

**Yolo County Airport Public Input Workshop #2**  
**December 4, 2013**  
**Lillard Hall, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

Frequently Asked Questions

**1. *What are the County's long-term economic development goals for the airport?***

Since being built during World War II, the airport has served a variety of federal, state and local needs. Now, it primarily serves local and regional pilots, businesses and UC Davis. The County has a responsibility to maintain the airport, and since FAA grants have been used over time to improve or maintain the airport, the County has responsibility for these investments as well. While the airport is not currently an income producing operation for the County, it does represent an important asset. The economic goals for the airport are to reasonably and responsibly build out the airport to the extent it can provide a sustained positive revenue stream for the county, while recognizing and addressing potential impacts to the surrounding community.

The County has been developing in accordance with the Airport Master Plan, adopted in 1998 along with its accompanying EIR/EIS (a minor update was approved in 2001). The Master Plan is “a plan for the orderly development of new facilities and other improvements at the airport to meet the community’s air service needs to the year 2015.” It forecasts that by 2015 the airport would house up to 145 based aircraft, experience 128 acres of new development, and have 101,000 operations per year. This level of activity, however, would require an upgraded water system, centralized septic systems, a new terminal building, new hangars to house the new aircraft, new tiedowns and a drainage plan to mitigate additional runoff. There are currently 81 based aircraft, 5-6 acres of new development, and perhaps 50,000 – 70,000 annual operations. A count of actual operations is underway thanks to community volunteers. Though 2015 is almost here, the plan stays in effect until revised. Nonetheless, the level of development envisioned in the plan is not being approached nor is it anticipated being approached any time soon. The county will consider updating the Master Plan in the next few years, which would include a public planning process. *See Attachment 1 for more detail.*

**2. *Isn't the County continuing to lose money on the airport?***

The airport is about a break even operation overall, with small annual surpluses or deficits, depending on grant funding and staffing needs. There was a surplus last year of about \$94,000, and there is a projected deficit this year of about \$100,000, which will be made up from the General Fund. However, not accounted for in this analysis is the General Fund revenue of \$64,000 in property and sales taxes from \$14.5 million based on the worth of airport property. In addition, payroll of about \$2 million is provided to approximately 50 workers employed by 13 businesses. As such, the airport is a significant asset for county residents and businesses, and the income provided by these residents and businesses accrues to the financial base of the County in ways not accounted for by looking solely at the contributions to the Aviation Enterprise Fund and General Fund. If it were a commercial enterprise, the Airport's assets would be valued at over \$20 million, with an annual economic contribution of \$10 million from employee spending, pilot/crew retail spending, hotel stays, restaurant visits, fuel sales and other spending. *See Attachment 2 for more details.*

**3. Is it true that many of the leases at the airport are “sweetheart” deals and way below market value, which significantly contribute to the deficit situation?**

The County has recently conducted an analysis of leases at similar airports and found the leasing rates at Yolo County airport are near the average. Airport land and hangar lease rates everywhere are much lower than industrial and commercial lease rates. It is also true that years ago some tenants did receive long-term leases which now are far lower than would be expected under current economic conditions. As these leases expire, the County is bringing these leases into conformance with current rate structures at the time of renewal, and is including annual cost-of-living adjustments. *See Attachment 1 for more detailed information.*

**4. Is it true that the County wants to expand the airport to a category C-II airport?**

No. The County has no plans to expand airport operations to a C-II classification. The C-II designation was included in Alternative F in the Master Plan in 1998, which was the adopted Alternative. The C-II future designation has also been shown on Airport Layout Plans since then. However, all development that has taken place in recent years and is anticipated in the future is consistent with the current B-II designation. For example, the designation for a C-II airport includes larger high performance aircraft with 49-79 foot wingspans, heavier takeoff weights, and faster takeoff and landing speeds. To change to a C-II, we would have to show 500 or more annual flights of aircraft this size. Currently, only a few aircraft of this size land each month at the Yolo airport. In addition, our runway would have to be strengthened, land acquired to expand the safety zone around it, and the fire station, wind cone, and crop dusting pad would also have to move. The County is not planning for any of these things. To be clear, even though identified as a long term future possibility in the Master Plan, there is no intention for the Yolo airport to actually become a C-II class airport – there will also be no tower, no scheduled air service or larger commercial jets, all more typical of a C-II airport. As an illustration, the Master Plan calls for 128 acres of business development by 2015, and as of 2014, only 6 acres have actually been developed. *See Attachment 3 for more detail.*

**5. Is it true that the fire station and Lillard Hall might have to be moved?**

The County considers the Fire Station and Lillard Hall to be a valuable county and neighborhood asset right where it is, essential to safety and emergency response in the area. There is no desire, or plans, to move these structures, which would only occur if required by the FAA. Our last airport inspection noted that the fire station and Lillard Hall are currently not in compliance with the existing B-II classification of the airport because the buildings themselves penetrate the FAA Part 77 conical surface, much like the trees around the airport used to do. However, the FAA commonly requires only the addition of approved safety lighting in such situations. To ensure these buildings may remain located where they are, County staff have submitted the required forms to the FAA and hope to implement the addition of approved lighting in early 2014.

**6. What can be done to make sure that airplanes use the appropriate landing and take-off protocols so they are not too close to nearby homes?**

The County has limited authority to affect pilots who do not use accepted landing and taking-off protocols. Ultimately these concerns fall to the authority of the FAA. Nonetheless, the County has attempted to do what it can by developing flight protocols that avoid all nearby homes and encouraging all those flying into and out of the Yolo airport to comply. Staff has also created a handy pilot safety flyer for just that purpose. In cases where pilots do not comply, a complaint must be made to FAA (by anyone who has observed a

deviation from accepted practice), if the tail number can be identified. The pilot of that plane can then be fined or their license suspended or revoked, but such action is the responsibility of the FAA. *See the Draft County Good Neighbor Program. The County's "Airport Information for Pilots" brochure also addresses these issues.*

**7. *Is it true that development at the airport has caused the stormwater drainage problems in the area? If so, what is being done about it?***

Studies have demonstrated that flooding of neighborhood areas around the airport are largely the result of independent watershed activities upstream. Storm water from a large watershed area of nearly 47.3 square miles upstream of the airport converge on Airport and Dry Sloughs just southeast of the airport. The Airport is roughly 500 acres of that; approximately 53 acres of which are impermeable and over 445 acres are made up of permeable farmland and grassland and able to absorb storm water. Nonetheless, every addition of impervious cover or new runoff potential should be addressed so the situation is not exacerbated. So, the County is exploring several opportunities to improve drainage conditions around the airport with several hydrologic engineers. Some neighbors have expressed concern that new development within the airport has contributed to drainage problems. This concern is now being evaluated by those same engineers. The County is exploring options (such as detention structures) to ensure that stormwater runoff from current and future airport development has no effect on the surrounding community. In addition, County staff is working with these same engineers and community stakeholders on a long-term, area-wide drainage solution which would re-route drainage so that it bypasses Rolling Acres and goes more directly to Willow Slough. Such a solution would require a substantial funding commitment, which might require a grant, assessment district, or other funding mechanisms. *See Attachment 4 for more detail.*

**8. *Are camping and other non-aviation related activities at the airport allowable?***

Camping has been continuously occurring on the airport in conjunction with skydiving operations since the 1960's, and is a common activity at other general aviation airports. Recently, County planning officials have determined that a Use Permit is required for this activity. The skydiving company has applied for the required permit to continue to allow camping at that location, under a set of carefully monitored conditions. The FAA is also evaluating whether this activity violates any of their policies. A gun club is among the few other non-aviation leases at the airport, which dates back to 1999 and expires in 2029. That lease authorizes several shooting ranges, a clubhouse with snack bar and lounge, supervised youth camping, fishing, picnicking, and a caretaker residence. *See Attachment 5 for more detail.*

**9. *What more can the county do to address the concerns of airport operations and their impact on the surrounding community?***

The County has heard from residents and businesses in proximity to the airport that more can be done to demonstrate the County is concerned with their interests. As a result, a Good Neighbor Program is being developed. Likewise, concerns have been raised about communications, transparency of decisions and providing information requested in a timely and thorough fashion. These and other concerns will be incorporated into the Good Neighbor Program and addressed in continued operations of a Yolo Airport Advisory Committee. *See Attachments 6 and 7, and the Draft County Good Neighbor Program.*

**10. When you look at the big picture, isn't it true that the County has a fundamental conflict between wanting its own airport to succeed and be an element for economic development, and protecting the rural lifestyles, quality of life and environment for the neighborhoods near the airport?**

Yes, it is true that the County has to balance often competing interests at and around the airport. But this is what all cities and counties do on a regular basis when addressing land use issues. Cities and counties are very much responsible for their neighborhoods and residents and their quality of life and environments. At the same time, all cities and counties are also charged with and responsible for ensuring fiscally strong governments and services, jobs and business opportunities, and access to all forms of mobility and transportation. These legitimate values are often in conflict or at least must be carefully balanced. While an airport presents a set of particular issues because of its operations (noise, safety, lighting, heights, etc.), in all competing land use situations, the County's role is to balance the values fairly and openly. Using a community/airport advisory structure to provide input on these challenges is one step towards trying to achieve the desired balance.