

**St. Mary's County  
Airport Advisory Committee  
2007 Annual Report**

May 15, 2008



William McNamara, Chair

Joe Mitchell, Vice Chair

Ned Clarke

Rich Richardson

Erin Lesko

Skip Shephard

Korey Smith

Appointed ex officio member  
George A. Erichsen, P.E. Director,  
Department of Public Works and Transportation

Assigned technical advisor  
Gary B. Whipple, P.E. Engineer

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***Purpose and Goals of the Committee***

A Resolution was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on September 18, 2001 to establish an Airport Advisory Committee for matters relating to the development and management of the St. Mary's County Regional Airport. The initial Committee members were appointed by the Board of County Commissioners on December 20, 2001 with the first informal kick-off meeting held on January 28, 2002.

The Committee consists of seven (7) members whose role is to advise the Board and County government on future planning, development and opportunities related to general aviation that might affect this important County asset. The Board meets on the fourth Monday of each month in the conference room of the Captain Walter F. Duke Terminal Building in California, Maryland unless otherwise indicated or if a special meeting is necessary.

The self-imposed goals of the Committee are to: ensure safe and secure facilities for general aviation; improve economic development potential; complete a parallel runway and taxiway extension; protect and enhance airspace and approaches; evaluate the County-owned North Parcel development feasibility; and to ensure that commercial, private and public development in and around the airport meets standards with respect to safety and noise.

The Advisory Committee is provided with staff support and provides valuable input to the Airport Operations Division of the Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T). At present, the Airport Manager duties are performed by the Director of the Department of Public Works & Transportation. Capital Improvement assistance is provided by the Supervisor, Engineering Services; an operating agreement with our primary Fixed Base Operator (Airtec, Inc.) provides daily operational support.

### ***Welcome and Thank You***

Congratulations to Bill McNamara and Joe Mitchell, who served as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively for calendar year 2007. The Advisory Committee also extends its appreciation to Bill McNamara, Korey Smith and Erin Lesko for their dedicated service as they leave the committee. The committee also welcomes its two newest members, John "Skip" Shephard and A.H. "Rich" Richardson, who joined during calendar year 2007. The Advisory Committee wishes to extend its recognition of the County Highways & Building Services Divisions of the DPW&T, the Department of Recreation, Parks & Community Services, the Real Property Manager of the County Attorney's Office, and the Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) for their assistance over the past year.

## DIVISION MISSION STATEMENT

### *Airport Operations*

“To satisfy aviation demand and promote airport development that both integrates with the community and serves the region’s general aviation and corporate pilots.”

## ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2007

The Committee reports the following as an update to the May 14, 2007 report:

- Leases – (a) The County moves forward in negotiations with the Civil Air Patrol to study the feasibility of locating a CAP Mission Base at the airport. The change in scope is being identified to the County in the revised lease being prepared by CAP for committee and County review. (b) The Fixed Base Operator is investigating a sub-lease to bring a food service vendor to the Terminal Building. (c) The Maryland State Police are interested in updating their facilities to support the new Trooper 7 due to come on line within the next three to five years.
- Safety & Security – (a) The County, in conjunction with the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department and the Civil Air Patrol, conducted a crash and rescue drill on September 15, 2007. (b) The emergency preparedness of the airport and the local community was also put to the test on August 9, 2007 when a plane went down west of the airport on private property due to an overloaded condition. Both incidents provided the County with valuable insight into command and control procedures and most lessons-learned have been implemented. (c) The committee provided airport security training at the December meeting thanks to the resources provided by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA).
- Operational Improvements - (a) The Automated Weather Observation Station (AWOS) was completed and commissioned in 2005. The FAA’s 2007 inspection indicated no technical or administrative deficiencies. (b) Semi-Annual airfield inspections were formalized with the Advisory Committee, and inspections were conducted in April and October, with findings recorded, reviewed at subsequent committee meetings, and tracked by both the County and the Fixed Base Operator (FBO). (c) The Letter of Authorization between the Patuxent River Naval Air Station and the County was updated on October 29, 2007. (d) The Committee and the FBO increased vigilance of non-airport related parking and unauthorized dumping on airport property, cleaning up debris and posting signs
- Environmental Assessment – A Public Informational Meeting was held on July 24, 2007 for the Phase I Non-Tidal wetlands permit that will authorize grading activities for the airport expansion. The County applied for the permit as a subsequent action to the FAA’s issuance of their Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the 2006 Environmental Assessment.

- Communications – (a) A Ground Communications Outlet (GCO) is a radio transmitter/receiver with a telephone interface which allows pilots to communicate directly with air traffic controllers (ATC) located at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station. The GCO at St Mary’s County Regional Airport was provided by the Maryland Aviation Administration and installed and commissioned in 2004 as a part of a cooperative effort with the Naval Air Station, the Airport Advisory Committee, and County Airport staff. By making such remote access available, pilots won’t have to choose between climbing out of the airplane to make a phone call or launching into marginal weather conditions to gain the altitude needed for radio contact. (b) An on-line St. Mary’s County Regional Airport Users Forum was established for use by airport tenants to facilitate open dialog about issues. (c) All Advisory Committee bylaws and meeting minutes are now posted on the St Mary’s County website for review by the general public.
- Annual Budgeting – (a) The Airport Advisory Committee has been briefed by the DPW&T and is aware of the recommended operating budget level and the requested FY 2008-2013 capital budget plan. We support the federally funded projects as shown in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and are pleased to see that several 100% County-funded Airport Improvement projects are also included in the budget as requested. (b) The projected revenue from tie-down leases, transient fees, office space rentals and fuel sales is approximately \$55,000.
- Airport Management – (a) Mr. Erichsen has done an excellent job considering there were at least three individuals performing the task before the Airport management function was returned to the DPW&T without the position filled as a consequence of a reduction of operating monies to the current FY 2007 level. (b) The transition of technical advisory responsibilities by DPW&T to Mr. Gary Whipple has been well received by the Airport Advisory Committee and general public. Responsibilities beyond capital improvements and planning will require additional time on Mr. Whipple’s part. (c) To assist in the day-to-day management, an Amendment to the current operating agreement with AirTec Inc. was approved to provide additional operational support. This BOCC - supported effort has helped address customer service related issues, operation of the UNICOM radio, issuance of NOTAM’s, tie-down and hangar fee collection / management, and basic airfield maintenance. (d) The Maryland Aviation Administration performed its annual Airport Operating License inspection in April; and the airport is authorized for operation through April 30, 2008, with Mr. Erichsen designated as the Airport Manager. (e) Through the DPW&T County Highways Division, an annual weed spraying and routine ramp vacuuming program was implemented to maintain surfaces free of debris subject to prop wash and to help extend pavement service life.
- Economic Impact Study - A preliminary economic impact study was performed for the airport to assist in the development of an overall Airport Business Plan. The scope of services was approved by the DPW&T, endorsed by the Airport Advisory Committee, approved by the County Department of Economic and Community Development, and funded by the Board of County Commissioners. The final product was placed on the County Airport Operations website. The most recent Maryland Aviation Administration economic impact report of 2006 notes that the airport contributed, either directly or

indirectly, to 105 jobs, \$6.0 million in personal income, \$5.7 million in business revenue and \$618,000 in tax revenues for 2005. Businesses that regularly use the airport include A.T. Massey Coal Company, Boeing, Coleman Microwave Company, and Washington Hospital Center. The airport is often used by tourists for such events as the Budds Creek Motorcylce Races, the Potomac Jazz and Sea Food Festival, as well as the St. Mary's County Fair.

- Airspace Protection - The new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance provisions with respect to Airport Environs and Tower installations were implemented by DPW&T staff to address issues associated with preventing penetrations to FAR Part 77 surfaces and preserving airport approach minimums. These provisions prevent the further loss of approach minimums; historically, hundreds of vertical feet were "lost" due to the lack of local code protection. Development review procedures were reviewed in the summer of 2006, and development projects are regularly briefed at Airport Advisory Committee meetings. The DPW&T is now a registered user of the FAA's Obstruction Evaluation Office website on which the County can review and comment on local FAA aeronautical studies.

## **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED OR EXPECTED**

- The Advisory Committee recognizes the challenges faced by the Board of County Commissioners and the DPW&T Director, especially with only limited financial resources available. The latest airport management proposal, which provides for assistance from one of the resident Fixed Base Operators in the performance of basic daily activities, should provide a smooth transition to a full time Airport Manager. The committee will continue to monitor this management arrangement.
- Support the expansion of tie-down spaces for additional fixed based and transient customers. The Committee concurs with the Airport Master Plan which intends to move all rotary wing aircraft (i.e. Medevac) from the existing apron area to the southwest portion of the runway extension.
- Customer service should be greatly improved with timely UNICOM operations and a formally authorized FBO daily presence on the airfield to provide such assistance to the County.
- Continued monitoring of development within the vicinity of the airport property to provide sound technical advice to protect the County's and the FAA's substantial investment in this important public asset.
- Work with the Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) to address the economic viability, diversity in services provided, and improving the marketing of the Airport as a regional asset. Recommend complimentary uses for the County-owned North Parcel, adjacent to the industrial park, to include a possible separate taxiway access to the Airport as described in the original feasibility study for the

North Parcel Development. Growth should be aviation-related and have direct benefit to the airport.

- Finding sufficient time to expend in assisting the Board of County Commissioners on the Advisory Committee.

## **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

- The Committee has reviewed and concurs with the Airport Operations action items that have been integrated with the Department of Public Works & Transportation's Strategic Plan. The Committee will continue to monitor and address these issues as presented for recommendation and/or action. Specific Action Items of particular interest to the Committee are as follows:
  - Develop an Airport Business Plan in conjunction with the DECD.
  - "Open" up the southwestern portion of the airport for development by extending water and sewer with County funding resources when the wetlands mitigation is complete.
  - Complete the update of the Airport Rules, Regulations, and Minimum Standards.
  - Coordinate the Lawrence Hayden Road relocation project with the County-wide Transportation Plan and other development on the area, to ensure consistency.
  - Promote the implementation and commissioning of an improved GPS instrument approach.
  - Review and update the Airport Emergency Plan (AEP) with County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) as Annex U.
  - Work with the new Public Safety Director to continue annual "Crash and Rescue Drills." Ensure increased safety for pilots, aircraft, persons and properties.
  - Pursue and obtain all required navigation and obstruction removal easements.
  - Complete the development of an airfield and land-side signage plan to foster rapport with transient users.
  - Compare St Mary's Regional Airport operational performance levels with respect to similar facilities provided at other locations.
  - Establish leading practices in Airport Management to include an Airport Operation Manual.
  - Reflect new lease areas on Airport Property Map as "dedicated for airport use" and update surveyed Lease Area Plat.
  - Foster communication, coordination and rapport between the FAA, MAA and local officials.
  - Program alternative revenue producing uses such as a restaurant or café-type service at the terminal. through a competitive solicitation or expression of interest.
  - Improve IFR capability through partnership with NAS Pax River.
  - Provide taxiway lead lines to address night-time operations.

## **ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF INTEREST**

Since 1978, the Federal and State Aviation Administrations have funded fourteen (14) projects at the St. Mary's County Regional Airport in excess of **\$8 million**.

### **AAC MEMBERS (DEC 07)**

### **TERM (3 YEARS)**

William "Bill" McNamara	12/31/07
George "Ned" Clarke	12/31/09
Korey Smith	12/31/07
Joseph Mitchell	12/31/08
Erin Lesko	12/31/09
John "Skip" Sheperd	12 /31/09
A. H. "Rich" Richardson	12/31/09