



# Idaho Aeronautics Advisory Board



## MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AERONAUTICS ADVISORY BOARD

October 12, 2023

The Idaho Aeronautics Advisory Board met for a regular meeting at the Pocatello Regional Airport located at 1950 Airport Way in Pocatello, Idaho at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, October 12, 2023.

The following were present:

Mark Sweeney, Chairman  
John Blakely, Member  
Todd Hitchcock, Member  
Chris Pomeroy, Member  
James Hoff, Member  
Shelly Haskins, Secretary/Admin Assistant  
Mollie McCarty, Chief External Affairs Officer  
Dan McElhinney, Chief Operations Officer (virtual)  
Tom Mahoney, Administrator  
Tim Steffen, Director of Flight Operations  
Jennifer Schildgen, Airport Planning and Development Manager  
Tom Humphries, Safety and Education Coordinator (virtual)  
Dan Conner, Airport Manager

Chairman Sweeney called the meeting to order at 9:48 a.m. and verified the members present met quorum. He then asked if everyone had reviewed the agenda for the day and had questions. No questions were asked.

Board Minutes. Chairman Sweeney advised there are two sets of minutes that need approval, which are the meetings on July 27, 2023, and August 22, 2023. He asked if anyone had corrections or additions to either of those minutes. No questions or additions were offered. Member Blakely made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Regular Board meeting held on July 27, 2023, and the Special Board meeting held on Aug. 22, 2023, as written. Member Hitchcock seconded the motion. All voted in favor; motion was approved.

Board Meeting Dates. The first quarter Idaho Aeronautics Advisory Board meeting was scheduled for Jan. 24, 2024. The meeting will include preparation for an annual update to the ITD Board. Primary topics

planned are commercial air service and an update from Division of Aeronautics.

## **Board Member Reports**

Chairman Sweeney. Delta started a daily flight from Lewiston to Seattle. The flight departs at 7 a.m. and a return flight arrives back in Lewiston at 9 p.m. The public had been asking for a direct flight to Seattle.

Member Pomeroy. FAA Reauthorization Bill did not make it through Congress before the continuing resolution. The bill did pass in the House of Representatives, but the Senate is still working on its version. The TSA Employee Screening Mandate, which requires airport operators to perform security screenings for employees, is enforced by the federal government. The program officially started in late September. Airports have one year to comply before being subject to heavy penalties. Currently legal representation is contesting this mandate. The Friedman Memorial Airport has had an 11% decrease in airport operations year over year and enplanements are up about 8%. Four additional flights are added for winter travel totaling 12 flights per day. Lastly, Member Pomeroy added there is a Request for Proposal for a new fixed based operator and hangar.

Member Hoff. Idaho Falls Airport has been busy primarily due to the fire season although the fire season has been using fewer aircraft than prior years. There will be four additional commercial flights this winter, totaling 12 flights per day between December and March. The local IAA (Idaho Aviation Association) chapter has been active and hosted a pancake breakfast.

Member Hitchcock. Overall general aviation flying at the Twin Falls Airport is down 20% and loads are about 50% full; cargo is still at pre-Covid level.

Member Blakely. John said his area (southwest Idaho) including general aviation has increased about 10%. McCall had an open house. Boise had an airshow. Backcountry flights are growing each year at both Nampa and Caldwell airports. Tom asked if we will start flying people into Indian Creek early next year. Member Blakely replies that it depends on the water level.

Chairman Sweeney informed the board members that board reports are not mandatory.

Administrator's Report. Tom Mahoney asked the Board to consider which airport to develop first, either Burley or Rupert airport. ITD Board has designated \$4M to develop each of the airports. He added Aeronautics is working with stakeholders around the state establishing priority. On Oct. 23-25 three team members from Aeronautics will attend the FAA ADO Conference in Helena, MT and will consult with FAA regarding this situation.

Tom updated the group on the status of the Fleet Task Force and states he has written a draft report. He needs to draft a financial comparison before it is distributed. The task force was helpful in establishing requirements for state agency travel. Tom stated the aircraft needs external lockers to carry hazardous materials which law enforcement might need to transport.

Chairman Sweeney asked if anyone had questions for Tom. Member Blakely asked about the 1033 program and requirement that it is for law enforcement agencies. Tom answered the 1033 program has allowed the Division access to used aircraft without needing to purchase. Also, the program requires returning and not selling of the current King Air, N121TD. Tom added replacement parts for a 44-year-old aircraft are becoming obsolete. Member Blakely commented that King Airs are well supported.

Member Blakely asked to have a run down on the Idaho Airstrip Network. Tom replied explaining the Idaho Airstrip Network is helpful with coordinating all the agencies regarding backcountry airstrips. Tom answered they will meet a

few times per year. Applicable agencies involved with backcountry airstrips such as IAA (Idaho Aviation Association), RAF (Recreational Aviation Foundation), USFS (United States Forest Service), etc. will talk about various issues. Tom says the Division has \$30,000 to pay for someone to manage the duties with this role and a few people are interested. Hiring someone is less expensive than having a full-time employee.

Dan McElhinney asked the Chairman if he could make a comment. Dan thanked Chairman Sweeney and the Aeronautics Advisory Board members on behalf of the Executive Leadership Team at Idaho Transportation Department for help moving forward on the grant program and in the process for finding our new Division Administrator. Dan added Tom Mahoney is doing a very good job. Regarding his service on the Aero Advisory Board, Chairman Sweeney responded, "It has been a pleasure."

Flight Operations. Tim Steffen, Director of Flight Operations, stated we are beginning the transition to limited operations during the winter season. The Kodiak was grounded and required a pilot to stay overnight in Coeur d'Alene. Tim updated the group on the upcoming maintenance for each aircraft. The King Air is due for its 75-hour inspection which will address all major maintenance as the King Air will be the primary plane flown in winter. Chairman Sweeney asked if anyone had questions. Chairman Sweeney asked about the instruments and if the 75-hour inspection is done in-house. Member Blakely asked if we are fully staffed with pilots. Tim stated we have two pilots and two contract co-pilots. The annual training for pilots on turboprop airplanes will happen in the next couple of months.

Tim provides statistics for Search and Rescue in 2023 with 34 total accidents; four which were fatal. In total, 45 calls came in and 71% were false alarms. Tim said the highlights are there were almost no accidents up until July but then we had 14 accidents in 10 days. Tim discussed ADS-B which uses dual frequencies. New installations have reduced blind spots and provided information to more networks.

Tim explained the Backcountry Safety Coalition is nationwide and has regional support and helps us share safety and education materials. Standard Operating Procedures backcountry videos have been created and one is on YouTube. Tim played the YouTube video "Draft Smiley Creek" for the group. Tim is working to have six training videos by spring and each will be a checklist item for pilots who are flying in the backcountry. The Division compiled a list of 30 sites for webcams and have not heard back from the FAA. Chairman Sweeney thanked Tim for his update and asked if there were comments or questions. No questions or comments were made.

Airport Management. Dan Conner provided an update on Hoodoo Meadows including work from the IAA that has been completed and upcoming projects. Dan provided updates on Leading Idaho projects, such as culvert liners installed at Garden Valley, Cavanaugh Bay outhouse, snow roofs at Johnson Creek and Cavanaugh Bay. Member Blakely said congratulations on Hoodoo Meadows. There are many repairs needed for airports, such as the two vans at Johnson Creek along with the septic pump, courtesy car at Johnson Creek, and courtesy car at Smiley Creek. Dan explained how he is working to update some of the equipment such as tractors and ATVs. He shared improvements on airports includes signs that have been made to keep snowmobiles off the runways, replacement of older equipment, brush clearing, and new tools. A bid to build at a new storage shed at Big Creek came in extremely high so it was cancelled and will rebid in the spring.

Dan explained how the Division is investing in fertilizer and chemicals, as well as biocontrol, which tackles weeds in a different way. The Nez Perce Reservation has bugs that will attack the weeds at the root and does not cost as much as chemicals. Dan listed the dates for 2024 for backcountry caretakers. New Meadows was the airport spotlight and he provided fun facts and history of the airport.

Member Blakely told Dan congratulations on reopening Hoodoo Meadows. Dan shared the process started in 2016 and has been successful with the help of other people/agencies working together. Chairman Sweeney asked if Hoodoo Meadows will be added to the Idaho Airport Facility Directory and Dan advises it is already listed. The Special Use

Permit for Hoodoo was out in the spring and the work is already complete. Dan added that it is open to the public although we are not advertising at this point. Chairman Sweeney asked about Bruce Meadows and any update on the drainage issue and talking with USFS (United States Forest Service). Dan says without funding to hire a consultant, the project is at a standstill. Chairman Sweeney advised the Division will want to stay on top of this situation.

Chairman Sweeney asked if there are questions. No questions. Chairman Sweeney asked if there have been requests for additional tie-downs at New Meadows. Dan responded that his hasn't had the capacity to install any yet.

Safety and Education. Tom Humphries, Safety and Education Coordinator, began with integrating the SMS (Safety Management System) as emphasized from the FAA. He plans to coordinate with the state of Montana and Utah and continue to become more educated about SMS.

The Aviation Stand Down is scheduled for March 9, 2024, at Nampa Civic Center. The event will include backcountry training, IFR (Instrument flight Rules) considerations, and efforts to streamline pilot trainings throughout the state.

Tom stated he will meet with Madison High School students in Rexburg for the Aviation Career Seminar on Oct. 20, 2023. The training will emphasize scholarship opportunities, aviation career in Idaho, networking opportunities, and opportunities for women.

Tom shared information on LAUNCH! which gives up to \$8,000 per student for education in high-demand careers, including aviation career training.

Tom recognized Chairman Sweeney who is retiring as Chairman and served since 2006. He shared the positive impact Chairman Sweeney made in the community is invaluable. Chairman Sweeney asked if there were questions for Tom. Member Pomeroy says he hosts an aviation career summer camp at the airport and wants to connect with Tom in relation to ACE. Tom Mahoney commented how the LAUNCH! Program could help find airplane mechanics and other in-demand careers.

Meeting attendee asks about the Aberdeen airport, which has gotten funding from FAA with a match of \$350K to extend the runway.

Deadwood Airstrip and Commercial Air Service. Discussions regarding Deadwood Airstrip and commercial air service took place. Regarding Deadwood, Tom stated the USFS Ranger wants to determine jurisdictions due to Bureau of Reclamation and USFS involvement. The USFS Ranger has closed the airport due to ruts from precipitation runoff. State representative and city councilman of Pocatello, Rick Cheatum was introduced. He voiced importance of commercial air service for economic opportunity. The primary airport group may do research and give a presentation to educate members of legislature. Chairman Sweeney thanked Rep. Cheatum for his attendance and guidance.

Budget. Tom Mahoney filled in for Ruth Munoz, Business Operations Manager, who had to attend another meeting. Tom said these financials are for the first two months and are on schedule. He added we have savings in Personnel since we have a pilot position open, and the Technical Records Specialist has moved. Chairman Sweeney asked if there are questions on the budget. Chairman Sweeney asked about the actual vs. the variable and why there is such a discrepancy. Tom reiterated what Ruth had shared that we are "on track". Tom advised that ITD switched software programs so data may be a little off due to the change. Member Blakely said the variance part does not add up for Revenues. No other questions.

Working Lunch to Discuss Big Creek Four. Discussions take place on Big Creek Four airstrips. Tom commented that the matter is under the purview of the Attorney General's office and that the filing

processes seemed to be proceeding normally.

Election of a New Chairman. Member Hitchcock motioned to vote for Member Blakely as Chairman. Member Pomeroy seconded. Votes were all in favor. John Blakely is the new Chairman.

Adjourn. The Chairman motioned to adjourn. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 1:42 p.m.