



**TACOMA NARROWS AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION**  
**Meeting Summary**

**January 12, 2021**

A meeting of the Pierce County Tacoma Narrows Airport Advisory Commission (TNAAC) was held on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

- **Call to Order & Welcome**  
 Chair Kurt Grimmer called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

TNAAC VOTING MEMBERS	
<b>Present:</b>	Kurt Grimmer, Chair Tim Toerber, Vice Chair Wiley Moore Garth Jackson Bob Felker Brad Pattison – arrived after roll call
<b>Excused:</b>	
TNAAC NON-VOTING MEMBERS	
<b>Present:</b>	Rod Propst, Pierce County Airport Manager; Tracie Markley, Gig Harbor Councilmember
<b>Excused:</b>	Derek Young, Council District 7
PIERCE COUNTY STAFF	
<b>Present:</b>	Rod Propst, Airport Manager/Asst. Administrator Cindy Willis, Office Assistant
VISITORS	
<b>Present:</b>	Approximately 12 members of the public joined the Zoom meeting.

- **New Business**
  - **Election of Officers**  
 Chair – Tim Toerber was nominated; unanimous vote (5-0).  
 Vice Chair – Garth Jackson was nominated; unanimous vote (5-0).

- **TNAAC Vacancies** – Cindy Willis provided an update; we have four vacancies: two community residents, one airport user, and one PenMet Parks representative. We currently have two applications. Encourage interested persons to apply.
  
- **Approval of Prior Meeting Summary**
  - Meeting Summary – October 13, 2020 - Motion (Grimmer/Jackson) passed unanimously to approve the meeting summary as written.
  
- **Reports**
  - **O&M Report** – Rod Propst shared his screen with a PowerPoint presentation. The landscape and parking lot were finished/graded/seeded; thanks to the Purdy Road Shop. The landside study is done and we're sending it to the FAA for approval; this is simply a refinement of the 2015 Master Plan which was fully vetted; it includes the east side, area north of the airport office, County hangars, and the west side. The hangar door repairs are moving slowly because Davis Door is hamstrung by finances. Roof repairs are also slow and our on-call roofer changes at the end of January; recent rain has pointed out what needs repair. Derelict aircraft are not airworthy and are taking up tie-down space; their owners don't purchase fuel or maintenance on the airfield. We ask them to provide a copy of their annual inspection or give us plan about when their plane will become airworthy. Our tie-downs are 95% occupied so we need airworthy aircraft there. Most of these owners at TIW are paying their lease rate, unlike Thun Field; he's spoken to several owners and some have asked for time for repairs; some just don't want to get rid of the plane or make it airworthy. Wiley asked about the landside planning study; it sounds like it's been adopted and will be incorporated. Rod said the preferred alternative was provided, but the community and City of Gig Harbor wanted more time, so we put it out for another 30-45 days; it's what you've seen for the last couple years. The new ALP won't have the grass landing strip; the FAA won't allow it since it's rewriting the AAC for turf runways. Rod said like any plan, nothing will happen until there's money to rebuild County hangars. Wiley said there are a street and fences on the south end that weren't well-conceived. Rod said they talked about moving the fence up to boundary of the hangars; the south gate and fence will stay where they are. When someone with money shows up, we'll develop the west side. Wiley said the TNAAC didn't have an opportunity to review the study and he asked if other TNAAC members would like to review it. Tim asked if there's time for the draft ALP to come to the commission first instead of going directly to the FAA. Rod said the draft ALP could be presented at the next TNAAC meeting—we'll make it an agenda item. The only change in the critical forecast is from a Citation CJ2 to an Embraer Challenger 300. Wiley wants to look at it, but not slow it down a lot. Rod said there's not a lot of non-aeronautical use at TIW. The study doesn't impact the runway/taxiway environment. Wiley asked about a children's play area; Rod said the ALP is the document we use to get AIP funding; he doesn't think it's significantly different. Brad Pattison asked if a turf runway is dead; Rod said the FAA won't sign the ALP with a turf runway because the AC is being rewritten; it didn't say there's no future for it, but the reality is it would be low on the priority of AIP projects, and the County isn't going to fund it. Brad said private parties have offered to assist with equipment. Rod said the language is in the landside study document, but not on the ALP. Bob Felker asked about the hotel. Rod said nothing is happening because of Covid. We met with the hotel people, but service providers have taken a beating, and money set aside for a hotel may have been consumed in just surviving. Rod said the Hub is offering takeout and using the patio; it seems to be hanging on, so we're glad to see that. Our new airport website has a better

layout and is more user friendly. Brad Pattison said some landlords are forgiving rents; are we adjusting them? Rod said he's had that conversation, but the FBO didn't want to go down that path. Some CARES money is available, and he may apply for that. The Peninsula Pet Lodge which is on airport property is getting Economic Development to pay its rent for several months. Tim Toerber asked about Hub roof repairs or other infrastructure repairs that could be done while there are few customers; Rod said there's been no request for structural upgrades. We met with the fire marshal and building official regarding the tent and a built structure over the patio.

- **Tower Report** – David Langford, tower manager, was unavailable so Rod provided a report. The fourth quarter had almost 18,000 operations; year-end total was a bit over 76,000 which is significantly less than last year (87,890), but the FAA won't consider ops counts for 2020. Operations are typically down due to weather. The helo landing on the west side of the runway is defined with cones; the problem is when the cones aren't visible, then traffic must be sequenced with fixed-wing arrivals and it's difficult to control. It doesn't happen a lot. Tim asked about read-back procedures; has that conversation taken place? Rod said tower wants pilots to read back what they've been told and who they are; any specific questions should be emailed to David. Tim said it's good to chat with controllers regarding questions.
- **Commission Reports** – Doug Fratoni is the director of the annual Wings & Wheels event, but we had to cancel in 2020 due to Covid; we will try again this year. He has several great aircraft lined up to perform. We're looking at Covid numbers and not sure about having large gatherings by July. Several airshows are using a drive-in format with each vehicle given a 20 X 20 spot on the tarmac; they bring their own food and stay put except to use porta-potties. That's been done in several airports around the country and what everyone is leaning toward; it meets social distancing requirements. Each vehicle is restricted to a family unit so can have up to 10. There would be no vendors or static displays, and impact to the airport would be minimal for set-up/break-down. We need to check with tenants about using their leased area to maximize the number of vehicles we could bring in (about 500 cars). We'd keep the price down and would do multiple shows per day. Doug said we could have a ramp where planes are parked and would have vehicles exit at the north gate and drive by the planes and see them. Feedback from other airshows is very positive. Any family activity is going to draw enough people to pay for it. Two shows per day maximizes number of people who could come. Tim asked about helping the Hub; Doug said his team had a conversation today about attendees pre-ordering from vendors to deliver to their cars; or they could bring their own food. He'd like to help the Hub generate income. Tim said maybe they could partner with electric aircraft to show what they sound like. Doug will reach out to them. The announcing would be broadcast on AM radio in cars coordinated with the FCC. Bob Felker asked how much lead time is needed to decide on the large group v. drive-through format. Doug said they will plan for an in-person show but depending on Covid and the state phase we're in, we'll decide two months out and switch to drive-in if necessary. We plan for a two-hour long exciting show. Doug had asked if he's considered to be an airport user; he might want to apply for the TNAAC. Tim said he thought Doug would qualify as an airport user. Brad Pattison asked about biplane and helicopter rides; Doug said probably not this summer. Tim thanked him for his work.
- **Council Report** – CM Dave Morell said there are four new councilmembers; we're looking forward to doing some good things this year. Tracie Markley, Gig Harbor

Councilmember, said she will relay the hotel update to the city. Gig Harbor sent a letter to Pierce County stating its opposition to a runway extension; the letter was answered and the County asked that TIW be taken off the list—that puts their minds at ease, although it's not over yet; people are feeling more confident that the airport won't expand. She appreciated the landside study extension to the end of January. Rod said it would have to be national emergency before the runway was extended.

- **Old Business**

- **Hangar Inspections** – Rod Propst said we've completed all hangar inspections; we are complying with the 2016 FAA policy on occupancy which says they must be used primarily for aircraft storage. For this year, all hangars comply; it's an ongoing process that changes and we will revisit it later this year. Brad Pattison thanked him for his hard work; it's been a challenge for years. Brad said he still sees one hangar not used primarily for aviation—a bunch of cars in a hangar isn't following FAA policy; he understands it takes steps. Rod said when he reviewed the hangar, it complied.
- **Noise Complaint Report** – Rod said as weather gets worse, noise complaints go down. He'd forgotten how short the winter days are in the Pacific NW, but for the last three months, we've had only one noise complaint; we're tracking by frequency and location. There's a link online and a phone number. In answer to the question about why we can't do anything once a craft is airborne, Rod presented some historical information: the 1926 Air Commerce Act took control of US aviation; the Federal Aviation Act of 1958 confirmed it. A 1990 Act explains that the federal government has control of airspace. We'd like to be able to control aircraft, but federal law prohibits it. The County has goals in its land use plan about how they hope to control land uses around airport to preclude inappropriate uses. The County is doing as much as possible through land use and tracking noise complaints; we can't change how pilots fly, but we can inform users and flight schools about being good neighbors and flying friendly. Tim said the TNAAC ordinance advises airports and adjacent properties to find uses compatible with airports. The best noise abatement depends on compatible uses. PenMet Parks is looking to acquire adjacent land for parks to ensure it remains as open space which is a great asset to the community and best possible neighbor to the airport.
- **Commercial Operating Agreements** – Rod Propst brought this issue to TNAAC for public vetting; he could have implemented it without comment but decided to bring it to this forum for discussion. He's not asking for a recommendation about whether to have an agreement—it's already in the County code; he's asking for a recommendation on the fee amount and changing the ordinance that says who should have to pay these fees. Whenever the County accepts an FAA grant, we must abide by grant assurances, especially #22 and #24 about creating an even playing field with non-discrimination and making an airport as self-sufficient as possible. Minimum standards define commercial activity and level the playing field for it. The Pierce County Code has minimum standards that say if you're making money on a Pierce County airport, you need an agreement with the County authorizing you to do that—either a lease that defines uses or other agreement; and the County will be compensated for providing your business the opportunity to operate here. Even though they were authorized, no commercial operating agreement document existed, so he used a right-of-entry document and modified it. It's been vetted with our attorneys and Risk Management. He presented it virtually on November 9 with several operators. In 2019, airport hangar rates/charges were adjusted; that ordinance references an agreement. Rod recommends we modify

the Pierce County Code to include all aeronautical commercial operators outlined in the Minimum Standards; he also recommends a proposed fee of \$200/month but would like some discussion. Most other airports around here don't have an agreement; Auburn charges \$265 annually for a license, but that doesn't cover administrative costs. Maybe \$50/month is better. Using a percentage of receipts causes difficulty in tracking. He wants the TNAAC to determine the fee to be paid. There are also insurance requirements; some operators won't need to carry certain insurances so amounts will vary. For the purposes of discussion, a motion (Grimmer/Moore) was made to support Rod's recommendation. Tim wondered how this agreement would impact our aviation medical examiner (Dr. Keith Lemmon). Does it add value? Rod said he anguished over Dr. Lemmon because he doesn't have to be on the airport; it's just convenient; he won't be required to carry most of the insurance that an A&P would be required. A flat fee of \$200 is probably high and \$25 is low; Dr. Lemmon has chosen to operate his business inside the airport. This is already public policy, so to look the other way isn't right. Rod said if you have a lease with approved uses that articulate you can repair, rent, etc. – that's in the lease and the fee is already paid. If you rent from the County and your lease agreement is for aircraft storage only, you'll need a Commercial Operators agreement. If you are in a condo and run a business, we don't have a lease directly with you and you will need an agreement. If you're an A&P leasing from the County and the lease is for a building only but no business, you'll need an agreement. Wiley asked about flight instructors. Rod said in the 30 years he's been doing this, it's almost impossible to find a CFI; they often don't own the plane and have no shingle hanging at the airport. Wiley said that seems to be a slippery slope. Rod said folks doing business on the airfield and making money on a federally obligated airport are easy to identify. Pierce County needs to be named as additionally insured; we have an obligation to protect the County based on the Code. Brad Pattison said the airport's been here since 1962; the fuel flowage fees, land lease fees, and any money made is not supposed to leave the airports. He worries about bureaucracy trying to get more money and making it more cumbersome and difficult to those using the airport. He's suspicious; why can't we keep this simpler? Maybe raise fuel flowage fees? A \$50-200/month fee per business seems unfair to smaller businesses. Rod said this discussion should have occurred years ago when it was included in the code and Airport Rules & Regulations. He's not making it up or looking for trouble. Raising fuel flowage is not what the rules say; all he's asking is for help to propose a fee that's appropriate. Whether to do it has already been determined—this is just how much. Tim asked about administrative costs to determine appropriate rate. Rod said it takes an attorney, administrators, and airport staff time; he thinks \$265/year is too low and \$200/month is too high. A percentage of gross receipts is fairer, but onerous to determine. Rod said the County is left liable by not being named additionally insured. When the County allowed business to occur, lawyers will come after the County with deep pockets. It's almost a gift of public funds without reimbursing the airport. Tim said Auburn has a lower rate—how do they cover costs? Rod said he didn't know; Bremerton says they have no commercial operators. The goal isn't to balance the budget on the backs of commercial operators; it's to have rapport with them and include insurance. Brad said we could recommend that the Code be changed; Rod said Minimum Standards is where the Pierce County Code originates. The County would be short-sighted not to enforce the Code as appropriate. Wiley suggested a break-even cost; the County and risk managers could work with operators on insurance. Rod said insurance is not within the commission's purview; you're being asking to find a fee (percentage or flat fee) that's appropriate. Brad said our job is to advise the Council, not the airport manager. Rod said he's asking

for the TNAAC's help, not whether it's a good idea to have the agreement. Wiley suggested we make the number as low as possible that makes sense: \$50/month; Tim said we need to meet the gifting of public funds threshold. Rod he's surprised more commercial operators aren't attending to provide input. Brad said identifying commercial operators is a good idea; insurance is good; maybe make it on quarterly or a less frequent fee schedule to reduce administrative burden; he'd be fine with \$50/month. Garth Jackson said insurance is the most important part; choose a nominal fee and adjust as needed. Rod said Council can adjust the fee based on commission input. Garth said insurance could be expensive; Rod agreed that the insurance that will financially burden them. Garth suggested a minimal fee and track the cost to administer it. The motion was amended (Moore/Toerber) to a \$50/month fee; the amendment to the original motion passed unanimously. Brad asked about the possibility of a quarterly fee; Rod said operators may prefer monthly to quarterly; terms are generally month to month. Rod said insurance is part of the agreement. A condo owner is one thing; a commercial operator is another—they must have the appropriate policies and name the County as additional insured.

- **Recommended Changes to the Airport Rules & Regulations** – Rod Propst said that recommended changes to the Airport Rules and Regs require a commission recommendation with a letter to Council. Rod proposed a change in the Airport Rules & Regs to what's in the draft document attached to the meeting packet. Wiley said he needs a map to understand the movement/non-movement areas; Rod said we can put a map together. The ramp is everything east of the connecting taxiways. Rod said it's only a matter of time until a vehicle runs into an aircraft. Brad said it's better than what we had before, but in paragraph 5, he'd like to include that the director wouldn't tow vehicles until a reasonable attempt is made to contact the vehicle owner first. Rod said he's OK with that if the TNAAC puts that in the recommendation. He's done a lot of work to get illegal vehicles off the airport; we warn owners.

**Vote on Vehicle Operations - Motion** (Pattison/Grimmer) was made to accept Rod's recommended changes with a change to paragraph 5 that towing won't occur until reasonable attempts have been made to contact the vehicle owner. Rod said both master leaseholders on the airport agree with these changes. The motion passed unanimously.

**Vote on Access Gates, Hangar/Building Security/Locks** – Rod said this is a difficult issue; he's amazed at the open gates at both airports. An airport operator is responsible for security, so most airports have barriers. Rod recommends a change in language at both airfields to ensure physical and psychological barriers are in place, with use of gate codes or cards only, and the gates always closed. Some businesses inside the fences have an angst about this, but there's a callbox so customers can reach them. There's no TSA/FAA requirement to require an airport be fenced; however, when an airport is accessible, it invites trouble. Protection is important; the commission recommendation goes to the director and to the Council. Garth wondered about impacts to businesses. Rod said the PCC code was changed to open the south gate at TIW; he's not sure about Thun. At Thun, we closed gates in March and no businesses behind gates have said anything about it being a detriment to their business. When the TIW south gate was left open, it was to accommodate one business on the airfield. There are several businesses inside where the gate isn't open. Brad said at a TNAAC meeting about four years ago, staff recommended gates be closed always; there was an objection from the Avionics

Shop that it would hinder them, so we proposed to have the gate open Monday-Friday during business hours. Staff wasn't supportive, but the TNAAC voted unanimously to leave the gate open during the day. The County was going to investigate additional road access for customers, but it never happened. Rod said considering the Avionics Shop location, he's not sure how it could happen. He believes the airport should be secure; the Avionics Shop can be notified when customers are at the gate. Tim said everyone agrees that increased security is a good thing, but we need to maintain access without hurting business. Rod said a call button exists. Tim said he understands Dan's hearing loss, but he has other employees. How do we not hurt a longtime business, but elevate the security posture of the airport? How much of their business comes from off-airport? Rod said every delivery truck in Gig Harbor knows the gate code. Brad suggested we table this issue until there are options for Avionics. Garth said security is good; keep tenants in mind. Wiley asked if this is a federal requirement; Rod said no, it's just a recommendation. If the airport had an air carrier, that's a different story. Tim asked about resources to do additional analysis; what about cameras? Rod said on a GA airport, no camera system is AIP-eligible (the FAA won't pay for it). He's not opposed to cameras, but our airport enterprise fund is \$1.5 million/year between two airports with just \$24,000 in profit last year. Tim asked about the broken south end gate. Rod said Justin has jury-rigged it so it will open and close; a large vehicle probably hooked it and took out the cement footing and bent the pole and gate. Tim asked if perhaps the condo association might do it or has existing cameras. Rod is open to whatever we can do. Kurt said cameras don't prevent crime—they solve who did it. Brad said they can be a deterrent. Tim asked about how often gate codes change; key cards are better. Tim suggested we table this until April. He'll solicit feedback from tenants and the condo association. Rod said it would be great to change gate codes monthly and be sure the cards are being used by their owners, but it's difficult to run two airports with three people. Brad said it would be optimal to close the gates all the time; perhaps there's another option to accommodate Dan (a light to go off?). Garth said he has a neighborhood gate and his watch vibrates when it opens; a cell phone could help. Tim will talk with Dan and find out what accommodation would be reasonable and come back in April for action. Pattison/Moore made a motion to have Tim discuss with this issue with Dan; we are concerned with welfare and security of the airport and its tenants. The motion passed unanimously. Brad suggested that Tim include Ben Neil when he talks to Dan; ask about his difficulty in participating in these meetings.

- **Visitors and Petitions**

(Public comments are limited to 3 minutes per person on non-agenda items.)

1. Tom Curran is an independent flight instructor who would be affected by the commercial operating fee. He sent a letter to the airport manager; he's willing to pay his fair share, but \$200/month is staggering; an annual fee or percentage of gross is more palatable. I would assume others have read airport standards; all require insurance and a license to operate. Minimum Standards talk about the possibility of having independently negotiated fees. Flight instruction work is sporadic; he carries insurance and could name the County as additional insured, but said it will be expensive. What happens if instructors work for airport businesses and then moonlight? He appreciates the \$50 fee proposal rather than \$200. He applied for a TNAAC position several years ago, but was never appointed. Tom was encouraged to apply again.
2. Ben Neil is with the Avionics Shop. They were told the gate was closed as a trial period; he spent most of his day answering the phone because someone forgot their key card and forgot the code; consequently, his production dropped dramatically. Next to the

south gate, there are two gaping holes; they've been temporarily fixed with zip-ties, but no one has paid attention in years. Ben said that Tim would be welcome to drop by the shop and he's sure Dan would appreciate it. Discussion on the operating fee was good, but there should have been more upfront explanation about why the fee is needed, not just that it must be paid.

3. Larry Bilstein had a safety item of concern: the north gate and curb at the street is a hazard. There's a 30-mph speed limit suggested for cars on 26<sup>th</sup>, but he's had close calls trying to pull out. He recommended a sign indicating that there are driveways ahead; he would like the speed reduced below 30 mph. Wiley said it's a sight distance problem – trim trees and a put up a sign. Brad asked about the south gate; the road grade should be a gentler diagonal direction. Rod understands and would love to make that happen, but the question is where to spend the money. The design of the access point was poor. Brad asked what can be done about the north gate. Rod said we're negotiating with a business for the HeliTrak building; they want to move the access point of gate. Changing the speed limit is next to impossible because it involves the Traffic division; he thinks he can do signage based on the change to the parking area. Brad said both accesses need to be addressed under Old Business in April. Brad said there are several unresolved issues, including a compass rose. Brad said there are not many certified compass roses; Rod said there are few painted on asphalt, even in Southern California; where would we put it on the limited amount of pavement?

Tim thanked Kurt Grimmer for his leadership on the TNAAC. This has been our third Zoom meeting; he assumes we will continue in this format. He'd love to see all 10 TNAAC positions filled by year's end.

- **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.