibit A**

# **AMAC Meeting** **Airport Director's Update** **May 17, 2019**

### **Pavement Repair and Maintenance (Financial) Analysis**

- David and I have not been able to get together for a call to Baker. I know David is busy with his campaign and I have been busy managing ongoing projects and spooling up for the busy season. I'll commit to make time at David's convenience.

### **Taxiway D and 422-3 Repaving**

- Baker is waiting for two quotes from subcontractors—Walbridge Surveyors and a quality assurance contractor who certifies the asphalt. When they get those quotes, Baker will be able to send us a Work Authorization proposal for the project. Mike Waibel anticipates he will have that next week.
- If the Town approves the project, the work will be done in September.

### **Perimeter Fence**

- The fence contractor is going to bring a sample of the "Marder" fence posts to the airport early next week for us to review. He is skeptical about the strength of the pipe—he doesn't think it will support the wire mesh and will be a constant maintenance problem. In his opinion, this might work for a back yard garden, but not for the size and scope of our project.
- I have proposed that the contractor use the existing 4x4 vertical posts to affix a 4 foot horizontal 2x4, supported by a 45 degree angle brace, to which the mesh can be attached. This idea was received well by the contractor, would result in the same shaped fence as the Marder design and would most likely cost less.

### **Crack Sealing—Runway and Taxiway Striping**

- The project got delayed due to contractor slow in providing Jeanne Carroza with required documents for a contract.
- Project will be divided into two phases:
  - Phase 1—painting and striping runways and taxiways next week.
  - Phase 2—crack sealing postponed until after busy season in September.

## **Ramp Lighting**

- Engineering for this project has been given to the Town Planning Department Senior Planner, Eric Schantz.
- Eric has proposed a design that reduces the number of light poles by half the number McLean proposed.
- Once we have Town Board approval, we will go out to bid.