

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
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CONVENE: 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Debbie Sullivan and Councilmembers Peter Agabi, Michael Althaus, Joan Cathey, Leatta Dahlhoff, Angela Jefferson, Charlie Schneider, and Eileen Swarthout.

Staff: City Administrator John Doan and Economic Development Manager Austin Ramirez.

AIRPORT UPDATE: Mayor Sullivan introduced Warren Hendrickson to provide an update on the Airport Master Plan for the Olympia Regional Airport.

Mr. Hendrickson reported he is with the Port of Olympia serving as the Airport Senior Manager. Former Airport Manager Rudy Rudolph now serves as the Operations Director for the Port of Olympia. He also serves as the Acting Chair for the Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission (CACC) for the state.

Mr. Hendrickson said his role on the CACC is separate from his position with the Port of Olympia. He is a member of the Washington State Aviation Alliance, an alliance of all aviation organizations in Washington State except for commercial and military aviation. The alliance advocates for legislation and serves as a non-voting member of the CACC.

The Airport Master Plan is a comprehensive study of the airport's short, medium, and long-term development plans to meet future aviation demand. As a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) funded airport and part of the National Plan for an Integrated Airport System (NPIAS), the Port is required to complete a master plan update. The update is completed every eight to ten years dependent upon the nature of growth and changes within the aviation marketplace. The last master plan was completed in 2013.

The master plan provides guidelines for actions occurring at the airport for the next 10 years. The Port contracted with the Aviation Planning Group, a DBE (Disadvantaged Business Enterprise) company, to assist in developing the master plan. The subcontractor is DOWL. The update was initiated in the second quarter of 2021 with funding from the FAA of \$655,293.00. Because the grant was issued in 2021, Congress authorized all grants in 2021 to be paid at 100% reimbursement versus the normal 90% reimbursement rate saving the Port \$65,000.

The goals of the master plan include:

- Meet Aviation Demand
- Meet FAA Design Standards

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- Prepare for Future Development
- Prepare for Emerging Aviation Technologies
- Plan for and Demonstrate Airport Self-Sufficiency

The master plan document elements include:

- Inventory
- Forecast (approved by the FAA in 2021)
- Facility Requirements
- Alternatives
- Airport Layout Plan (approved by the FAA)
- Implementation – Capital Investment Plan

The preferred alternative protects and preserves existing infrastructure and meets FAA standards. Lacking an approved Airport Layout Plan, the Port of Olympia would not be eligible to receive state or federal funding. The contractor provided a final draft of the first chapters and is scheduled to complete the final chapters within the next 10 days. In addition to the six chapters of the master plan, three appendices are included covering:

- Commercial Service Feasibility Study (Part 139 dictates FAA airport certification for commercial airport)
- Public Involvement/Public Comments
- Emerging Technologies

The airport currently lacks certification to offer commercial service. Port Vision 2050 includes a recommendation to plan for future regional commercial service at the airport.

Mr. Hendrickson displayed an aerial illustration of the airport and identified the boundaries of the runway protection zones, which do not allow development other than for existing infrastructure. Other highlighted areas are designated as future aviation-related and aeronautical development. The plan calls for no changes in the airport fence but some taxiway locations will change to meet FAA standards. The main runway will be rehabilitated with repair and rehabilitation of two runways. The illustration identifies future aviation-related industrial property either on or adjacent to the airport. He outlined the location of the proposed soda bottling company. Other areas reflect potential hangar development. Most other development on the airport will be subject to the Habitat Conservation Plan.

Mr. Hendrickson outlined the highlights of the Commercial Service Feasibility Study. Currently, no market exists for commercial aviation

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service until 2035. In 2035, opportunities may exist to consider offering commercial air service if the market can support service. By 2040, the forecast potential is 280,000 passengers or 20,000 passengers per month. Today, the Port's operational capability is 209 operations daily. At the end of the forecast period, 240 operations are forecasted daily. An operation is a takeoff or landing. The population rate of growth in Thurston County will exceed the rate of growth at the airport during the forecast period.

Mr. Hendrickson responded to questions concerning the forecast for commercial air service and explained that because the airport is also federally funded, the Port must abide by FAA grant assurances. As a public use airport, the airport is available for use by the general public without a requirement for prior approval of the airport owner or operator. Additionally, airport runways are not capable of supporting the weight of large aircraft. The master plan does not recommend any changes to existing runway configurations.

Mr. Hendrickson addressed questions about the type of fuel used by different types of aircraft and future planning for the airport. Aircraft powered by piston engines require a small amount of lead in fuel. The Legislature is considering a bill to address the issue of lead-based fuel. An approved unleaded fuel is available for piston engine aircraft that universally applies to all types of piston aircraft in existence. The issue surrounds the lack of any production or distribution capabilities to offer unleaded fuel to the market. The master plan also includes consideration of air pollution. The Port believes issuing a SEPA Planning Checklist is warranted for the master plan and plans to pursue the SEPA review process. The Port completed a SEPA review as part of the 2013 master plan planning process as well. The master plan does not forecast the purchase of property for future expansion of the airport. The airport will experience incremental growth as the population of Thurston County increases.

Mr. Hendrickson shared that as part of the public engagement process, the Port hosted a question and answer session on January 18, 2023. The event attracted approximately 65 individuals between zoom, online, and in-person during the meeting. Some concerns surrounding the update was the Port planning to offer up to 630 airline flights a day. The source of the concern was identified in the 2013 planning document, which defined the capacity of a single runway airport serving 630 flights a day. The FAA's approved forecast for the Olympia Regional Airport discounts that scenario.

Mr. Hendrickson reported he recently met with the consultation team and

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reviewed the airport layout documents to finalize the documents for FAA approval. The draft document is scheduled for completion by mid-March with a goal of submitting the master plan to the FAA at the end of March. The formal FAA approval process entails a two-month process beginning in April and concluding at the end of May. In April, the Port will host another formal public comment period for comments on the master plan. All comments will be included in the secondary appendix scheduled for completion in early May. The final FAA approved Master Plan is scheduled to be presented to the Port of Olympia Commission on June 26, 2023 for acceptance.

Mr. Hendrickson summarized the master plan as reflective of no major changes to the footprint of the airport, realignment of taxiways to meet FAA standards, installation of efficient lighting (LED), and condensing the size of the secondary runway to increase pervious surface.

Mr. Hendrickson addressed questions about energy efficiency. The Port of Olympia has energy efficiency policies and programs to minimize or reduce energy use during operations. The Port has established sustainability teams and recently executed an interagency agreement with the Nisqually Indian Tribe to apply for a sustainability grant. The Port and Nisqually Indian Tribe plan to combine efforts during a yearlong study on the potential conversion of vehicle fleets to electric vehicles. The Port also has installed electric charging stations at the Olympia Farmer's Market.

Mr. Hendrickson updated the Council on the work of the CACC. The task assigned to the CACC was to identify a single preferred location for a new commercial aviation facility by June 2023. The Commission includes 15 voting members and 12 non-voting members with all members having an equal voice with the 15 voting members voting on the final recommendation. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Aviation Division provides administrative support. The timeline was extended by subsequent legislation because of the pandemic. The overall goal is to address commercial air passenger service as well as air cargo and general aviation service. The three-phased deadlines include January 2022, October 2022, and June 15, 2023. Members are volunteers and funding from the Legislature did not allow for any independent research and analysis. The CACC relied on existing plans or explored ways to locate other sources of data. Funds available to the CACC were limited to public outreach and administrative purposes. The Legislature prohibited the Commission from rendering any recommendations involving King County or Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM). In 1992, another study, The Flight Plan included three recommendations:

- Construction of a third runway at Sea-Tac Airport – completed

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- Provide commercial air service at Paine Field – completed
- Construct a new airport in South Puget Sound – not completed.

Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) soon after completed a study and a forecast, the Regional Aviation Baseline Study. The study identified Sea-Tac as unable to accommodate 27 million commercial passengers in the Puget Sound region resulting in the economic loss of \$31 billion and 209,000 jobs. WSDOT Aviation completed a study and verified PSRC's forecast. By 2032, existing facilities would be unable to serve capacity needs.

Based on recommendations in 1992, a South Sound airport, Sea-Tac, and Paine Field would provide three airports to serve the population. Following contact with 18 regional airports during the initial first round, owners of the airports and elected officials conveyed no interest in sponsoring another airport. The Commission concluded a new site selection was necessary. WSDOT Aviation generated data to enable the Commission to complete the analysis. During the first phase of review, the Commission considered six airports located throughout Puget Sound and determined no viable candidates. The second phase concluded in October 2022 with a recommendation to expand Paine Field to its maximum capacity to serve northern Puget Sound and identify a greenfield site with a two-runway configuration (3,100 acres). The CACC selected central east Pierce County and central Thurston County as the three greenfield sites because each site provided the greatest level of capacity to meet the 2050 target. Following analysis of the sites, local government entities at all levels and tribal nations universally opposed the three greenfield sites. Subsequently, the City of Yakima requested consideration of the McAllister Field as the new preferred airport location. The challenge with the site is the location as the population served by the airport resides in Puget Sound.

The CACC's four guiding principles for selection of an airport site are public benefit, economic feasibility, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

Mr. Hendrickson shared that over the prior three-year period, the website hosted by WSDOT Aviation included 700 individuals who had signed up to receive information. Following the announcement of the three greenfield sites, sign-ups increased to 4,200 in three weeks.

The CACC recognizes its direction to recommend a single site for a new airport while acknowledging the lack of any government or public support for any sites considered by the CACC. It is likely the Paine Field site

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would need to expand to the extent possible. However, beyond Paine Field, the CACC cannot provide a recommendation on a site that would meet capacity needs at this time.

House Bill 1791 is currently under consideration by the Legislature to create a successor commercial aviation coordinating work group. The bill passed from the House Transportation Committee and is moving through the legislative process. Until the CACC receives direction through new legislation, the CACC is required to forward a recommendation while acknowledging the information gleaned over the last several months. The CACC continues to engage with communities and is hosting two open houses with 1-hour question and answer sessions via zoom through the WSDOT Aviation website within the next several weeks. The next meeting of the CACC is tentatively scheduled on March 30, 2023. The CACC may render a final decision at that meeting.

Mr. Hendrickson offered four questions for moving forward:

1. Do we agree there is a problem? Is the forecast aviation capacity deficit for both passenger and cargo?
2. Do we agree it is worth solving?
3. If there is agreement for solving the problem, then how and where?
4. If not solved, it may require accepting the consequences of taking no action recognizing \$31 billion in economic gains and jobs would be lost.

Future conversations require a dialogue on defining the problem and ways of solving the problem rather than identifying a particular location.

The Council thanked Mr. Hendrickson for the update.

**EXPERIENCE
OLYMPIA &
BEYOND UPDATE:**

Manager Ramirez invited Annette Pitts, Executive Director, Experience Olympia & Beyond, to update the Council on research serving as the basis of the organization's new Business and Marketing Plan.

Last year, the organization was able to increase staffing capacity following COVID and added a market research analyst. In 2020, Thurston County lost over 700 jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry. The region has not recovered fully from the loss of those jobs. The research included considering a broader view and review of personal sentiments than in the past by asking similar questions about the visitor experience when visiting Thurston County. The findings were surprising and serve as the basis of the Business and Marketing Plan as the research identified differences in terms of how residents view the region versus how visitors view the region.

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Four hundred people participated in the survey identified either as residents, businesses (profit and non-profit), governmental entities, or visitors.

Ms. Pitts shared the results of the survey. Over 86% of visitors surveyed indicated they had previously visited the region. The main purpose of their visits was to visit friends and family followed by weekend getaways and vacations. Many of the respondents were multiple day visitors versus a day visitor with the average stay in the county of 3.6 days. Over 60% of the respondents indicated they stayed at a hotel or motel. The organization tracks short-term rentals through a service. The region's short-term rental lodging inventory is 11% of total rental rooms that have expanded by 3% since January 2022.

Ms. Pitts highlighted some survey responses reflecting the differential between visitors and local stakeholders for some specific areas within the county. The survey reflected a wide range of questions on homelessness, panhandling, public parking, transportation services, arts and cultural venues, restaurants, hotels and motels, and handicap accessibility.

The completed Business and Marketing Plan integrates data obtained through the survey and data from location services and consumer industry statistics and forecasts. The organization is introducing several campaigns. One is *Made in Thurston County* to identify locally made products, services, and stores in the county. The organization has launched the program *You belong Here* emphasizing the friendliness of the area. A systematic approach has been developed for all lodging tax award recipients regardless of the municipality providing the funds. Recipients receive a suite of services at no charge to include a listing on the website, social media advertising, inclusion within seasonal PR pit sheets distributed to local and national media, and inclusion within the organization's email and visitor email newsletters. Several public meetings are scheduled in March and April. The meetings are community listening sessions to share information on survey key findings and receive feedback from the community on ways to improve the destination experience for both residents and visitors. The organization will develop a plan and pursue efforts in 2024. Survey results are posted on the organization's website located at www.experienceolympia.com under reports.

Ms. Pitts addressed questions about the organization's name, which was adopted prior to her joining the agency. The name was adopted as it reflected a name that had more brand recognition. She has received much

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feedback about the name, as the name is not reflective of other local municipalities leading to the creation of co-brands of *Experience Tumwater*, *Experience Lacey*, and other communities within the Thurston County region at no additional cost. A style guide was produced as well as logos accessible to all municipal partners. She cited other efforts to ensure the organization is inclusive of all communities in the region. Additionally, most tourism organizations are a county or a collection of municipalities. It speaks to the importance of showcasing areas and events to attract visitors.

Ms. Pitts shared information on the partner portal enabling businesses and organizations to update their respective listing at any time at no charge. A blog listing is different and can be updated by contacting agency staff to shift the focus of the information for the organization or entity. She shared that the new website features an itinerary building/mapping tool to create self-guided tours around specific interests. The organization plans to identify different categories based on analytics from the website and visitor traffic to create different itineraries and tours, as well as integrating the organization's certified tourism ambassador program.

City Administrator Doan acknowledged the membership of Councilmember Jefferson on the Board of Directors for Experience Olympia and Beyond, as well as Parks and Recreation Director Denney. Director Denney has been very involved and recognized for his work on community events.

**MAYOR/CITY
ADMINISTRATOR'S
REPORT:**

City Administrator Doan recommended deferring discussion on the Council's consent calendar to another meeting. The Council supported deferring the discussion.

ADJOURNMENT:

With there being no further business, Mayor Sullivan adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.