

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
Aviation Advisory Committee
2024 Annual Report

Advisory Body Meeting Time and Location: 10:00 am on the 2nd Thursday of every other month at either Buchanan Field or Byron Airport.

Advisory Body Chair: Shawn Stappen

Airport Staff: Greg Baer, Russell Milburn, and Elke Soberal

Activities

- Bi-monthly review of noise statistics, operations report, airport development projects, airfield updates, community events.
- Discussions of airport projects and programs to disseminate information and solicit input from members and public.
- Discussions of issues facing the airports and airport community.
- Input to the Airports Director, Airport Committee, and Board of Supervisors on issues affecting the Contra Costa County Airports and surrounding communities.
- Participation in community outreach efforts.

Accomplishments

Discussed and advised on the following:

Buchanan Field Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF)/Administration/Terminal Building

- Construction of the new Buchanan Airport Terminal project was successfully completed and became operational in May after numerous delays. The project began construction in September 2021, three years later, the long-awaited ribbon cutting was held on October 29, 2024.

Buchanan Field Security Upgrade Project

- Airport staff's successful re-request for FAA funding in 2022 allowed work to begin late that year and the project completed in Spring 2024. New airfield fencing and motorized gates with security access card readers have been installed which greatly enhanced airport security.

Hosted Discussions on Transition to Unleaded Fuel

- The AAC began detailed discussions in 2022 on the national issue of general aviation's transition to unleaded fuel, those discussions continued throughout 2024. Notably, the passage of SB 1193 in October has set January 1, 2031, as the date leaded aviation fuel sales are banned in California, which also aligns with the FAA's deadline of the same. A subcommittee on fuel was established in 2023 and it continues to engage this complex issue. The AAC will assist in facilitating discussions between all stakeholders and recommend potential way forward as the landscape continues to develop.

Hosted Discussions on Airport Economic Development

- The AAC hosted discussions with local aviation-related businesses and airport key stakeholders to understand the needs and the draw the airports provide to the aviation-supportive technology industries.

Property Commercial Development

- Commercial Development of Aeronautical and Non-Aeronautical Sites at Buchanan Field and Byron Airports. Increasing development is an important continuing item significant to the Airport Enterprise Fund. Several undeveloped parcels, designated for non-aviation use, are part of the Buchanan Field. These include sites at the corners of Marsh Drive and Solano Way, which is now Buchanan Field Self Storage and slated to open late 2024 and Marsh Drive and Sally Ride Drive, as well as other sites not needed for aviation use.

Community Outreach and Volunteering

- Staff hosted a successful “Santa’s Jolly Landing” at the end of 2023 at Buchanan Field. The event attracted over 200 community members and children. Staff, AAC members, and other volunteers engaged with attendees that helped to raise funds for 1120 meals for the Contra Costa County Food Bank.

The AAC continues to express strong support for all potential development projects. Each of these projects will contribute to the Enterprise Fund and will provide jobs and other economic benefits to the area surrounding Buchanan Field and Byron Airport.

Airport noise impact on communities including:

AAC continues to engage in various Buchanan Field and Byron Airports’ noise inquiries through phone conversations and in-person meetings between residents and airport staff and/or AAC members. What is key is consistency in reminding pilots of designated training hours according to the airports' noise abatement ordinance.

In contrast to last year’s slight increase in noise inquiries, 2024 inquiries were down 16% despite a 6% increase in flight operations. Similarly to previous years, the number of callers remains relatively low, with the same callers making repeated calls over the year.

Attendance/Representation

- AAC is composed of members representing each of the supervisorial districts, the cities of Concord and Pleasant Hill, the Airport Business Association, community of Pacheco, surrounding communities of Byron Airport (Brentwood, Byron, Knightsen, Discovery Bay), and three at large positions for a total of 13 members.
- In 2024 the AAC overcame previous years’ quorums difficulties due to vacancies by welcoming two new members and solid member attendance. Only one seat remains vacant. The AAC, in partnership with Airport Staff and the Board of Supervisors, actively recruits with hopes of an early 2025 appointment. Finally, new leadership was elected in January, the new Chairperson, Vice-Chair and Secretary assumed responsibilities in March with a strong interest in each seat that has been appointed.
- The AAC is a diverse group of aviation professionals, retired and current community leaders, members of the public, consultants, and educators. There is a balanced mix of pilots and nonpilots.
- Public participation varied throughout the year. Most public comments centered on unleaded fuel and noise related topics.

Current AAC member roster is as follows: AAC Members	Representing	Term Expiration Date
Vincent Salimi	District 1	2/28/26
Elizabeth Leddy	District 2	2/28/27
VACANT	District 3	
Gareth Ashley	District 4	2/28/26
Christopher Baker	District 5	2/28/26
Keith McMahon	City of Concord	2/28/25
Richard Celestre	City of Pleasant Hill	2/28/27
Shawn Stappen	Member At Large 1	2/28/27
Eric Meinbress	Member At Large 2	2/28/26
Emily Barnett	Member At Large 3	2/28/25
Peter Baker	Pacheco Neighbor	2/28/27
Dean Hickman-Smith	Byron Neighbor	2/28/27
Michael Bruno	Airport Business Association	2/28/25

Training/Certification

- It is mandatory for all Committee members to complete county training regarding the Ralph M. Brown Act, County's Better Government Ordinance, Implicit Bias for County Officials, and complete the County's Ethics Orientation within 90 days of the appointment and every two years thereafter.

Proposed Objectives for 2025

- Unleaded Fuel Transition.
- Encourage the growth of business and general passenger service for our surrounding communities.
- Continue to support BATS program.
- Continue to advise, monitor, and review the Buchanan Field and Byron Airports' construction and maintenance projects.
- Continue to advise, monitor, and review activities and incidents impacting airport security.
- Continue to grow and develop community and tenant outreach efforts for both airports.
- Continue to advise, monitor, and review, noise statistics, and overall operations.
- Continue to work with the surrounding communities regarding noise inquiries and other aviation-related issues.
- Continue regular discussions with Airport Staff on various airport developments (current and future), projects and issues, as well as disseminate information and offer recommendations.
- Continue to provide the general public with an open forum for discussions on aviation-related matters.
- Continue to support the Airports Division through the planning, outreach, and attendance at community-based events. These events are key for AAC members to engage with the public and highlight the regional benefits our two airports bring to northern California.