

City of Colville
COLVILLE 2000 AND BEYOND Airport Study Committee
 November 16, 2009
 6:30 – 8:30 P.M. – City Hall

Purpose: To provide information on the airport study and to gather issues and concerns from the public, which will be addressed during the environmental assessment study process.

Objectives

1. Increase public awareness about the project purpose and study process.
2. Minimize misperceptions about what the study is and what it is not.
3. Encourage participation in the study process by interested stakeholders.
4. Document issues and concerns raised by the public.

Committee members (x indicates attendance)

	Bud Budinger	x	Ed Gray		Bruce Nelson
	Paul Buxton	x	Velmer Hawkins		Curtis Pedersen
	Bob Campbell		Dan Henry		Steve Rawlings
x	Steve Cockerham	x	Greg Knight	x	John Smith
x	Forrest Collins	x	Doug Kyle	x	Mark Smith
x	Bill Danekas		Don and Frances Loan	x	Loren Torgerson
x	Raymond Driggs	x	Cecil McNinch	x	Russ Vaagen
					Troy Washburn

MINUTES

The second meeting of the Colville 2000 and Beyond Committee was held on Monday, November 16, 2009, at 6:30 P.M., at City Hall. See the attached sign up sheet for a partial list of citizens in attendance.

Facilitator Lori Isenberg welcomed the committee members and the public to the meeting. Following introductions, she overviewed the objectives of the meeting. The agenda and meeting packet had been distributed to committee members and interested persons prior to the meeting and additional copies were available (copies on file).

Discussion of *Frequently Asked Questions* document.

At the previous meeting, the committee developed a list of questions that needed to be answered; additional questions were added via email from community members. Ms. Isenberg explained that the consultant team answered the questions as much as possible.

The committee reviewed the attached *Frequently Asked Questions* document and determined whether each question had been adequately answered (noted OK below), needed additional information, and how additional information should be gathered.

Requests for additional information are underlined in the review below.

- Question 1: *What is the expectation of the committee from the city council?* OK
- Question 2: *Are we supposed to develop a broad vision for the community with specific plans for the airport?* OK
- Question 3: *Are we ultimately expected to make a recommendation to the mayor? The city council? Are we looking for a majority vote? Consensus?* OK

- Question 4: *If an airport is built in a new location, what happens to the current airport?*
 - Additional information was requested relative to whether the current airport property would revert back to the original property owner if the airport is relocated.
 - Committee member Bill Danekas explained that the Chamber of Commerce purchased the airport property from a land owner and then donated it to the City
 - Are there any restrictions?
 - Will there be two airports?

- Question 5: *Will a new airport be a City airport or a Regional airport?* OK
 - Ms. Isenberg explained that the term “regional” is an FAA term used in accordance with State and Federal definitions based on runway length and other factors such as the size of planes that could come in. The plans being discussed would meet the definition of a regional airport.

- Question 6: *What is the perceived operational capability of a new airport: medical?* OK

- Question 7: *What is the timeframe for our planning (20 years? 40 years?)* OK

- Question 8: *Why isn't the County involved?* OK
 - Lori pointed out the County is on the distribution list for information and a letter of support was received from the County. She suggested that more County involvement would likely occur at the NEPA stage of the process if potential sites are located outside the city limits.
 - Committee member Russ Vaagen pointed out some of the potential sites are clearly outside the city. He questioned whether it is mandatory that a City take the lead?

- Question 9: *What regulations need to be complied with during this process?*
 - Laws and regulations that need to be complied with during the airport siting process were listed in the document. It was questioned whether the Department of Health should be added to the list.

 - Ms. Isenberg explained that any community that wants to site an airport must go through a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process if FAA funds are used. The City decided to do a pre-NEPA Public Involvement Process with this committee due to all of the confusion surrounding this issue.

- Question 10: *If a site is selected that requires the purchase of private property, what is the process to purchase that property?*
 - Ms. Isenberg pointed out that the State and Federal laws and regulations governing the procedure for cities to acquire property were listed in the document.

 - Questions raised were: 1) Does the City Council vote to proceed with eminent domain? 2) What is the process to acquire land? 3) Will FAA go forward if the property hasn't been acquired?

- Question 11: *If needed, when and how does eminent domain come into play?* OK
- Question 12: *How will the decision to either leave the airport as is or build a new one affect the overall community?*
 - Russ Vaagen indicated that no one has addressed the negative issues of a new airport and suggested that they be brought up and not ignored.
- Question 13: *Where will the funds come from for planning, construction, and maintenance?* OK
- Question 14: *How does the current airport affect public safety?* OK
- Question 15: *How might a new airport affect public safety?*
 - Committee member John Smith requested that additional information regarding regional public safety be provided.
- Question 16: *What do we know from the FAA wind study?*
 - It was reported that the wind study is due to be completed in March 2010.
- Question 17: *How will the economy of the community be effected long term: 1) by a new airport? 2) if nothing is done with the current airport?*
 - One of the committee members pointed out that an immediate positive economic impact to the community would be the construction of an airport and the jobs it would create.
- Question 18: *Is the development of an industrial park being planned near a new airport?*
 - While an industrial park would be desirable near an airport, it was noted that the feasibility of future development would be subject to the environmental review process.
- Question 19: *What are the environmental impacts of the current airport now, and in the future? What will be the environmental impacts of a new airport?*
 - The committee felt that this question has been adequately answered in the document.
- Question 20: *What sites have been reviewed in the past?*
 - A list of eight sites that had been previously studied by CH2M Hill and the Foresite Group were listed in the document. Findings for each site were provided as outlined in a September 1987 report.
 - Committee member Forrest Collins expressed the feeling that some of the findings from the 1987 report were not factual. Based on his knowledge, he pointed out some of the analysis he felt was in error.
 - A map identifying the locations of the sites studied in 1987 was copied and distributed for information (copy on file).
- Question 21: *What is the process and timeline?*
 - A flow chart was provided which showed the activity related to this committee and the preliminary plan forward.

- Question 22: *Hasn't the need for an airport in the Colville area already been determined by FAA, the Washington Department of Transportation Aviation Division, the City and others?*
 - Ms. Isenberg explained that it appears there is quite a bit of support for a new airport, noting that earlier this year letters were written to Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers expressing the need for a new airport and requesting funding for the study effort. Key comments in those letters were noted on Pages 9-11 of the document. Copies of the letters from Senators Bob Morton, Joel Kretz and Shelly Short; Rodney D. Smoldon, Deputy Forest Supervisor Colville National Forest; Robert Smith, Director, Air Operations, US Customs and Border Protection; Richard Nichols, Mayor of Colville; Board of County Commissioners of Stevens County; Cindy Montgomery, President, Colville Chamber of Commerce; Leslie Jones, Executive Director, Tri-County Economic Development District; and Fran Bolt, Mayor of Marcus were distributed for information (copies on file).

There was discussion of whether the “support” mentioned in the letters was for the Aladdin site. Lori stated that either way, the NEPA process for an Environmental Assessment level FAA Airport Siting Study must consider all potential sites.

Committee member Cecil McNinch asked when it would be appropriate to talk about potential sites. Lori explained that either tonight or the next meeting a list of potential sites would be presented to the committee. At that time, any additional sites can be added to the list. Since some of the sites have been studied in the past, an abbreviated process will take place. Some of the old reports can be updated as needed and sites evaluated to get the number down to a manageable level. Lori pointed out in some communities this process takes 8 years.

Following a short break, Ms. Isenberg reconvened the meeting.

Next Steps

Lori suggested that while consideration needs to be given to what was done in the past and the information utilized as much as possible, it may be time to move forward. Discussion followed relative to the next steps in the process.

Ms. Isenberg stated it was her understanding that at its next meeting the City Council is going to discuss moving forward with the FAA NEPA airport site selection process

Committee member Steve Cockerham felt that if the City Council is planning on making a decision to move forward at the next meeting, this decision is for the community and yet there is no representation from the county or any of the non-city residents who have a stake in that. He questioned whether it is going to be a city airport.

Committee member/Councilmember Doug Kyle stated, to his knowledge, the intent is for it to be a city owned and operated airport regardless of what it is called. The term “regional” airport comes from state and federal definitions. As indicated earlier, part of the funding will come from WSDOT Aviation Division who has identified a need for a regional airport in Northeastern Washington, would includes Pend Oreille, Stevens, and Ferry Counties.

DRAFT

Committee member Russ Vaagen pointed out that letters of support have already been submitted from local politicians and others and it appears that the City Council is ready to move forward. He questioned whether the committee could accept the fact that “need” has been addressed and move forward with the process.

Lori reiterated that the process can move forward as soon as the City Council makes its decision to go through the NEPA process. At that time, FAA would advise the City to hire a firm to go through the formal study process, which could take 2-3 months. Ideally, the committee would continue to communicate with the public through January – February, which could facilitate the study process.

Doug Kyle pointed out one of the objectives of the committee is to increase public awareness. If there is a need for a new airport, he felt this must be communicated to the public. He expressed the desire to move forward and get the information out.

Forrest Collins asked if there would be a point in the communication process to develop a list of the possibilities and advantages of a new airport in Colville.

Steve Cockerham suggested that some of the reasons that have been cited in the support letters are pretty generic and felt some specifics on economic improvement should be provided for the public.

Committee member John Smith noted that he presented a preliminary outline to Lori earlier regarding the economic impact of the airport. He offered to share the information as soon as it is complete. He felt are some significant economic impacts to the community.

Committee member Loren Torgerson expressed that it is not the job of this committee to determine the need for an airport; that is what the NEPA process will do. During that process, a lot of these same questions are going to be evaluated. Based on the committee’s purpose and objectives, he suggested that the next step would be to develop a plan on how to communicate with the public.

Cecil McNinch brought up the issue of operating costs and questioned whether it would fall on the local taxpayers. Bill Danekas noted that the airport is a service to the public. He commented that he keeps hearing questions about seeing it fund itself; he would like to see - just for general public awareness – which departments in the city generate enough revenue to fund themselves; maybe water and sewer?

Russ Vaagen suggested that some like sized cities be contacted that are in similar situations, i.e., Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport, and Castlegar, B.C. He felt their Chambers of Commerce might be able to share specific examples of why a regional airport is beneficial or not beneficial. Steve Cockerham asked that cities that are paying operating costs also be contacted, not just the ones that are not.

Ms. Isenberg confirmed that getting the answers to a lot of the questions is time consuming and expensive. If a study is done through the NEPA process, FAA will pay for it. If not, the City is going to have to pay for it. Part of the pre-NEPA process is for the committee to help the public understand what we are doing and how they can be involved.

Bill Danekas pointed out that the airport issue has been discussed for 30 years. He felt it is time to move forward and that the committee should proceed with the communication process.

Wrap-up and path forward.

Discussion followed relative to a communication plan. Several ways of sharing information with the public were suggested including the local newspaper and radio. Lori confirmed that documents can also be posted on the City's website for information and input. She suggested that the newspaper and Chamber of Commerce could also have a link to the City's website to access the information. Members felt it was important to make sure all of the facts are communicated by the consultant and committee to avoid misconceptions.

Besides posting the *Frequently Asked Questions* in its entirety on the website, Lori felt that articles in the newspaper should be kept to 3-4 key points that the public needs to know. With input from the public, the committee identified the following items to communicate:

- Why is an airport needed? Who is supporting it?
- Are multiple sites being considered? There appeared to be a misconception among the public that the only
- Funding – where is the money going to come from now and in the future? (study process, land acquisition, construction/operation, ownership)
- Users – define “regional” and what type of aircraft would be using it.
- Potential impacts – negative and positive.
- Explain how the NEPA process works and the timeline (minimum 2 years – up to 8 years).

To wrap-up, Lori summarized comments from committee members Loran and Greg who suggested two paths moving forward: one for the city and one for the committee as described below. Each committee member was asked to respond; everyone agreed with the two stated paths forward (their responses are below).

1. The City is moving toward starting the NEPA process with FAA. It may take 3 months to get a consultant on board to start the NEPA process.
2. The committee's job is to start communicating with the public: share with them what we have learned and find out what additional questions they have. We will keep that communication process going until the NEPA process starts. This will probably be in February. When that process begins we will have an informed public that understand the process and want to be engaged.

Responses from the committee members related to the path forward are noted below:

- John Smith: Yes, key to public involvement is communication and that is now happening.
- Doug Kyle: I agree.
- Greg Knight: Yes, I think the process mentioned by Loren and Russ is the way to start.
- Ed Gray: (Made no comment)
- Ray Driggs: Yes, the public needs to be involved
- Cecil McNinch: Yes, we have a lot of input now and should be able to comment on sites soon.
- Bill Danekas: I think public input is very important and I think this is a good process.
- Russ Vaagen: I agree
- Forrest Collins: I am very well satisfied with how things are working.
- Mark Smith – yes, I agree
- Loren Torgerson: Yes, as I have said; I would also suggest some sort of a survey to the public and ask them what their concerns are – what do you need to know? Maybe this will be part of scoping.
- Steve Cockerham: Yes. More of an interactive website would be nice so that we can get that input also – we definitely have a big hole to dig out of as far as how this whole thing started in way too much secrecy.
- Velmer Hawkins: OK, I am not against an airport. I am against where it is at.

DRAFT

Committee member Velmer Hawkins expressed concern relative to the process of eminent domain. He felt the public needs to know that the Mayor and City Council intend to use eminent domain, if necessary. He questioned how the public felt about that and wondered if it might split the community. Ms. Isenberg stated that eminent domain is only used as a last resort; legally the Mayor has to say that it is possible.

Lori asked if anyone in the audience had any additional comments (questions had been asked throughout the meeting as appropriate).

- One citizen asked if there is an exit strategy if the City starts taking FAA money and what would happen if the project does not go through. Lori explained the NEPA study will determine if there is an appropriate site for an airport; one of the alternatives that must be studied in the NEPA process is the “No action” alternative.
- Another citizen asked what the City’s commitment is if the Council decides to move forward with the FAA at its next meeting. Ms. Isenberg indicated that she would attempt to get this question answered.
- In response to a question about a specific site, Lori explained this committee will only be developing a list of potential sites.

In conclusion, Lori thanked everyone for their participation and said the next meeting would be in January. In the meantime she will send the meeting minutes out as soon as possible and will proceed with all of the work that needs to be done and will continue to communicate with the committee and interested persons.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 P.M.