



LAKE ELMO AIRPORT FEDERAL EA / STATE EAW

Community Engagement Panel

Meeting #6 Minutes

Baytown Community Center

May 15, 2018

6:00 P.M.

Panel Attendees

John Renwick
Marlon Gunderson
Mary Vierling
Dave Schultz
Kent Grandlienard
Stephen Buckingham
Chad Leqve
Neil Ralston
Michael Madigan

Representing

Airport Tenant/User
Airport Tenant/User and City of Lake Elmo Resident
West Lakeland Township Resident
West Lakeland Township Supervisor
Baytown Township Supervisor
Baytown Township Resident
Metropolitan Airports Commission Director of Environment
Metropolitan Airports Commission Airport Planner
MAC Commissioner District F

Other Attendees

Dana Nelson
Brad Juffer
Evan Barrett

Representing

Metropolitan Airports Commission
Metropolitan Airports Commission
Mead & Hunt

Public Observers

Mick Kaschmitter

Resident of

West Lakeland Township

Absent Panel Members

Ben Prchal
Keith Bergmann
Ann Pung-Terwedo
Robin Anthony

Representing

City of Lake Elmo Planner
City of Lake Elmo Resident
Washington County Public Works Planner
Greater Stillwater Chamber of Commerce

The attached report represents this writer's interpretation of items discussed during the meeting. Any corrections or additional information should be brought to our attention for clarification.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Present an overview of public and municipal/agency comments on the Draft EA/EAW.
- Share information with the CEP members on the next steps in the environmental process.

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- Request feedback on the stakeholder engagement process.
- Continue to equip CEP members to be the point of contact for information sharing, both to and from the community and MAC, and to respond to inquiries from their constituent groups.

The presentation was as follows:

A copy of this presentation can be found at: <https://metroairports.org/General-Aviation/Lake-Elmo-Environmental-Assessment/21D-CEP-Meeting-6-Presentation-05-15-2018.aspx>

Evan Barrett, Mead & Hunt (MAC's consultant) Project Manager for the environmental review process, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for coming to the sixth and final meeting of the CEP. He recapped that the last CEP meeting was held in January, and since that time the project team published the Draft EA/EAW at the end of February, held the public hearing on April 4th, and closed the public comment period April 19th. He noted it's been about 3 ½ weeks since the public comment period closed, and a lot of comments came in during the last week, so the team has been busy cataloging and responding to comments. He mentioned this work is still ongoing.

Evan then outlined the agenda for the evening. He said he would provide an overview of the comments received from the public, municipalities and agencies, cover next steps in the process, and then turn it over to Dana Nelson, who would seek the CEP's input on the stakeholder engagement process.

Evan reported the following:

- Public comments were received from 74 individuals (written and verbal). Of those, 46 oppose the project, 26 support the project and 2 were neutral or difficult to determine a position.
- 16 individuals spoke at the public hearing
- 66 individuals submitted written comments
- 74 total written comments were submitted (several individuals submitted multiple written comments)
- Many of the topics were on themes heard previously during the long-term comprehensive plan (LTCP) process and earlier in the EA/EAW process. He referenced the list of frequent public comment topics shown on slide 4 of the presentation. He also stated the list is not comprehensive and that the team is still working on sorting through and grouping the comments and determining which can be addressed with a common response and which are unique and will need an individual response.
- Many comments were several pages long and so long comments addressing multiple concerns were broken down into sub-comments, so the team can be sure each sub-comment is responded to with either a general or individual response.
- The team received letters or emails from nine government agencies or local governments. All had substantive comments. Evan provided a brief overview of each:
 - West Lakeland Township – Most comprehensive comment letter received. This letter included comments on almost every aspect of the document, which the team is working to address. The rest of the agency/government comments were specific to that agency's area of expertise/interest/jurisdiction.
 - Valley Branch Watershed District (VBWD) – This letter focused on compliance with Watershed District rules and regulations related to wetland sequencing, wetland buffers, storm water management and floodplain management. He noted there were

- several technical clarifications the team is working to integrate into the report in response to these comments.
- Washington County – Comments were limited to information about their zoning ordinances and enforcement authority for zoning, as well as a general comment about the drainage plans for the project being subject to the permitting process and that they would review them at that point in time.
 - Washington Conservation District – Comments were related to several different environmental issues, including the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee proposal, salt and chemicals used on the airport, and updated land use data. They also had comments about wetlands and storm water similar to the VBWD and Washington County.
 - Minnesota Department of Agriculture – Included one comment related to uneconomic remnants of ag land, which are areas that may become severed, isolated or triangulated as a result of the project. They were interested specifically about the area south of 30th Street, and the team is working to supplement the analysis in response to that comment.
 - Minnesota Department of Transportation – Included a comment related to 30th Street and the fact that some speed limits were shown in the draft report. Evan stated the team would clarify in the response to comments that MnDOT will have to conduct a speed study to identify approved speed limits.
 - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Included comments on several different environmental issues within their purview, such as subsurface geology, aquifers under the Airport, public waters on and near the airport, and mitigation strategies for the Blanding's Turtle, which is a state-listed threatened species.
 - Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) – As is typical for this type of project, the MPCA notified the MAC that a water quality certification will be required prior to construction, which will include an anti-degradation assessment because the Airport drains to Down's Lake which MPCA has identified as an impaired water body under the Clean Water Act.
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Included two comments. One was on the groundwater monitoring wells. Evan explained the project will not affect any wells, and if any monitoring wells were closed in the future, all applicable regulations would be followed. Their other comment was to recommend that the MAC continue consultation and coordination with any appropriate state agencies such as the DNR and MPCA.
 - Evan then discussed next steps in the process:
 - The team is currently incorporating responses to all those comments—public, local government and agency—into a *Response to Comments* document that will be published with the final EA/EAW document.
 - Once that's done, the final actions that will need to occur to complete the EA/EAW process are as follows:
 - The FAA and MAC will coordinate their responses to comments prior to publication of the final EA/EAW document – this is ongoing.
 - The FAA, as the lead federal agency for the EA, will issue a finding on the EA. Timing is to be determined. Notices of the finding will be published in appropriate publications, such as the Federal Register.

- The MAC, as the responsible governmental unit for the EAW, will issue a determination on the EAW. There will be discussion of that determination at a future MAC Planning, Development & Environment Committee meeting. A formal determination will occur at a future MAC full commission meeting. The e-news subscription list and CEP will receive a notice once this has been added to the agenda for either of these meetings.
- Once the official determination has been made by the MAC full commission, a notice will be published in the EQB Monitor.
- Evan noted timing is still TBD for these final steps in the process but expects it'll be a few more months until the process is complete.

Evan then turned the meeting over to Dana Nelson.

Dana asked if there were any questions before she moved to the next topic. Upon hearing none, Dana proceeded, noting that when this process started about 15 months ago, in February 2017, the team had mentioned they were undertaking a new, expanded stakeholder engagement process for this EA/EAW and requested regular feedback along the way. She stated the team wanted to offer one last feedback opportunity for the stakeholder engagement process. She said this is also informing future processes that the MAC will be taking for other airport projects, such as the Crystal environmental review and the MSP LTCP. She noted they will take lessons learned from this process to incorporate into those stakeholder engagement programs. She noted that earlier tonight she sent a questionnaire to the CEP members and asked them to fill those out and send them back to her. She acknowledged the significant amount of time, effort and dedication the CEP members expended toward the process and thanked them for their participation. She also thanked Kent and Baytown Township for use of the Baytown Community Center space for many of the CEP meetings. She also noted the feedback provided on the form will not be part of the project record nor will it in any way change any comments anyone already has on the project record. For example, if someone provides positive feedback on this form, it will not endorse the project; likewise, if someone has negative feedback on the stakeholder engagement process, it will not alter the position of any public comments provided on the project. Dana offered paper copies of the form and told the CEP it was their choice to fill out a paper copy or the electronic copy sent earlier in the day. She said the form can either be filled out now and returned to her tonight or emailed or mailed to her in the next few weeks. She stated the form was also available to members of the public in attendance at tonight's meeting.

The CEP discussion was as follows:

Commissioner Madigan asked whether the team could remind him how many trees would be removed. He said there was a comment at the last meeting that a white oak would be removed. He further stated, obviously, all trees are valuable, but can you comment on whether those types of trees are within the area marked for tree removal, and what mitigation measures are being considered? Evan responded that on airport property, the document states that for the preferred alternative, the MAC is removing 20 acres of trees. He noted that some of those acres are fairly heavily forested—so basically clear-cut areas—but the majority of the acreage consist of scattered, individual trees. He said it is difficult to quantify the exact number of trees. The team used an acreage approach to give a sense of how many

trees on the Airport would be removed. Land cover data suggests there are 35 total acres of trees on airport property, and they would be removing close to 20, so a little over half of the trees that are on airport property. He said the team took a more targeted approach for off-airport property trees and noted a great deal of effort from the LTCP process and ALP update went into this to look at individual trees and identify specifically which trees may or may not need to be removed. This effort identified about a dozen trees off airport property that may need to be removed as part of the project. Neil Ralston noted they were all off the crosswind runway (Runway 04/22) ends. Kent Grandlienard asked if most of them were off of old Neal Avenue, that was vacated? Neil clarified that several trees were in the approach to Runway 22, just north of the railroad track. Neil also said the team had identified some areas where, if trees were growing quickly, they would have to look at removing them during project design, but there were no guarantees they would have to be removed. He stated they would look more closely at specific trees and tree growth rates. He referenced a specific homeowner's tree that was discussed at the public hearing and suggested that if it was an older, legacy tree, he suspected it wasn't growing very quickly and that, unless it was growing very quickly, it likely shouldn't be an issue. However, he noted, for the purpose of the EA/EAW, they needed to identify areas of potential tree removal that would need to be looked at closer as the project progresses, but to this point, they have not determined with certainty that specific trees must come down.

Evan noted that discussion hopefully answered the first part of Commissioner Madigan's question. The second part was related to mitigation. He said that trees are a difficult thing to mitigate for (i.e. replace) on an airport because they grow and may become hazards. He said the team looked at possibly keeping some of the trees they proposed to remove, but determined that, in order to build the new runway, the FAA was going to require those trees to be removed. He stated the team had conversations with the FAA about that, and that's what resulted in the team taking a close look at all the off-airport trees, because initially the team was not proposing to remove any trees off airport property—only ones on airport property. He noted that as far as mitigation is concerned, there is no requirement under state or federal law to replace trees that are cut down. However, there is potential that during the permitting process for the wetland impacts—he noted that a small portion of the tree removal will occur in the wetlands—permitting authorities may require some sort of mitigation in terms of replacement of trees that are taken down in wetlands. He stated that as for the trees in the upland areas, there are no requirements for mitigation under any regulation he's aware of; therefore, the team has not proposed any mitigation or replacement. He said the team is taking a careful approach to the northern long-eared bat that may be in some of those trees (it's not been documented that they are in those trees), and they will follow mitigation measures to remove those trees at a certain time of the year to avoid any possible bat roosts that could be in those trees. Commissioner Madigan clarified that even if it's not required by law, they could be mitigated and replanted, correct? Evan confirmed they could. Neil added that the goal is to take a harder look at specific areas and only take action on trees that are likely to penetrate a protected approach surface to a runway within a zero-to-five-year timeframe.

Chad Leque suggested Evan discuss some of the comments received regarding trees and shielding airfield lighting and the measures the EA/EAW outlined to mitigate that. Evan reported that the team received several public comments about airfield lighting and trees in combination. Some neighbors feel the trees provide a buffer for their property from those lights. He said the team had heard that at previous CEP and public meetings as well and noted that, partially because of that, the team investigated different strategies for reducing the effects of any new or relocated lights. These included light baffles, certain types of fencing, certain settings on the lights, and notifying pilots of the preferred

light usage settings (i.e., turning off or to a lower setting when not in use). He noted the key concern the team has heard about the lights is that it's not just that the lights are moving to a new place, it's that they're being moved AND trees that are perceived to shield those lights are being taken down.

Mary Vierling stated she noticed today that they're counting traffic on 30th Street and asked if this was a County traffic count. Kent Grandlienard stated it must be because they're counting it on Northport, too, and he confirmed Baytown Township is not doing it, so it has to be the County. He said they did it a couple of years ago as well. He speculated they are trying to determine what the impacts of the future Manning Ave. construction is. Dave Schultz stated it's also related to a jurisdictional study on roads to determine who's going to own the road.

Mary asked whether the MAC has engaged with any neighbors or residents regarding home buyouts, as she had a couple neighbors who dropped out of sight. Neil confirmed there were no property acquisitions proposed as part of this project. Evan stated it certainly would have been brought up as part of this process if that was being proposed. Mary stated she thought there were several homes that had been earmarked for acquisition. Neil stated that no homes that had been earmarked for acquisition. Dana Nelson asked if Mary meant homes in the State Model Safety Zones. Mary said they were the six homes in one and she thought five in another, and that she was referring to homes within the State Model Safety Zones. Dana confirmed the MAC is not proposing to acquire those. Commissioner Madigan suggested the issue there was that if people [in the State's Model Safety Zones] wanted to increase the height of their houses, they couldn't? Evan responded that he recalled a discussion with Commissioner Madigan and a homeowner regarding this after the public hearing. He said the team used the State's Model Safety Zones to evaluate the potential land use impacts to residential properties associated with the project. Those State Model Zones are based on the length of the runway and the surfaces coming off the end of the runway. However, he said, once the zoning process is underway, there's an opportunity to propose a custom or modified zoning ordinance. Therefore it is not certain what restrictions would be imposed on those properties, but the State Model Safety Zones provided a way to compare alternatives and their relative impacts. Regarding those zones, in Zone A, typically construction of new structures is prohibited. In Zone B, typically there's a density restriction. He further stated there's a lot of low-density development off the ends of the runways, particularly off the end of Runway 32 southeast of the Airport. He noted it's likely that, even if the State Model Zones were enacted, the current density and housing in that area would not exceed the requirements and therefore there wouldn't be an issue unless a homeowner wanted to subdivide their property or something like that. He expressed that this may not have been adequately explained in the document and stated that the particular individual he'd talked with after the public hearing had also submitted a written comment on this topic, and so there would be a response to that comment when the final document is issued.

Dave Schultz apologized for arriving late but asked about the timeline for responses to comments. Evan responded that prior to Dave's arrival, he'd explained to the CEP that it's been about 3 ½ weeks since the public comment period closed, and the team received a lot of comments in the last week of the comment period. He said that the team has been working hard to develop responses in a timely fashion while also making sure they are addressing the specific comments being made. That being said, Evan noted the team is looking at getting the project wrapped up in the next few months. He noted there are still a lot of things that need to occur, such as finalizing the responses, coordination between the FAA and MAC, FAA must make its determination, and MAC must make its determination. He said there is not an exact timeline at this point, but noted the team is working as quickly, completely and effectively as it can, taking all those things into consideration. Dave asked, so probably another couple months from

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today? Chad Leqve responded hopefully by July or August, but noted that, as Evan said, the team will make sure to keep everyone updated through the communication channels that have been established so people will know in advance. Chad also stated that as soon as the project advances, the MAC will provide information on when the state environmental review process will play out at the MAC Planning, Development & Environment Committee meeting, and ultimately a full MAC commission meeting, as well as any developments that occur on the federal side with the FAA.

Evan asked if there were any other questions before adjourning. Upon hearing none, he echoed Dana's sentiments and appreciation for the group's participation, time, energy and input in this process. He recognized that some of the meetings may have been difficult but said, ultimately, the group's participation makes the process better. He stated that, regardless of whether everyone agrees on the outcome, there's a benefit to having the conversation. He thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:35 p.m.