



Aviation Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

May 14, 2025
6:00 PM

MEETING ACCESS INFORMATION

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Location: Pilot Lounge @ Pearson Airport, 101 East Reserve Street.

- I. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
- II. **Community Communications - Public Comment**

No Action. The public is invited to speak. The AAC makes no decisions during this period. Each speaker is requested to fill out a pre-printed testimony card (provided at the meeting entrance) with their name and matter to be discussed and asked to state their full name for the audio recording. Please limit all comments to 3 minutes.

***Action Items/Tasks**

- I. ***Approval of Minutes for April 9th, 2025**
- II. ***Long Term Tie Downs**

Communications

- I. **Airport Manager's Updates**
- II. **Committee Members**

Aviation Advisory Committee

MEMBERS

Shon Lindey, *Chair*
Brittany Sulitzer, *Vice Chair*

Laura Krueger
Kevin Lux
Joe Ong
Austin Merle
Sara Baker
Peggy Keith

Pearson Airfield
101 E Reserve Street
Vancouver, WA
TTY: 771
[www.cityofvancouver.us/
pearson-field-airport/](http://www.cityofvancouver.us/pearson-field-airport/)

-Recommendations on next meeting topics/comments & concerns

Adjournment

Community Forum Instructions

The public is invited to speak regarding any issue. Members of the public testifying are asked to limit testimony to three minutes. There are three ways to provide comments:

1. In Writing: Public comments can be submitted in writing (name, address, contact information and comments) via email to meredith.fox@cityofvancouver.us by 5pm the day before the meeting.
2. Remotely: Pre-register by phone at 360-487-8619 or email meredith.fox@cityofvancouver.us by 5pm the day before the meeting.
3. In Person: Pre-register by phone at 360-487-8619 or email meredith.fox@cityofvancouver.us by 5pm the day before the meeting or fill out a Public Comment form in person prior to the start of the Community Communications portion of the meeting.

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Aviation Advisory Committee

Airport Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: April 9th, 2025 **Time:** 6:00 PM **Location:** Pilot Lounge @ Pearson Airport, 101 East Reserve Street

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

- Meeting called to order by Chairperson Shon Lindley at 6:02 PM.
- Committee Members Present: Chair – Shon Lindley, Vice Chair- Brittany Sulitzer, Sarah Baker, Joe Ong, Laura Krueger, Kevin Lux
- Committee Members Absent: Peggy Keith, Austin Merle
- City Staff present: Airport Manager Meredith Fox, Senior Support Special Specialist Angie McBurney

II. Community Communications – Public Comment

No public comments were made during this meeting in person. An email from the public contained various suggestions for airport improvements. Members acknowledged receipt but noted the extensive nature of the email, clarifying that it was communication rather than public comment. That communication is attached to these minutes. Further clarification on the written public comment process was requested for next meeting.

*Action Items/Tasks:

III. Approval of Minutes for March 12th, 2025

- **Motion:** Kevin Lux moved to approve the minutes as presented, Joe seconded.
- Vote: Unanimous approval.

IV. Recommendation on Fees

Transient Overnight Fees & HONK Payment System

The committee reviewed the proposal for transient overnight fees:

- \$10 per night, \$50 per week, \$100 per month (Extended stays require Airport Manager's written approval)

Members discussed enforcement strategies, including using FAA registration details for late payment notices, which has shown high compliance rates at other airports.

HONK Payment System:

- Compared with Parking Kitty, Honk was found to be significantly more affordable at \$50 per month, \$600/year versus Parking Kitty's \$5,000+ annual cost.
- Members appreciated the flexibility of Honk for pricing adjustments, event-based fee waivers, and validation options for local businesses.
- **Motion:** Brittany moved to approve the Honk system and transient overnight fees as proposed, including a 60-day notice period before implementation, Joe seconded.
- Vote: Unanimous approval.

Long-Term Tie-Down Fee Discussion

Members discussed potential rate increases for long-term tie-downs to \$75 per month, as well as concerns regarding security and aircraft eligibility:

- **Enforcing Airworthiness:** Discussion on ensuring hangars are occupied by active aircraft rather than non-aviation storage boats, RVs or derelict aircraft.
- **Security Enhancements:** Research on solar-powered lighting for permanent tie-down areas is underway to improve visibility and security. Members also considered increasing patrol frequency from Vancouver Police Department.

Motion: The committee decided to table the discussion on long-term tie-down fees until further security updates and tie down user feedback are collected.

- **Motion:** Brittany moved to table the discussion; Joe seconded.
- Vote: Unanimous approval.

V. Recruitment for AAC & OPMA Training

- **Recruitment Update:** The application period for AAC membership has closed, and a candidate will be appointed within a month. Several applicants submitted interest, including Shon and Sarah, who provided letters of continued support.
- **OPMA Training Status:** Members provided updates on their completion of OPMA training.

VI. Scholarship Update

Committee members discussed the scholarship program, clarifying that the AAC does not have legal authority to manage funds for such a program. The recommendation was made to explore partnerships with organizations such as the 99's or EAA to support scholarships outside of city governance.

VII. Centennial Event Planning Discussion

Members discussed potential AAC involvement in planning an event to celebrate Pearson's Centennial in September 2025. Further discussions will determine the AAC's role and involvement based on what city & NPS planners have arranged.

VIII. Airport Manager's Updates

Finance Report:

Committee members reviewed the financial report, noting that expenses exceeded revenue by \$66,000, which was expected due to timing of grant funding allocations.

Operations Report:

Committee members reviewed operational data, including fuel sales trends, five-year average statistics, and overall airport activity levels.

Construction Report:

- **Runway Lighting Update:** The new pilot-controlled lighting (PCL) system has been activated and is now fully functional. The lights are operational, and NOTAMs have been updated accordingly.
- **Project Timelines:** The airport reopened ahead of schedule after an initial delay due to UXO survey concerns.
- **Communications:** Members praised airport management for clear, frequent updates throughout the construction period.

IX. Other Airport Updates

- **Hanger Maintenance:** Northside hangars have undergone cleaning to remove mold buildup. Additional mowing and grounds maintenance are underway.
- **PDX Tower Tour:** Scheduled for Friday, May 2nd at 1:00 PM.
- **Vancouver Public Schools Parade:** Monday, May 12th, 9:30 AM - Noon, affecting East 5th St. traffic.

X. Committee Members Discussion

Committee members shared recommendations for future meeting topics, including:

- Further security improvements, such as AED machines and lighting installations.

XI. Adjournment

- **Motion:** Joe moved to adjourn; Brittany seconded, Vote: Unanimous approval.
- Meeting adjourned at 6:47 PM.

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April 7, 2025

Re: April 9, 2025 AAC meeting

Aviation Advisory Committee, please accept the following public comments.

1. Kudos to Meredith for your successful navigation of the airport over the last few weeks. Pearson is known for its complex and unexpected political, technical, and regulatory land mines. You can now distinguish yourself as the first Airport Manager to my knowledge who has also successfully navigated actual land mines!
2. The operations report for this month indicates that there have been approximately 62,000 operations over the last 12 months. This seems reasonable based on previous year's surveys. Two thoughts: (a) Several of the FAA's recent obstacle evaluation reports have indicated that the airport 5010-1 Master Record is showing operations 25% of that level. Why the difference? (b) Also, as a suggestion, the operations chart might generate more insightful conversation if it showed a two- or three-year window so that the AAC could discuss year to year trends and how those might be influenced for the betterment of the airport, city, and community. More important than what the graph shows in the past is what you want it to look like in the future - and how to get there.
3. Kudos to Meredith for inclusion of the financial report letter from Shannon Turk. This report is another step towards returning to pre-2018 airport transparency routinely available without public record request. Thank you!
4. There is some important context that I have not heard you consider related to transient fees and tie down agreement/fees currently under discussion. To follow are some thoughts and relevant history that you likely have not had access to; forgive this being a bit long.

Meredith is correct in her assessment that the tie down agreement is weak and needs to be updated. This is unfinished work from a few years ago.

Meredith is also correct that if there is a problem with aircraft utilizing transient spots for over two weeks this should be addressed. It is not fair to other users to allow this to continue. It also harms the airport overall as the purpose of transient parking is to encourage visitors and tourism. Article 11(A) of the [Airport Rules and Regulation](#) was specifically included to address this issue; given this, why penalize every transient user that comes in with a fee? For a bit of history on transient fees, prior to the last airport manager's arrival the city, with input from a group of advisors the City Manager and Mayor had recruited, eliminated transient fees. This was an intentional strategic decision to encourage visitors; adding value to the airport, the city, and the NPS far greater than any fees assessed. In addition, enforcement was difficult/expensive and the cost to manage fees was greater than the revenue coming in. Adding a third-party collection system would make this even more so. That said, I do think there is an opportunity to make the 2-week free policy more visible both for its original promotional value, and for enforcement. I may be missing something, but the only place I can find reference to the time limit is pretty obscurely on one of the [Pearson Field web pages](#). I don't see it in the Chart Supplement, on Foreflight, or any other public reference or signage. The strategy discussion to be had here is whether you want to address a few cases of abuse by making the airport less inviting for everyone, not what the fee should be.

On the matter of fees more generally, there is a lot to this, including some important airport strategy conversation that I would strongly encourage you all to have. [VMC 10.05.075\(A\)](#) is set up with two tests for rate increases: (1) airport self-sustainability based on actual and projected costs and (2) competitiveness with local benchmark airports adjusted for differences in services, amenities, and geography. USC 49 provides valuable guidance by emphasizing "conditions existing at the airport." While the VMC calls for an annual review, it does not mandate an annual increase. Note that the four commercial land lease agreements on the field have alternate language around periodic reviews and CPI adjustments.

Let's dig further into the first test, airport self-sustainability based on actual and projected costs. Per the Shannon Turk report Pearson has a current cash balance exceeding \$1.5M. Benchmarking other similar airports you will find that this is an extraordinary level, amounting to multiple years of operating expense. Prior to the last airport manager the field had targeted 10% of this amount as cash reserve based on actual history of unexpected expense. This was the case even during the 2008 recession when we were actually discounting hangars to get them filled. So, how did this happen? Around 2020 the city, without input from airport users, decided to grow cash reserves in order to provide front money for reimbursement grants. This was a choice, not a requirement. With a bit of planning and management of the accounts payable and receivable cycle, the city could have chosen to provide short term (months) loans to the airport at prevailing rates. Rather, the strategy chosen ties up a huge amount of airport financial resources that are not being put to work on high value projects. An important conversation for the AAC about lost opportunity cost vs investment return on this capital is warranted and overdue.

Now, let's dig into how this amount of cash was amassed. Pre 2014 when tenants paid their rent it included a base amount of rent that went to the city, and a 12.84% lease hold tax that went to the state. Eleven years ago, through work initiated by an active tenant, the AAC, and with city legal staff support the city was able to obtain an exemption from the tax due to the airport's location on the Historic Reserve. In addition, roughly \$400K in back payments to the state were recovered back to the airport. This was a huge win and an example of the type of past efforts of the AAC that the airport now benefits from.

The question then arose as to how to handle this windfall. The agreement between the AAC and the city was that the \$400K one-time recovery would be used to pay off remaining bond payments for the newest hangar buildings at the NE corner of the airport, and any remainder used to address some significant deferred landside maintenance issues. This was a pretty easy discussion.

What to do with the forward looking 12.84% lease hold tax that the state no longer required was a much larger, highly debated, topic. One option was to give the tenants a 12.84% reduction in rent since the state no longer required it. The other option was to in effect raise rents by 12.84% with the former lease hold tax money going to the airport reserves for a to be developed list of jointly agreed upon priority land side projects. The later path was chosen; in exchange for a massive 12.84% rate increase tenants were promised that landside facilities would be improved relative to airport access, facilities, operational reliability, hangar upgrades, and services valued by users and the community. This is also why there has not been a rent increase in 11 years. I know this story well because I was the AAC chair at the time and took the lions share of the heat for my advocacy of this path. If interested I have a significant background file on all of this that can be made available to you.

Fast forwarding to today, for a host of reasons beyond the scope of this letter the city has simply not followed through on their part of the bargain: there has been no recognizable shared landside project priority process since 2015; several repair projects the city has taken on have resulted in huge cost and schedule overruns due to acknowledged mismanagement; and responsiveness to identified maintenance issues has been unacceptably slow. This has been costly for our revenue generating and nonprofit tenants, left opportunities to provide more value to users on the table, and hurt the field strategically in its community standing. Ironically, in the recent letter you received from the city regarding prioritizing of Pearson vs downtown development, several of the points raised were the direct result of the city's intentional choices in underinvesting the airport's own money.

To be fair, while there are opportunities to improve project planning, the city has done a good job, for the most part, of accessing grant money for airside improvements since 2018 – that should be acknowledged.

On the flip side attempts to use grant money for landside improvement have been laudable in their intent to leverage outside money, however fall short in how that money is adding value to the airport, its users, or the community. Two examples, useful for their stark contrast are the “terminal building” project and the solar project; both initiated not by strategic planning, rather availability of grants. The former project was prompted by a desire to update the office space for the airport manger who had previously had his office in city hall - later expanded in scope to become the “terminal building” update in order to qualify for a grant. I'm sure it will be beautiful, but there is no business plan supporting it, no future tenant considerations, and no broader community benefit. Were it placed alongside other uses of the money it likely would not have been at the top of the list. In contrast the later project, albeit bringing modest financial returns at the scale the pilot project was proposed, would have been enormously strategic for the field for its alignment with city strategy and the positive community perception of the field that it would have encouraged. The city, however, chose to let this project's grant money expire before the project was begun.

To close, given the history here I would strongly encourage the AAC to hold on any new or increased fees, while supporting Meredith in working through the backlog of projects she has inherited. Once done, I am confident that with her fresh set of eyes a more collaborative and strategic lens can be brought to landside investment planning at Pearson. Then, if there is a business case to be made for additional revenue generation in support of the field come back to this discussion with a story that holds together both in the short and the long term.

Pearson has always produced its best results as a collaborative effort between the city, users of the field, and the community. Those that were here last January when I gave the first of two planned orientation sessions heard many examples of this. For those that were not here at that time I hope the material was provided you as part of your orientation.

Thank you for your consideration,

Paul