

ATTACHMENT B

file



October 31, 2005

Tim Arntzen, Executive Director
Port of Kennewick
101 Clover Island Drive
Kennewick WA 99336

Dear Mr. Arntzen,

With this letter I am transmitting comments to your proposed update to the Vista Field Master Plan. These comments are very pointed and direct regarding the future of continued airfield operations in the Vista area. Kennewick City Council has not reviewed these comments but rather these are staff's perspective of this area as it fits within Kennewick's Comprehensive Plan. I do believe these comments reflect the majority of our Council's historical perspective regarding the Vista Field.

I understand this is a sensitive issue and please know that the City of Kennewick is ready to be at the table to discuss the future of this property at any time you feel that is appropriate.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Hammond".

Robert R. Hammond
Kennewick City Manager

Cc: City Council

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

Comments from City of Kennewick

Proposed Vista Field Airport Master Plan Update

The Vista Field Master Plan update forces the question on the continued viability and rationale of maintaining a utility airport for small aircraft in the center of the City's most valuable commercial land.

A commercial and industrial area of prime significant economic value has grown around the Vista Field Airport. Very little of this commercial and industrial value has been the result of the location of the airport. In fact, a reasonable person can assume that the location of the airport has had a deleterious effect on private investment in the Entertainment District Area and area north and at the ends of the current runway alignment. Urban density commercial development will further push against the building restriction envelopes dictated by airport hazard zoning. As road access continually evolves to accommodate the community's vision in this area, it appears obvious that Vista Field has become an impediment to effective land planning rather than a driver for economic development.

The continued operation of the Vista Field Airport in such proximity to areas with concentrated populations and physical structures calls for the increased analysis of the safety considerations relating to airport operations. The airport just doesn't feel safe.

The height restrictions that are necessary to protect the clear spaces at either end of the runway and the height restricted building area that is parallel to the runway alignment will or has caused adverse impacts on land use and investment in this valuable commercial land.

Master Plan – specific comments:

1. Question the long-term benefits of the City rezoning space in and around Vista Field for additional hanger development and / or buffer zones along the current north-fence line (Page 1). This will aggravate the difficulty in eventually relocating airport operations.

2. Question the 1.37 million dollar capital investment required until the year 2009 for such expensive items as
 - FBO building improvements and expansion at \$370,000; and
 - Paving the apron and extending utilities for new hangers on the north at \$487,000.

Over the next five years, \$1,372,306 is proposed in upgrades that do not make changes to the current limited usage of the airport. After these improvements, the airport will still be one of very limited use.

In addition, there are specific questions on several of the capital items such as the one on page 3: "This recommended Master Plan maintains the philosophy of providing ground clearances for safe operations of occasional B-II aircraft, however airspace for B-II operations is impossible to achieve due to the presence of buildings outside of Port ownership"; and on page 8: "In 2009, a 4-inch overlay of the north taxiway will bring the pavement strength up to B-II status."

The first sentence is confusing in that it is admitted that the airspace is not there for the B-II aircraft, yet the airport wants to provide ground clearances. In addition, although the airspace is not possible, \$72,000 will be spent on a taxiway overlay to meet the needs of the B-II aircraft. If the airspace is not there, but the Port feels the airport must accommodate B-II aircraft, then it needs to look at locating the airport elsewhere to accommodate that need, and maybe other needs that cannot be met in the current location.

3. Fundamental assumptions for the continued viability of the airport have not been presented as a component of the master plan update. On page 1 of the Master Plan this is stated: "The completed Master Plan Update will give the Port of Kennewick staff and Commissioners the tools to make informed decisions regarding airport planning and land use." However, the Update fails to consider the larger questions: What value does the current airport provide to the community? What opportunities does the current airport impede? Does the current placement of the airport allow it to become anything more than it is right now? Is there a need for the current airport?