

PALO ALTO AIRPORT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PALO ALTO AIRPORT



JULY 2017

A Member Organization of the California Pilots Association

AIRPORT DAY 2017 IS SET FOR SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 10

Uncertainty about planned construction at the airport has delayed a decision about whether to have Airport Day this year. It would be pretty difficult to have AD if there were a large construction project in progress affecting the areas we need for the event. As things turned out, there has been a delay in awarding contracts due to legal and procedural issues. The result is that while it's likely that there will be construction activities by September 10, they will not excessively impact parts of the airport we need for the event and can be worked around. Due to construction at the golf course, we will be able to use its parking lot for AD.

We feel that Airport Day is particularly important this year because all of the facilities are now owned and controlled by the City of Palo Alto. The increased income from the previously-leased facilities permits the airport to meet operating expenses and pay for capital improvements as FAA grants become available. This will be the first time in over 60 years that the City has had complete fiscal and operational control of the airport, and that is something to celebrate.

AD17 VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Airport Day always depends upon the volunteer efforts of owners, pilots, flight instructors and airport businesses and their employees. We already have a start: The formation flying group is committed as are the Young Eagles flights for kids. We need volunteers to operate the booth for the tower tours and organize visitors into groups to go to the tower.

Displays of aircraft require pilots willing to show their aircraft and additional volunteers to watch over them and help the public to understand what these planes are capable of and to uses to which they are put. In the case of experimental aircraft, volunteers can help the visitor appreciate the effort and reward that comes from building your own plane.

Please volunteer: It's your airport and its vitality and well-being will benefit from a well-received and appreciated Airport Day. Leave a message on the website: www.paloaltoairport.aero or contact Gerry Barker, geraldcbarker@yahoo.com. With your help we will have another successful event!

ALL AIRPORT LEASES ARE NOW WITH THE CITY OF PALO ALTO

In April the airport leases held by Roy Aero and Airport Management Group reverted to the city, including all land and improvements. The City is now managing the leases and payment for these is now directly with the City. The City did a survey using a consulting firm meeting with City staff to determine the fair market value for the leases. As is well known, the market value of property in Palo Alto is among the highest in the nation, so the rates are not cheap. Some rates are not much changed from those in place by the previous operators; some have actually gone down a bit. However, some of the larger sites have had fairly sharp increases. The PAAA has expressed concern that rates at the airport do not rise to the point where flying clubs and airport business cannot afford to operate or that less affluent owners are forced to move elsewhere. The airport exists to serve the public.

AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS UNDERWAY

Already the runway has had critical fixes eliminating the worst dips and the FAA-required perimeter fencing has been completed, both paid for 90% with FAA grants. RFID card access is in place at the gates; issuance of cards and the development of the corresponding data base will occur soon. Readers installed at the access points emit sufficient signal to allow card reading over a distance of some feet, so you may not even have to hold the card out the window of your car. Repairs and refurbishing have been accomplished at the Terminal.

FAA grant funding has allowed the airport to let contracts for the first phase of apron reconstruction. Engineering work has been done, so it's the actual construction that will start, probably before the end of the summer. Specifications call for rebuilding the apron with much more durable pavement and the airport layout must meet FAA specifications. You can see the new layout plan in the Terminal Building. Specifications call for wider taxiways, so we'll lose some tiedown spaces, but may eventually make up the lost spaces in unused parts of the airport. The project will be phased, with aircraft moving to various parking spots as the paving progresses and each new phase begins. Airport closures will be minimal if they do become necessary.

Recognizing the need at PAO, the FAA has indicated that more grants will be authorized relatively soon. The City must come up with 10% matching money. Nevertheless, 90% is a very good deal—essentially making these projects fiscally feasible.

FINANCING THE AIRPORT

PAO is operated from an Enterprise Fund. That means that it is expected to provide for itself with no long-term impact to the City's General Fund. However, due to lease commitments in place before April of this year limiting revenue and the need remedial work due to County's deferred maintenance, the airport has relied on funds from the General Fund. With income up, this must now be returned as quickly as possible, while recognizing on-going operating and capital expenses. In the coming fiscal year (2018) \$500,000 has been budgeted for this purpose. This will continue for about 3 years, until the General Fund has been repaid. The policy requiring the airport to

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fund itself and thus refund money borrowed from the General Fund is appropriate. One hears the objection to the airport "because the City is funding something only used for recreation by rich people." This isn't true, but it's vital that the airport be in a position to refute this by maintaining the airport's financial independence.

Operating staff is currently limited. The City has become reticent to add permanent staff, due to the large cost of retirement benefits called for in union contracts. There are currently four fulltime employees and two part-time employees, each limited to 1000 hours per year. This may change next year.

TAKE CARE FOR THE BAY WHEN WASHING YOUR PLANE AND REFUELING

Water used for plane washing now drains into storm drains and goes untreated into the bay. This means that care must be taken to avoid using chemicals or allowing oil to go into the drain. Biodegradable soap is the only thing that should be used other than water. Use the least amount that will get the job done. Clean up oil with disposable towels and throw them into the trash. A can is located at the wash rack. And of course we all should be returning sampled fuel back to the plane's tanks using a GATT's jar of similar filtering container.

As part of the Airport Plan, the wash rack will be moved and drained into a sanitary sewer connecting to the waste water treatment facility.

PAAA NEEDS YOUR HELP

The PAAA has no paid staff, which means that dues are entirely spent for the benefit of the airport. But that does mean that we need volunteer help to accomplish our purpose. We need more board members to help share the load. Many hands make light work, so this is a chance to help out without adding too much to your busy life. The PAAA serves as your voice in airport matters and with Airport Day helps promote the value of the airport to the public. Meetings are held at noon on the first Monday of the month. This could be changed to better accommodate work requirements.

Please contact ralphbritton@comcast.net to discuss a possible board position. Enquiries welcome!

PLEASE FLY QUIETLY

Summer's here and windows are open; it's a time to diligently follow low noise operating practices.