

# Airport Community Meeting with Strategic Planning Services 12/13/2023

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December 13, 2023

5:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Placerville Airport – EAA Hangar (H-03)

Airport tenants along with the community were invited to meet at the Placerville Airport on December 13, 2023, with the Strategic Planning Services Consultant Group (SPS) and County Staff. At this meeting Doug Goldberg and Thierry Sarr from SPS presented a slide show to provide to the attendees the process of the study, goals, and expectations for the Economic Development Study for County Owned Airports. This meeting also gave the attendees the opportunity to ask questions and engage in conversation regarding ideas, concerns and hopes.

The following are comments/dialogue from the meeting:

Doug went into detail about how they will use Comparative Analysis to gather data. He stressed that the Stakeholders, FBO's and airport users need to be the priority in this study. He explained that their purpose in this study is to identify what will work and what will not work with our demographics, etc. They will also be doing a "Needs Assessment". With the Needs Assessment they will then do an evaluation of options, then they will be able to develop an economic development strategy.

Thierry then explained that the FAA guidelines and allowances will consider the FAA-approved Airport Layout Plan (ALP) for each airport. They will be making recommendations for the Georgetown Airport as well as the Placerville Airport. One of the areas they will be focusing on is viable aeronautical and other aviation-related compatible land uses.

Consultants mentioned that an area of focus that has been brought to their attention is the need for Flight Training to be brought to the airports. They mentioned that there are five flight schools in the area but will look at how having a flight school at our airport could benefit us financially, as well as help address the pilot shortage facing the commercial aviation industry.

SPS's goal is to deliver the preliminary Needs Assessment by the end of January of 2024.

Airport user asked about the item on the presentation "deliverable #2": "Who will the presentation in April be made to?" Answer was given by Chris Perry: "The presentation will be presented to the AAC and airport users initially, ultimately it will be presented to the Board of Supervisors."

Consultants mentioned that there will be a Benchmark Analysis for both airports.

Airport user asked: "Is the County looking for Revenue? What is the County's goal?" This answer was given by Chris Perry: "The cost recovery objective is broad goal to help balance the County cost of operating both airports with potential revenue-generating opportunities. - the county is currently at 25% cost recovery."

Airport user asked: "What is the normal?" Answer given by Doug: "Some airports run on 100% recovery, and some are much lower." Chris then stated: "There are different ways to reach a higher cost recovery, one that is being looked at is economic development to grow income. Almost all divisions in the Department are currently at 100% or near 100% cost recovery. It would be nice to see 100% cost recovery, but that does not mean that it must come from the current airport tenants. The focus is to increase overall business and avoid the need to increase the rates to the extent possible."

Airport user read a summary that he had forwarded to the airport staff and to SPS, prior to the meeting. This summary is attached (attachment B) to this meeting summary.

Airport user mentioned that there is a need for more commercial hangars, that there are 30 people interested in building hangars, just in the EAA community.

Airport user stated that the Placerville airport could accommodate small jets, would benefit from solar panels, and having solar coverings for the tie downs would provide weather and sunlight protection for aircraft, and provide income.

Airport user suggested looking at the Auburn airport. User states that the Auburn airport is bringing in up to \$2k/mo. for one hangar.

Doug suggested that the study will explore compatible businesses that rely on airport assets and offer the potential to drive future demand, such as a restaurant.

Airport user states that we need to be inviting nationally, and the airports could do this by building up commercially.

Doug stated that he would like to see the airports be able to generate more income commercially, so we don't have to raise the rates on the airport users.

Airport user made a statement that we do not need any more flight schools, when there are already 5 in the surrounding areas, but she would be interested in seeing a Seaplane Base. She stated that a Seaplane Base would be desirable and would bring in tourism and income as there are many beautiful lakes around here.

Airport user directed the following to Supervisory Thomas directly: "There is no hangar availability anywhere. What about Lease terms? What if the residents want to put an end to leasing and try to close the airport?" Supervisor Thomas replied stating that this is not what she is gathering from this meeting, that she is not hearing anything like that. Airport user then stated that he would like to see protection for the tenants. He also added that the golf course site to the west of the Airport could be a good opportunity for a business park. If our airport had covered parking, there is the capability that Tahoe Flyers (Skiers?) would come here when they have snow.

Airport user stated: "The East End of the Placerville Airport is low hanging fruit for hangar development, what is the hang up with development?" Answer given by Chris Perry: "One of the challenges is providing

underground utilities at an affordable cost.” Supervisor Thomas added: “We are here to explore options.” Another airport questioned if a water tank would be sufficient temporarily for the East end in an effort to get things moving on improvements and meet county fire suppression requirements.

Airport user asked: “What is the cost of this study?” Answer given by Chris Perry: “\$50k.” Airport user continued: “Are you looking at revenue development or cost recovery? The state of California is bad at using our tax dollars. Doug responded that the purpose of the study is to develop an economic development strategy that will support both airports by identifying increased business opportunities for tenants and users.

Airport user asked: “Does Brandley work with us on grants?” Answer given by Sherrie: “Brandley prioritizes from the runway out.”

Airport user asked: “Can the grants process be made public?” Answer given by Sherrie: “It can, a lot of the grant processes have been made public and talked about at the AAC meetings.”

Airport user makes statement: I do not recommend water tanks. Why is the other half of the airport not approved for development?”

Airport user states: “There are other sources of funding than the FAA grants. Auburn got \$3.44 million from the American Rescue Plan and still has \$1.2 trillion that hasn’t been tapped into.” Airport user then reminded everyone that 6 years from now is the 100-year celebration of aviation at Placerville, and plans are already in the works to commemorate the anniversary. User then added that competitive airports have received millions of dollars in the last 18 months, as we have lost 3 business opportunities to have here at our airport to the other airports that received those funds.

Airport user stated that he volunteered at the Cameron Park airport when it was a county airport as a manager, and when he presented their tree problem to the previous Board of Supervisors, they weren’t aware of the importance. In 2018 they introduced the importance of this safety hazard removal again to the Board of Supervisors, and they pushed it aside. He stated that nothing will get done unless the Board of Supervisors and the county are behind it. He said with grants, nothing moves forward until every little step is taken before they handle it. Chris emphasized that the county is actively engaged with the FAA to resolve the tree/obstruction issue at Georgetown Airport.

Airport user asked: “Is there another access road? Is there room for another road?” This question was answered by another airport user: “There is, but CDF has entitlement.”

Airport user makes statement: “If more hangars are built, it will grow. We need water there (in the East end) to comply with fire codes.” Another airport user replies that there may be a temporary water access, that we could go to the fire marshal to get access to power or water or a fire pump. The user then stated that at the Georgetown airport, 25 years ago, there was a masterplan that was approved for hangars where the campground is and that the Georgetown airport is a quicker flight to the airport in Auburn.

Airport user stands at the podium and gives his feelings on the airport/airport community and what it means to him and the EAA: He talked about the tradition of having pancake breakfasts there that are very special, and the Young Eagle flights they provide. He stated that they have given \$66,500 in scholarships for pilot scholarships, with the expectation that they complete the program in 1 year. He stated that they used to rent

his plane to these aspiring pilots so they could get their flight hours in, but now the insurance has gone up so much, that he can't afford to ensure the planes he rented out, and it has been a hardship on these student pilots to achieve their required hours now. He mentioned how great it would be to have a flight school or a plane available to rent to students, that there is a great need for flight schools and an available Certified Flight Instructor (CFI) and plane rentals to support pilot training.

Airport user stated that it would be beneficial to streamline the entry process of businesses on the field.

Airport user asked: "Does the airport have an enterprise fund? Answer given by Chris Perry: "Yes" Airport user then asked: "Is there special rules for enterprise funds?" Answer given by another airport user: "Those funds are protected."

Airport user then began to ask for specifics on the processing of grants, in which airport staff told the user that we could get them a list at another time.

Airport user made a statement that raising airport hangar rates will chase people out.

One question was left in the question/suggestion box at the meeting: Is there a chance that El Dorado County may build (be allowed to build) non-aviation use structures as they have in the Cameron Park Airport?

Before the meeting had started, an airport user discussed the idea of using old county vehicles that have been retired for shuttle services with county staff. He mentioned that years ago, he had donated a car for that purpose, and it was used often, all the way up until it couldn't run anymore.

Meeting ended with SPS and staff thanking everyone for showing up and offering their input. The consultants let the attendees know that they would be happy to continue communication with the users as the study progresses.

An initial list of preliminary economic development initiatives for Placerville and Georgetown airports have been prepared by the SPS team and is included in attachment A.