

City of Winsted
Winsted Municipal Airport Commission
Winsted City Hall Council Chambers
Tuesday, April 13, 2010
8:30 a.m.

Airport Commission Members Present: Russ Paschke
Kevin Kubasch
Dave Millerbernd
Dave Mochinski

Airport Commission Members Not Present: Sarah Fasching

Staff Present: Brent Mareck, City Administrator
Dave Meyer, Public Works Lead
Amanda Zeidler, Utility Billing & Payroll Clerk

1) Call the Meeting to Order

Paschke called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

2) Approval of Minutes

Kubasch motioned to approve the minutes from December 8, 2009. Millerbernd seconded. Motion carried.

3) Financial Report

Mareck presented the Financial Report.

4) Maintenance Report

Meyer reported on the following:

- The new gas pump has been installed and is operational. The airport has had gas sales, and the pump is working great.
- Plowed a great deal of snow since the December, 2009 Airport Commission Meeting.
- Sod has been laid and tamped at the end of the blacktop to the runway.

Millerbernd stated that the runway looks very good after the winter.

Kubasch noted that the blacktop apron is heaved up and is sloping to the west by Hangar Eleven (11). This portion was part of the 2009 Airport Improvement Project. Mareck and Watson will evaluate the area.

5) Old Business

a. Skydiving Operation Update

Marcus Watson, Airport Specialist, Bolton and Menk, Incorporated, gave an update regarding the proposed Skydiving Operation at the airport. Watson stated that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is required to comment on the operation from a safety perspective. The City of Winsted must maintain a balance of operating a safe facility to FAA standards, and must meet all Federal grant obligations for accommodating all aeronautical activities as much as possible.

Watson stated that the FAA reviewed the original skydive agreement proposal, as required. The original drop zone is located south of the existing hangar area and north of McLeod County Road 5. The FAA must review any proposal for operational safety and Federal grant assurance compliance. According to Watson, the FAA will not provide approval or disapproval of a proposal, only comments. The FAA Minneapolis Airports District

Office (ADO) noted the close proximity of the original drop zone to the left-hand traffic pattern for Runway 27, and the fact that the drop zone partially includes McLeod County Road 5. The ADO also indicated that the drop zone is designated by the Airport for all skydivers, and cannot hold an exclusive lease with Westside Skydiving. To meet FAA grant assurances, the City is expected to collect revenue from users for the privilege of using the on-airport drop zone for skydive activity. Watson stated that the FAA Flight Standards division concurred with the review of the ADO. They issued a letter to the City confirming that the original proposed skydive drop zone is not in the "most reasonable" location.

Watson stated that Joe Johnson, owner of Westside Skydivers, has proposed an alternative drop zone for review. This area is located to the west of the hangar area and north of the residential area. It is centered 464 feet south of the existing Runway 9-27 alignment and 611 feet south of the future Runway 9-27 alignment. The dimensions are the same as the previous proposal.

Watson stated that the alternative drop zone should meet the Basic Safety Requirements outlined by the United States Parachute Association (USPA). The Basic Safety Requirements include an unobstructed radial distance to the nearest hazard of at least one hundred (100) meters (for solo students and A-license holders). Hazards are defined as telephone and power lines, towers, buildings, open bodies of water, highways, automobiles, and clusters of trees covering more than 3,000 square meters. Watson stated that the proposed drop zone is clear of all hazards. Watson mentioned that the cluster of trees near the wetland is approximately 1,500 square meters, so it meets the USPA minimum requirements. Watson stated that, if possible, these trees should be removed to limit the City's liability in using this space as a designated on-airport skydive drop zone. Under the existing airport configuration the alternative drop zone meets USPA requirements. Watson stated that the alternative drop zone addresses the FAA's concerns about the drop zone's proximity to the Airport Traffic Pattern and roadways; however, the FAA must still evaluate the site for overall airport safety.

Watson stated that the proposed drop zone is located in a future expansion area for the Airport. According to the draft Airport Layout Plan, future objects that would penetrate this drop zone location include the following:

- Aircraft Apron Expansion (parked aircraft)
- Relocated Wind cone (to accommodate apron expansion)
- Relocated Beacon (allowable once Runway 9-27 is shifted)
- Auto Parking Lot Expansion (parked automobiles)
- Future Commercial / Fixed Based Operator (FBO) hangar building

Watson stated that these items are not scheduled to be constructed until 2013 at the earliest, according to the Airport Capital Improvement Plan. He also stated that skydiving activities may occur in this area until that time; however, it must be understood that once development penetrates this drop zone, an on-airport drop zone is no longer feasible given existing airport property boundaries. Johnson stated that airport improvements would not immediately shut down the skydiving operation altogether, because he could discontinue the student portion of the operation.

Watson informed the Airport Commission that any agreement for the potential use of an on-airport drop zone should include provisions that allow for a specified notice period to users before the drop zone is inactivated. Inactivation of the drop zone would occur as airport improvements are constructed over time that create hazards within the minimum drop zone clearance standards outlined by the USPA.

Watson stated that the City must make an attempt to safely accommodate all aeronautical activities, including skydiving, at the Winsted Municipal Airport and meet all of the FAA grant assurances. According to the FAA, the exclusion of skydiving at the airport must have a reasonable safety basis; otherwise the exclusion can be seen as limiting public aeronautical activity and be a violation of FAA grant assurances for exclusive use. FAA safety and compliance comments can be used as guidance tools for decision-making. A final, local decision can only be made once the FAA has officially commented on the alternative drop zone.

Mochinski asked for the percentage of unlicensed jumpers that will utilize Westside Skydiving. Johnson stated that approximately ten percent (10%) of his customers will be unlicensed jumpers. Johnson also stated that most of his business will consist of tandem jumps and will be performed with D-License instructors. Johnson has requested a letter from the FAA commenting on the alternative drop zone.

Kubasch asked if the FAA would be involved if an off-airport landing site was being considered. Watson said that the FAA would comment on the same safety standards; however, an off-airport drop zone location would have separate considerations. An agreement would have to be drafted between the City and Johnson, called "Through the Fence".

Kubasch inquired about Johnson's long-term plans for the skydiving operation. Johnson stated that he would like to eventually locate the drop zone between the runway and taxiway; however, this area does not currently exist. Watson stated that a taxi-way is not defined, and the drop zone would be confined to the new proposed area. Johnson explained that he would like to build a separate facility and landing zone in the future, but would continue to utilize the Winsted Municipal Airport and area businesses.

Johnson stated that he is currently leasing Hangar #30 with the option to purchase the hangar on January 1, 2011. The business office will be located in the hangar and they will pack parachutes there, as well. Johnson stated that jumpers will load on the north side of the Airport Office.

Mareck stated that the language in the proposed lease agreement must state that Johnson will pay a rental fee for using the drop zone area, rather than stating that the City of Winsted is leasing the drop zone property to Johnson. Mareck also stated that camping is not allowed at the airport, by ordinance, without special permission.

Millerbernd asked for clarification on the rental fee of \$4,500 that is proposed in the agreement. Johnson stated that he is willing to pay the annual fee as it is proposed. Johnson stated that he hopes to help the airport acquire more grant funding for airport improvements with his business and be a good neighbor.

Kubasch made a motion to recommend approval of the new drop zone location. Millerbernd seconded. Motion carried.

b. Rod MacCharles

Mareck stated that Rod MacCharles, owner of Hangar #37, paid his 2009 Lease and Improvement Fee in full. MacCharles' 2010 lease and improvement fee are due by May 1, 2010.

6) New Business

a. Kubasch acknowledged that Mareck has accepted a new position with the City of Carver, Minnesota.

Kubasch thanked Mareck for his dedication and stated that Mareck has done a fantastic job and wished Mareck well in his future endeavors.

7) No Other Business.

8) Adjourn

Kubasch motioned to adjourn at 9:30 a.m. Millerbernd seconded. Motion carried.