

Solano County Airport Land Use Commission



SOLANO COUNTY

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Bill Seiden
Chairman

MINUTES OF THE SOLANO COUNTY AIRPORT LAND USE COMMISSION MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

The meeting of the Solano County Airport Land Use Commission was held in the Solano County Administration Center, Board of Supervisors Chambers (1st floor), 675 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA 94533

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioners Potter, Baldwin, Baumler, Vancil, DuClair, Randall and Chairman Seiden

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner Cavanagh

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Leland, Resource Management; Lee Axelrad, County Counsel; Kristine Letterman, Resource Management

Item Nos.

1, 2 & 3

Chairman Seiden called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

Item No. 4. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved with no additions or deletions.

Item No. 5. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the special meeting of August 25, 2015 were approved as prepared.

Item No. 6. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

Item No. 7. Public Comment

Robert Neefus, assistant chair of the Rio Vista Airport Advisory Committee, appeared before the commission. He commented that the Rio Vista Airport has been without an airport manager for quite some time. As a user of the airport, he voiced his frustration with the lack of support services from the city and felt that the county might be better equipped to manage the airport. He suggested that the ALUC consider involving themselves in supporting that effort.

Item No. 8. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

Item No. 9. New Business

- a. Conduct public hearing to consider adopting a scope of work for an update to the Rio Vista Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (LUCP) (**ALUC-15-16**)

Jim Leland briefly reviewed the written staff report. The State Division of Aeronautics has awarded the County of Solano a grant for the preparation of an update to the Rio Vista Airport LUCP. Under state law, the county will provide staffing and support to the commission for this update. It is anticipated that a part of the support will be provided by a consultant(s). In order for the county to secure appropriate professional services and provide adequate staffing resources, the county will require a general scope of work for the update. Staff has prepared a draft general scope of work for the commission's consideration and adoption. The scope of work has been reviewed and approved by the State Division of Aeronautics. The final step is for the ALUC to approve, or modify as needed, the scope of work and to direct staff to transmit the final scope of work to the county.

Commissioner Potter inquired about the Rio Vista Master Plan. Mr. Leland commented that a master plan was approved in 2007 which came before the ALUC and was found to be inconsistent with the Rio Vista LUCP. That was the decision that initiated the requirement to update the land use plan to reflect the master plan. Mr. Leland said that part of the study would be to make sure that any new layout plan or accompanying documents submitted to the FAA since the master plan was approved be taken into consideration in formulating the plan.

A motion was made by Commissioner Vancil and seconded by Commissioner Potter to adopt a scope of work for a comprehensive update to the Rio Vista Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (LUCP) and direct staff to provide a copy to the County for preparation of a Request for Proposal to solicit consultant services for the LUCP update. The motion passed unanimously.

- b. Conduct a workshop to discuss progress to date on revisions to the Travis AFB Land Use Compatibility Plan **(ALUC-15-17)**

Lee Axelrad explained that this is a workshop and not an action item for approval. This workshop allows the public an opportunity to provide input into the planning process.

Steve Alverson, consultant, ESA, gave a brief presentation of the major features as well as the differences from the current plan. The presentation included an overview of the process, review of the plan policy revisions, and review of the remaining schedule.

Commissioner Potter wanted to know how the distance is chosen with regard to the wildlife hazard assessment. Steve Alverson answered that the distances that are set by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in their Advisory Circular are based on years of analysis of aircraft strikes, hazards and wildlife impacts. During the process it was realized that there was already an existing perimeter within the 2002 Plan and since that was already in existence and the land use planners are used to working with that, it was adopted along with the 5 mile perimeter.

Chairman Seiden opened the floor for public speakers.

Paul Junker, Suisun City, spoke on behalf of Suisun City and thanked staff for their time in discussing the city's concerns. He stated that the city has identified some issues they would like the ALUC to consider. One is the reliance on the FAA Circular. He said the Circular is broad and some of its items are a bit disconcerting. He said Suisun City would prefer more focus on those features and hazards that apply within Suisun's vicinity. Mr. Junker referred to an area within the city's sphere of influence that is likely going to be annexed relatively soon. He said there is a footnote in the plan that says in the past, densities have been allowed to increase in annexations. Suisun would request more affirmative language and would like clarification that it is understood upon annexation to a city, the change in density would be appropriate or would be allowed rather than just saying it has happened in the past because a foot note says such changes have happened.

Mr. Junker said that there are several references about landfills being problematic as attractants for wildlife. He commented that Potrero Hills Landfill is important to Suisun City and because there are enough references that landfills are problematic, it gives Suisun concern that in the future what would be the expectation of the landfill. Suisun is obligated to do dredging in the waterways that are adjacent to the city and disposal of dredge spoils is one of the identified concerns. Mr. Junker said that here is an operation very important to Suisun and it is described as a potential wildlife hazard. He said they are not completely comfortable with how in the future it will be addressed. Suisun City has a recreational facility that is relatively close to Travis AFB and there has been an interest in adding softball fields. Mr. Junker said that they are not clear whether that would be problematic since there are references in the plan of open grassy areas being attractants to wildlife. Mr. Junker reiterated that it is the nature of the broadness of the FAA Circular that gives the City of Suisun some discomfort.

Mr. Leland spoke with regard to the status of Potrero Hills Landfill. He said the landfill has its approval from the county to operate for the next 35 years, and it was found at the time of project approval to be consistent with the 2002 Travis Plan. He noted that through its environmental review, the Potrero Hills Landfill has a mitigation requirement to minimize bird activity at the landfill. He commented that the landfill is not subject to this new plan unless they come back for expansion in the future.

Leland said that Mr. Junker is correct in that the FAA regulation is intended to apply nationally, and so there is an interest in developing an implementation program that narrows down the issues that face Travis AFB. Mr. Leland noted that staff has had a preliminary meeting with the Bird Strike Task Force at Travis and a meeting with the Solano County Water Agency who is creating the master plan for wildlife habitat in the county. He believed that one idea that is circulating and may be before the commission at their next meeting is an implementation program that directs staff over the next year to work with affected cities, the resource conservation agencies and Travis to detail what kind of wildlife attractants should be regulated. It is a new area for land use planning around airports that the county is now having to face because it is both in the state handbook and is a federal directive. Currently there is no requirement in the proposed plan that a project come before the ALUC if outside of the 14,500 foot boundary but within the 5 miles, there is only a requirement that they do their own environmental analysis of wildlife hazard potential and adopt reasonable mitigations.

In response to Commissioner Potter's inquiry, Mr. Leland stated that the commission will be seeing a new draft plan possibly in October. He explained that the format for tonight's workshop is for individual commission members to express their opinions with regard to what has been discussed or to offer different ideas. Staff is looking for general opinions about what has been presented. Mr. Leland stated that staff is not looking for any direction from the commission because there is no action to be taken at this time. Any comments that commissioners want to share individually will help staff in putting together the next draft of the plan for consideration.

Commissioner Potter stated that his overarching concern is that this document is twice as heavy as it has to be by including numerous statutes and reference documents. He said that when the document is reproduced it will begin to take on a life of its own. He said that it will be difficult to keep up with all of the changes by embedding those items within the document. Mr. Potter felt that the same procedure of referencing the guidelines electronically as has been done in the past can significantly reduce the size of the document.

Chairman Seiden commented that as a result from public comments and meetings with various working groups, there have been changes made to the plan to accommodate the concerns of others.

Commissioner Vancil asked for clarification with regard to the comment letter submitted by SMUD addressing the line-of-sight issue.

Beth Tincher, SMUD, stated that she served on the Renewable Energy Working Group and voiced appreciation for both the commission and Travis' willingness to work with them and massage language that would help allow wind development while maintaining the Base missions. She said that they have had several meetings with the county and Travis since 2013 and based on those conversations they proceeded with purchasing property within the wind resource area known as the Collinsville site. She said that SMUD staff recently met with county staff and based on those conversations staff suggested that SMUD proceed with the line-of-sight analysis and meet with Base representatives. They have since met with base representatives and it became apparent that the description of what the line-of-sight analysis is in the document could mean different things to different people. Both Travis and SMUD realize that there may need to be some clarification in the document to help resolve that question. Another issue that was presented is the fact that SMUD will be replacing 50 obsolete turbines on the site with 16 new turbines. While the new turbines may be higher in height, the actual interference to the radar system may be reduced by the newer type of turbine. Ms. Tincher stated that they would like the opportunity to work with the Base, county staff and the commission to help resolve this quickly and to prepare language that is acceptable to everyone.

Commissioner Vancil stated that the proposed language talks about the replacement of turbines that do not exceed 5% tolerance established by the Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA). The CRADA had an 80% probability of detection and he inquired if the replacement will go beyond 5% of that 80%. Ms. Tincher stated that they had prepared some language but had not had an opportunity yet to share the information with the Base and get their point of view. She noted that their consultant who is an expert in radar detection and was an individual who helped develop some of the software that the Base currently uses felt that this would be tolerable

Commissioner Vancil said that he believed that part of this update is that the county is trying to come up with some kind of process beyond the CRADA. He said that part of the issue with the CRADA is that it was not visible how analysis was done. Some turbines are being removed and replaced with bigger turbines but they may actually have a smaller radar footprint which will be determined after analysis. Mr. Vancil said that this issue could come up again with other turbines that may need to be replaced at some point. He believed the language was written to try and address the issue of when a turbine has a mechanical failure or something needs to be replaced the agency did not have to come before the commission for approval. He did not believe the fact was considered that a number of turbines may need to be removed and replaced with different models.

Commissioner DuClair stated that he would like more information on the performance of the new model of turbine and how much interference it is going to produce and if the replacements will cause more of an impact.

Chairman Seiden stated that he agreed with Commissioner Vancil with respect to the CRADA and how there is not precise data that tells exactly where the radar signature capabilities are. Mr. Seiden commented that as an aviator, only picking up 80% of potential targets is not a comforting thought. Needless to say, if one goes undetected there could be a catastrophe. He said that it is known that we cannot achieve 100%, but nonetheless if we are floating around 80% the potential from new turbines could actually exacerbate the circumstances rather than help them. He suggested that staff do further investigation to provide more substantial information to the commission.

Jim Leland stated that staff will conduct further analysis and provide additional information to the commission to help alleviate those concerns.

Item No. 10. Adjournment

Since there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned.