

**VAN NUYS AIRPORT CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**Tuesday, March 2, 2010**  
**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Van Nuys Airport Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Vice Chair Don Schultz. Members present: Rick Flam, Ron Merkin, Wayne Williams, Wendy Saunders, Harold Sullivan, Bob Jackson, Ken Miller, Harold Lee and Elliot Sanders.

Members Absent: Bob Frazier, Laurence Rabe, Dave Sotero, Gerald Silver, and Chris Nassif.

The Council vacancies as of March 02 are as follows: one appointment from the Office of Councilmember Alarcon, one appointment from Councilmember Cardenas, and one appointment from Councilmember Krekorian.

The minutes from November 3rd meeting and the minutes from February 2nd meeting were unanimously approved.

**1.) STAFF REPORTS**

Ms. Diana Sanchez introduced Mr. Jess Romo; the new VNY Airport Manager. Mr. Romo has been with the City of Los Angeles for 21 years, 13 years with LAWA; most recently serving as an Ontario Airport Manager since 2006.

The CAC welcomed Mr. Romo.

Mr. Romo stated it is his pleasure to be at the CAC meeting and to be re-associated with Van Nuys Airport as its manager. He stated he was the property manager at VNY in year 2001 and he spent many years working on Van Nuys issues. He stated that he wants to be a good asset for the people in the community and for the people who work at VNY Airport. Mr. Romo also noted that Ms. Selena Birk did an outstanding job managing VNY Airport for 10 years and he hopes that he and Mr. Kim Ellis, Assistant Airport Manager can follow in her footsteps.

**2.) REPORT FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chairman introduced and welcomed a new member of the CAC, Mr. Elliot Sanders. The CAC is looking forward to working with Mr. Sanders and thanks him for his time.

**3.) BOAC AGENDA ITEMS CONCERNING VNY**

None

**4.) PUBLIC COMMENT – NON-AGENDA ITEMS – Discussion**

Mr. Bill Mouzis from the public wants to know if any action has been taken by the CAC regarding the AQMD Study that is pertaining to the areas surrounding VNY. He also stated that the jet fumes at VNY seem to be getting worse every year and he wants to know whether any action will be taken by the CAC. VNY Airport is a non-passenger carrying entity and it would make more sense for the airport to have sole management control. Mr. Mouzis asked if the CAC would recommend that action.

Ms. Sanchez stated that she went to the Santa Monica meeting and she made contact for a possible speaker regarding the AQMD Study.

## **5.) NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Airport/Neighborhood Landscaping Improvements-Discussion/Action.**

The Chairman stated that in the two years he has been a member of the CAC he found that one thing the CAC has not discussed is the appearance and the large footprint that constitutes VNY. He asked the CAC Secretary to provide the CAC with pictures of the perimeter of the airport. In the last year he has taken the time to drive around the perimeter of the airport and he encourages all CAC members to take an hour to also drive the foot print perimeter of the airport. The Chairman noted that the CAC will find an amalgam of various things and none of which are aesthetically appealing. The picture we have of the airport shows just how big the airport foot print is and around its perimeter is the community that we work within. Another part of that foot print is land which may or may not be subject to appropriate use for recreational purposes or other types of purposes but the overall sense that the CAC may find is that we have this hodge-podge of things surrounding the airport and it looks unsightly.

Mr. Miller stated that in the recent years there has been a lot of negotiation in redevelopment of the airport and about four years ago a number of leases were finally redone and as part of those leases there were requirements in terms of development and also standards. He stated that near his property there is a new multicolored hangar that belongs to a tenant at TWC; in the lease and the plan presented to the airport that whole property was suppose to be redeveloped within a certain theme as was the Skytrails property which has been forced to vacate. There was an indication that the airport did have within its Master Plan some architectural continuity that was suppose to be implemented. All of those properties were re-leased and renewed; part of that commitment was to build it to those standards so maybe the CAC needs to find out what those standards are; what the delay is and is there something that says that LAWA understands there is a economic delay.

Mr. Jackson stated that recently he was driving on Hayvenhurst Ave between Sherman Way and Saticoy and he was appalled that one of the easiest areas to dress up is full of dirt. On the brick wall, all the way north, the colors of the wall doesn't match due to the graffiti that was there. The VNY Maintenance needs to use the same color paint as the rest of the wall.

Mr. Schultz stated that when Mr. Jackson was Chair of the CAC he asked Ms. Birk about the landscaping plan for VNY Airport. Ms. Birk answered there was a plan; however, that money has been diverted.

Mr. Jess Romo stated that he drove around Hayvenhurst Ave and saw the same things from Sherman Way all the way to Saticoy and it does not look good. There are a lot of areas at the airport that will be problematic to address because there is a balance between having the airport look nice, and there are areas that have perimeter fencing that cannot create visual obstructions from a security standpoint. He also stated there is no doubt that there are improvements that should be made. He noted that he will find out about any monies that may have been diverted; however, since this occurred a few years ago, reallocation of funds may be difficult.

Mr. Schultz stated that this was a full EIR and they allocated several hundred thousand dollars to that plan. Somewhere in the archives there is a landscape plan.

Mr. Merkin stated that he believes all of this will center on the budget so if there was some money available the CAC can select some of the most needed and important places to begin. He believes that would be the properties that are adjacent to the residential area.

Mr. Sanders stated that he is confused about the properties Mr. Miller talked about. It was the tenants and the master lease holder responsibility to include the landscaping and he assumes it is also a maintenance requirement as well. If LAWA has the perimeter than who has the wall on Hayvenhurst; is it the lease holder or is it LAWA. It might be a question of who is or who isn't maintaining the area.

Mr. Sullivan noted that since we are talking about all this money involved in the landscaping processes than we should be updated with the budget analysis.

The Chairman stated that in the last two years there were a lot of important issues that came before the Council. Even though the CAC has dealt with all those issues we still have zero political impact; however, we have sat down with Commissioner Aredas and he has been here for a variety of issues that have come up. He also noted that LAWA Real Estate Division has been responsive; but the bottom line is that the CAC has zero political impact. The CAC formed a very valuable workshop on the pollution and helicopter issues and we did all we could; but there are policies and constituencies who don't care about what the CAC thinks. This Council needs to talk about how the airport impacts the community, the budget monies that was allocated is good in terms of finding out the tenant history and who dropped the ball over on Hayvenhurst but it seems to him if we pick one or two of those things we will go down the same pattern we always go down, which is losing our focus and we don't have the authority. The Chairman stated that in the 1.5 years he has been the Chair of the CAC he has written a dozen letters to Chairman Rothenberg and he always gets a polite: "get out of here" response. He noted that he believes there is no one at LAWA who is looking at the landscaping issue.

Mr. Miller stated that he can hear frustration in the Chairman's voice and he has felt that the purpose of this Council was to create a forum so the public can come and vent and that would take the heat of those who have to deal with these issues. However, because of the Chairman he is seeing the CAC's movement and he is finding that LAWA is saying that the CAC is making some points worth paying attention to. Certainly as anything political it is not moving at a speed that we would like it to but he is aware that we are catching their attention. He doesn't think the CAC should take a stance that might be adversarial because ultimately there is a power to say that these people are annoying us and we need to get rid of them. This Council hears input from many sources and we try to stress the fact that the airport has values at many levels. Recent events need to be noted; what just happened in Haiti and Chile showed importance of having an airport; we too are in an area that is subject to earthquakes. We saw in Haiti that they had infrastructure problems so the airports in the area have many values that impact the whole community and part of our mission is to make this airport the kind of neighbor that everyone takes pride in and that everyone can live with. We can try to get some volunteers such as Home Depot and get out there on Saturday with some donated paint; overcome this budget issue and make the perimeter of the airport look good because we care. By getting involved as a group we can reignite the support across the board. Taking a position with LAWA to embarrass them and go to the newspaper with this issue would not be at the CAC's best interest.

The Chairman stated that the CAC's message needs to be sent out to LAWA and to the community. He agrees with Mr. Miller that the community can get together but truthfully we need to know a lot more about what the history was and what the obligations are. We do not want to embarrass LAWA but make them appreciate the fact that this is about the neighborhood.

Ms. Sanchez noted that the green security fence around the airport was put in within the last two years. She also mentioned that VNY has a volunteer group, Team LAWA who beautify schools and would be willing to help with this issue.

Mr. Schultz stated that somewhere in the archives there is a landscaping plan in place. He would like LAWA Staff to find it and bring it to the next CAC meeting.

The Chairman asked if Mr. Ron Domash was in charge of the leases at VNY Airport. He also asked for the leases in the last couple of years that have been negotiated.

Mr. Romo stated there are various people who are assigned different lease projects at VNY. He also stated that a lease should contain certain landscape provisions, and the airport has the right to make requirements of the tenant who is developing a facility. The provisions may vary in different leases, but the general language is in the agreement. Mr. Romo noted that he will ask Mr. Domash to compile a list of the leases that have been negotiated in the last couple of years and the leases that are in negotiations. He also mentioned that Staff will look for the old landscape plan.

The Chairman stated that he will defer appointing an adhoc committee until the Staff can provide the Council with those materials.

Mr. Rodine from the public stated two years ago there was a TSA mandated security project that was initiated on the airport and there were design specs given to all of those leases where the improvements are going to be made by LAWA. Mr. Rodine stated that in some places they were actually undertaken but on the Southwest corner of the field there was a necessity of a retaining wall that the TSA Security required.

The Chairman asked if that is the new green security fence.

Mr. Rodine answered yes, that security fence was required to wrap all 23 thousand lineal feet of the airport exterior. The old landscaping plan was not a budgetary document; it was a guidance document for how the airport ought to look. He believes the CAC shouldn't waste time looking at the architectural document but rather look at the TSA documents.

Mr. Romo stated the airport falls under the regulatory compliance of the TSA. We do have concerns of the functionality that fencing needs provide and part of that is visually being able to see into and out of those fenced areas.

There was a brief discussion between Ms. Saunders, Mr. Rodine and the Chairman regarding this item.

## **6.) OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Helicopter Routes – Discussion/Action**

The Chairman stated that the CAC sent a letter to the Mayor to take action in this matter. The resolution that was sent to the Mayor's office was based upon the communication in a letter the CAC received from the FAA. The CAC asked that the helicopter route be redirected from Bull Creek to Balboa. The Mayor responded to our request asking the City Attorney to review the proposal. The City Attorney responded that LAWA staff met with the FAA regarding the elimination of the Bull Creek route. A letter from Mr. Withycombe, the Regional Administrator from the FAA sent to Mr. Mouzis determined that was not possible because of the complexity of the airspace in the area.

Ms. Sanchez stated that the FAA and LAWA are going to update the letter of agreement; they also have a deadline to identify all the based operators and the common use operators. They will meet

next week and have an outreach plan to make sure that everyone is on board. The goal is to get a 100% of base helicopters and at least 75% of common users.

Ms. Flora Margheritis stated that the letter of agreement specifically outlines all of the routes and altitudes that the helicopter operators use and other safety related procedures. LAWA hopes that the helicopter operators will follow the language that is in the agreement.

The Chairman asked does anyone know if the letter of agreement would include reference to the Bull Creek route and possibly the changing of that route.

Ms. Margheritis stated that the letter of agreement currently does not and will not address eliminating the Bull Creek route. It is to make sure that the helicopter operators know that the routes are there.

The Chairman stated that the City Attorney's letter said that they recommend that LAWA continue its dialogue with the FAA, the community and the helicopter operators and the letter specifically is addressing the route change; not the issues of altitude. Mr. Withycombe stated that this route cannot change due to the complexity of the airspace in the area and the Chairman, as an attorney himself finds that statement very intriguing because it does not mean anything to him. The Chairman wants to know what LAWA is doing to deal with the Bull Creek issue.

Mr. Williams stated that Mr. Withycombe letter basically says that it is the City's responsibility to deal with the route and the safety issues.

The Chairman stated that originally someone else from the FAA articulated that it is up to the City of Los Angeles to decide what routes the helicopter operators will use; then we received a letter from Mr. Wythicombe declining the possibility of a route change due to complexity of the airspace in the area. For the purpose of clarification to the Council he would like to know if LAWA will follow through with the recommendation by the City Attorney as dated November 19, 2009 to work with the FAA, community, and the helicopter operators about the issue of Bull Creek route.

Mr. Williams noted that there was a consideration of trying the Balboa route to see what the reaction will be.

Ms. Margheritis stated that she will talk to the FAA about that.

The Chairman stated that he received a letter from BOAC President, Alan Rothenberg dated December 10, 2009. The letter stated that "After speaking with staff, I understand there are still a few options the FAA is reviewing as a result of the Citizen Advisory Council helicopter meeting with helicopter operators and the September meeting between airport staff and the FAA. Options include the FAA reviewing Air Traffic Control data and meeting with helicopter operators to possibly revise and/or update the existing letter of agreement between the FAA and airport tenants who operate helicopters. Safety remains the highest priority for the FAA and Los Angeles World Airports. The airport authority will continue to encourage the FAA to examine the helicopter routes with both safety and noise sensitivity around the entire Van Nuys Airport. The Chairman stated it would be a serious mistake on the part of LAWA staff to believe that the Council's action were regarding the altitude issues when in fact the opposite is true and the Council's action is about the routes and specifically the Bull Creek route. The Bull Creek route needs to be re-examined and alternatives need to be considered. The Chairman noted that by the next meeting he needs to know what LAWA staff is doing to focus on that issue.

Ms. Sanchez stated that is FAA territory and she will work on getting an FAA speaker to come to a CAC meeting.

The Chairman stated that he is very disturbed by Ms. Sanchez's response because that is just a push-off. According to President Rothenberg, LAWA's Staff will work with the FAA and look at the route issues and work on getting the Bull Creek route changed. He would also like to know at the next CAC meeting what the "complexity of the airspace" means and why isn't LAWA pushing to get the route changed or at least looking at other route options.

Mr. Jackson stated that several months ago he suggested that we have the VNY Tower Chief at the CAC meeting; he is the principal on the letters of agreement. We also need to get the airports operations staff and have them explain the letters of agreement.

The Chairman stated the Tower Chief is on assignments in Washington; however, having him at a CAC meeting would be valuable.

Mr. Mouzis from the public stated that he believes the City Attorney knew there has been a court precedence regarding City intervention in routes, noise and environmental concerns.

There was a lengthy discussion between the Chairman, Mr. Rodine, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Williams regarding this item.

## **B. Air quality and health impacts – Discussion/Action**

Mr. Schultz stated that the CAC asked for an AQMD Study Representative to attend a CAC meeting to discuss air quality and health impacts in the residential areas. He noted this will be a continuous item until we have a representative at CAC.

Mr. Miller stated that we live in a very heavily traveled Metropolitan area and he cannot understand how the CAC can anticipate a study that will separate what is coming out of the airplanes and what is being put into air by numerous other vehicles that are in the same area.

Mr. Jackson stated that a couple of years ago Ms. Selena Birk told him that the EPA was going to start running Federal Government tests on Van Nuys and Santa Monica Airport on jet smell and jet exhaust. He asked her if someone from the EPA could come to the CAC meeting and speak on that issue and no one got back to him.

Mr. Romo stated that he will find out why no one got back to Mr. Jackson.

Mr. Bickhart stated that the study is emerging in newspapers in Santa Monica and generating concerns amongst people who live around the airport. It appears that whatever tests the EPA did do they are going public with them.

Mr. Sanders stated that he attended that meeting back in December held by the Environmental Subcommittee of the Santa Monica City Council for the Airport Commission. There were many PHD's who attended that meeting and they made it very clear to the public that this study was going to take close to 15 years to develop actual statistical information concerning micro particulars in the atmosphere near an airport and without any way of attributing the specifics to an airplane or to a diesel truck that drives by.

The Chairman gave an amendment to the "Report from the Chair". He stated the CAC has an additional three vacancies. The Chairman asked Ms. Saunders to speak with Councilmember Cardenas' Deputy about appointing a member to fill a CAC vacancy. The Chairman also talked about the Bylaws and what they say about CAC attendance. The Chairman told the Council that he asked the CAC Secretary to provide him with the list of absences' from the CAC meetings. The rule is that three unexcused absences are grounds for dismissal and we have at least two members that have been absent six or more times in a 12 month period. He would like the Council members to keep that in mind and understand that there are times when a member cannot make it and those times are understood and agreed; however, he will be speaking with members who have less than stellar attendance history and he will have the CAC Secretary keep him updated.

**7) EMERGENCY ITEMS SINCE POSTING OF AGENDA – Discussion**

**None**

**8) ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS' COMMENTS - NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Mr. Merkin asked regarding the Stage 2 phase out is there any possibility that LAWA could have some take-off problems with pilots trying to perform a lower Db level and inducing power that might be considered close to the edge.

Mr. Len Kruegler stated that the noise abatement procedures are outlined in the aircraft manual that pilots use.

The Chairman stated that in the October meeting he raised a question about certain violators of the voluntary Fly Friendly Departure Program. There were numerous aircraft that were unidentified and unknown.

Mr. Kruegler stated that all of the unknowns are now known. LAWA has contacted every single one. He stated that he will have that report shortly for the CAC.

**9) ADJOURNMENT:**

8:55 p.m.