

AIRPORT: Mitigation is being explored on noise issue

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The listing in Appendix M as a privately owned, public-use airport of State concern would have little direct impact on the operations of the airport.

“It continues the uses that are currently allowed,” Swecker said. “It enables them in statute.”

While the airport has seen an increase in traffic and instruction activities, the issue that has raised the greatest concern in the community is the skydiving operation, which is expected to return to action this summer. Some local residents — both in the vicinity of the airport and further out — contend that the aircraft’s takeoff pattern and particularly the droning noise of its circling to gain drop altitude is negatively impacting their quality of life.

“Skydiving is the issue,” Bruce Mason told *The Nugget*.

Mason is a member of the steering committee of the local activist group Save Our Skies (SOS).

SOS representatives noted that they are splitting the cost of a facilitator with the airport owners to explore mitigation of the impacts of aircraft noise. Facilitator Anne George is currently assessing the potential for a mitigation agreement.

Both sides have expressed a willingness to “come to the table” — and both sides have said that they’ve met resistance from the other side.

Julie Benson told *The Nugget* last week that “SOS is not willing to mitigate (noise impact) — they just want it to stop,” Benson said.

SOS members say that is not true. Asked what would constitute mitigation from their point of view, Mason, Karen Hulbert and Susan Springer agreed that a change of takeoff and climbing pattern, changes or reductions in hours and/or days of operation and mechanical modifications to the skydiving aircraft would all be considered forms of mitigation worth considering.

“It would be a substantial noise reduction,” Mason said. “We’ve been saying that all along and have offered suggestions for that... If they did that, 95 percent of the complaints would go away.”

Asked last week about mechanical adaptations that could make a difference with propeller noise on the

skydiving aircraft — such as installing a three-bladed propeller or adding a muffler — Benson told *The Nugget*, “Absolutely, I believe there are some mechanical modifications that would help that plane. They’re expensive. Who’s going to pay for that? That’s absolutely something that we could bring to the table — if we can get to the table.”

Mason suggests that the use of a more powerful plane that could climb more quickly and quietly would be beneficial.

The skydiving operation does not currently have use of the drop zones where parachutists landed last summer. To use the properties where they landed — one alongside Camp Polk Road inside the city limits and one on a hayfield on private property under county jurisdiction — the operation would have to obtain a conditional-use permit, which would require a land-use process including public hearings. The timeline for obtaining permits by the start of the season would be extremely tight and given the likelihood of appeals, probably not viable.

Without the permits, the skydivers’ landing zone would have to be on the airport property.

In addition to the noise-impact controversy, there is an issue regarding a paved “runout” on the airport runway. Senior Deschutes County Planner Peter Russell noted in a memorandum last fall that the paving of the runout in 2015 poses several “challenges” for the County — the first being that it was reportedly done without permits. Additionally, the use is not allowed in the Rural Residential (RR-10) zone and it sits on property not owned by the airport but on the common area owned by the adjacent Eagle Air Estates subdivision.

Also, the runout was reportedly built on lands mapped as wetlands.

The Department of State Lands has not yet made a determination on the wetlands question or any action that might arise from it, and the Eagle Air Estates homeowners association and the airport owners are currently involved in mediation to resolve the issue of the runout intrusion onto the HOA common area.

Obituary

Dalton James

January 30, 1990 – March 9, 2017

A Celebration of Life for Dalton James, 27, of Sisters, will be held at 5 p.m., Tuesday, March 28, at the Sisters Rodeo Clubhouse.

Dalton passed away Wednesday, March 9, 2017 in Dunn Center from injuries sustained in a motor-vehicle accident.

Dalton Ray James was born January 30, 1990 to Stacy James. He grew up in Central Oregon and graduated from Sisters High School in 2008. Dalton built his first guitar during his junior year, which added to his love for music. He wrote a song he titled “These Boots,” and touched many people with the lyrics. He also was a part of his school’s football and wrestling teams.

The annual Sisters Rodeo was a big part of Dalton’s life. No matter where or what he was doing he always made sure to attend. Dalton worked at the Three Creeks Brewery in Sisters before moving to Dickinson in 2012 to seek work. He worked for various jobs including Titan



Chemical, Pathfinder, ZECO and Smithies Hot Shot.

Dalton shared his musical talent at many bars. He won second place in the 2013 Dickinson’s Got Talent and opened at the Bandshell. Dalton enjoyed having jam sessions and bonfires with friends. He made friends that turned into family everywhere he went. He will be truly missed by everyone who was lucky enough to know him, and even those who didn’t get a chance.

Dalton is survived by his mother, Stacy Berk of Dickinson; brother, Colton Berk of Bend; grandparents, Laurel and Bill Chrisp of Washington; dog, Tank; numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and friends too numerous to list.

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