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Grand Jury Use of Internet

One of the goals of the 2009-2010 Grand Jury was to bring the Plumas County Grand Jury, now and in the future, into the world of technology – to fully utilize the capabilities of the Internet to speed and to facilitate communication and document/file sharing between panel members. The initial approach was via email using password-protected files. Incompatibilities in software, hardware and internet service by different providers rendered this approach impractical for achieving our stated goal.

After a great deal of research, the Grand Jury established a new position, Webmaster, and purchased a low cost web hosting service. The service provides a high-end business-class online storage sharing website. The service also provides software that easily interfaces with Microsoft and Apple operating systems, which greatly improved the Jury's ability to quickly and securely store and share documents and files both large and small with minimal incompatible issues. The website was easy to set-up, has good support service, is reliable and requires minimal training for use by Grand Jury members. In addition, access to the site is password protected and all privileges for reading, sharing, uploading, downloading and management of documents/files/folders are controlled by the Webmaster and designated users such as committee chairs.

The Grand Jury elected to use their own email service and identities to communicate changes in website content, and the Webmaster used a portable storage device to manually backup documents/files. The website service proved to be a valuable tool and exceeded or met all expectations of our stated goal.

Finally, the combined use of Grand Jurors personal computers (desk top and lap top), printers, email and the web site saved significant time and cost. The use of these modern technologies is especially important in Plumas County due to the long travel distances between the Grand Jurors and the communities they represent.

**Plumas County Grand Jury Members
2009-2010**

Bourquin, Charles, Chairperson	Hamilton Branch
Brand, Richard	Chester
Dailey, Don.	Quincy
Erickson, Paul, Chairperson	Clio
Gill, Pamela, Foreperson	Portola
Hiltunen, Gary	Chester
Howe, Julien, Chairperson.	Greenville
Jesenka, Cheryl	Chester
Klemesrud, Eleanor.	Graeagle
Matthews, Anne.	Taylorville
Plopper, Charlie, Chairperson	Hamilton Branch
Ramsey, Melody	Chilcoot
Salvato, Fred, Webmaster.	Hamilton Branch
Scott, Carole, Foreperson Pro Tempore	Portola
Scotti, Jerry, Chairperson	Chester
Sevier, Harlon	Quincy
Wann, Julie	Hamilton Branch
Wheeler, Linda, Chairperson	Blairsden

Former members:

Berry, Sonya.	Quincy
Mike Quisenberry	Blairsden
Kennedy, Starra	Quincy
Windward, Stephen	Quincy

Grand Jury Committees

- Airport
- Animal Services
- Archive
- Conflict of Interest
- County Audit
- Editorial Review
- Economic Development
- Food Safety
- Grand Jury Manual
- Plumas County Correctional Facility (Jail)
- Stimulus Funding
- Structural Fire Management
- Water Resources

2009-2010 Grand Jury Celebrates Plumas County Airports' Success

Specific Issue:

Bestowed with the High Quality Standard Award from Exxon Mobil Aviation and operating at a profit, airports in Plumas County serve as shining examples of well-run county facilities. The county will benefit further with the addition of a new U. S. Forest Service Air Attack Base emergency response center at Nervino Airport in 2010. The county will gain revenues and the citizens will realize added forest fire protection. The airports are positioned for growth and the future looks promising.

As the 2009-2010 Plumas County Grand Jury began to choose possible departments of our county government to investigate, a reading of the Grand Jury's investigation history revealed that our three airports: Rogers Field in Chester, Gansner Field in Quincy, and Nervino Airport in Beckwourth, had not been investigated in the past ten years. With our present difficult times, our airports should be accounted for in their role within the future growth and development of this county. Where are we and our airports going? What issues of safety, management, or finance are there that our residents of Plumas County ought to know? This became the purpose of our investigation.

Summary of the investigation:

We of the Grand Jury, by the examination of all pertinent documentation, interviews and tours, found our Airport Department to be run efficiently by the combined teamwork of contract airport managers and the supervision of our Plumas County Director of Facility Services. For this brief summary, our claim of efficiency is found in that the Airport Department has operated with a budget that has been in the black every year.

Findings and Recommendations:

Finding 1: For the 2008-2009 year, the Airport Department operated with a budget that ended with \$5,391 in the black. At midyear this year, the airport budget is in the black by \$7,783.19. We commend the Airport Department for maintaining a budget that allows our airfield to be able to provide their services while not being any sort of financial burden on the people who live and pay taxes in our county.

Recommendation 1: The Board of Supervisors should continue to fund our airports as they have done in the past. Any operating surplus remaining in the budget should be reinvested in the airports for future growth and improvements.

Finding 2: An inspection at our three airfields during January 2010 by Exxon Mobil Aviation examined the general facilities, personal and flight line safety, records and receipts, fuel documentation, and filtration. One hundred and twelve quality control checks were performed in this inspection without any "discrepancy description or recommendations". The county facility at Gansner field was given a compliance rating of 90%. Rodgers Field and Nervino Airport received compliance ratings of 93% and 98% respectively. For this superior rating the Airport Department received Exxon Mobil's High Quality Standard Award.

Recommendation 2: The Grand Jury recommends the airports continue to adhere to their high standards of safety, service, and quality. We commend all three managers for their fine work, both in their offices and on the grounds throughout our airport facilities.

This award would not have been given without the dedication of airport staff trained in the many procedures ensuring the safety of fuels and the flight line.

Finding 3: During the summer of 2009, the Department of Transportation (DOT) made an inspection of the runways and surrounding airspace path of any aircraft at each of our airports. Critical issues were addressed in a timely manner. With the agreement of the DOT, items that were identified as not being critical safety issues will be corrected when funding from DOT becomes available.

Recommendation 3: The Grand Jury encourages the Airport Department to continue their compliance with DOT standards.

Background Information:

Plumas County owns and operates three airports within the county. Rogers Field in Chester, Nervino Airport in Beckwourth, and Gansner Field in Quincy. All three airports handle the typical traffic of private planes, with Rogers Field and Nervino Airport able to land jet aircraft. Airport traffic operates without control towers, but by the use of each pilot's own visual discretion and radio transmissions concerning their intent of takeoff or landing. Runway lights are controlled by radio transmission from the pilot. Fueling is self service, using a card lock system. Hangar and tie down facilities are available at all three airports. Each hangar owner pays their own utilities and is responsible for any upkeep needed on their hangar. Rent is paid to the county for all hangars at a rate of 41 cents per square foot. Property tax and luxury tax is paid to the county each year at a rate of 1%. Charter and sightseeing flights and flight instruction is available at each airport. A light industrial aircraft repair business is operated at Nervino Airport. Rogers Field in Chester has a large building that houses the Chester Fire Department as well as the Chester Public Utilities District.

Director of Facility Services

The county's Director of Facilities Services also supervises the Airport Department. Seventeen percent of the Director of Facility Services' duties are devoted and budgeted for Airport operations. While supervising the two contract managers who oversee Rogers Field and Nervino Airport, he serves as manager for Gansner Field. Salary and benefits for the Director in his service to the airports is \$21,001.

Contract Managers

Rogers Field and Nervino Airport are supervised by contract managers. These managers also have their own private air service business housed at their airports. Salary and benefits are \$18,106. Each manager receives a benefit package and a PERS retirement. Additional income for the Chester manager comes through collecting one half of the profits from fuel sales and all of the tie down fees. Managers are not exempt from paying rent on their hangars or any other fees paid by other pilots. Managers can utilize non-county employees they have hired and trained for airport duties at their own expense. Duties of managers are (some duties may be particular to a given airport and not another):

- Maintain safe, obstruction-free airport grounds
- Perform fuel testing
- Snow removal (estimated time is two hours for every inch of snow)

- Refueling air attack aircraft
- Maintaining runway lights and beacon
- Monitor use of Unicom (radio frequency airport auto lighting)
- Availability for FAA or DOT inspections
- Record keeping

County Owned and Operated Airports

1. Gansner Field, Quincy

Runway length: 4,125 feet

Future Airport Improvements Plan by year:

- 2011--Reseal Pavement, paint airfield markings
- 2012--Tee hangar site development, three 5 unit buildings
- 2015--Replace 4 unit tee hangar building
- 2017--Jet fuel tank dispenser

2. Rogers Field, Chester

Runway length: 5,100 feet with 6,000 feet possible

Chester houses an air attack base operated by the U. S. Forest Service.

Future Airport Improvement Plans by year:

- 2011-2012--Develop east hangar area, including access road
- 2013--Extend taxiway A to end of pavement (35' X 1,000')
- 2014--Reconstruct tee hangar Taxiways (4 @ 60' X 450')
- 2017 New Snow Plow Vehicle

3. Nervino Airport

Runway length: 4.625 with 6,000 feet possible

Future Airport Improvement Plans by year

- 2010--New Snow Plow Vehicle
- 2010--Engineering Design
- 2010--startup of the US Forest Service Air Attack Base/multi-agency fire center
- 2011--Reseal pavement joints and paint airfield markings
- 2012--Tee hangar site development
- 2013-- Environment assessment study
- 2014--Engineering Design
- 2015--Replace 4 unit tee hangar building, plus
- 2016--Construct two 5 unit nested tee hangars, plus
- 2017--Jet fuel tank dispenser

Increasingly, Nervino Airport is becoming a more important center with the traffic overflow from Stead Air Base in Reno. It is also the site of the county's next U. S. Forest Service Air Attack Base. This development is facilitated by Plumas National Forest applying for and receiving \$2.2 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It will become a multi-agency fire center. This facility would allow federal, county and private emergency response services to serve Plumas County. The Director of Facility Services says that he projects the Air Attack Base would also include a helicopter attack base for the Forest Service and a possible CareFlight station. The airport would be annexed into Beckwourth Fire District, allowing surrounding areas to get faster emergency response times. The county will receive rent from the Forest

Service (\$25,000/year), Beckwourth Fire, and CareFlight. The Forest Service will pay for and construct their needed facilities with those capital improvements becoming county property in thirty years. This thirty year turnover is typical for all structures that are built on any airport properties by private parties.

Department of Transportation Airport Inspection

In June of 2009, the Department of Transportation (DOT) made an inspection for state permit compliance of our three airfields. Previous inspection letters and the most recent State Airport Permit were used for this evaluation. The corrections noted by the DOT reports, for all three airports:

- Brush within the Runway Safety Area (60 feet side of centerline and 240 feet beyond each end of runway) needs to be removed
- Coniferous trees that penetrate the FAR Transitional Surface needs to be topped or removed
- Lip of runway needs to be filled and compacted flush to grade
- Runway needs to be displaced for local highway penetrating Federal Aviation Regulations Approach Surface

Concerning specific issues at Gansner Field on the DOT inspection of June 18, 2009, two items of concern were noted:

- A fire hydrant between parallel taxiways
- An electrical box on a segment of asphalt between taxiways

It was recommended that the fire hydrant either be relocated or marked with reflective tape and be given a low profile barricade. The electrical box should also be given reflective tape and have a yellow "X" on the asphalt, at the side of the taxiway. Action on these two non-critical issues has yet to be taken, but is planned.

Noting the resource burden associated with some of these needs above, the DOT remarked at the end of the inspection report, "The Department will continue to offer both financial and technical assistance to Plumas County." Monies planned for these compliance issues were not provided because of our State's own budget woes. An agreement stands between both state and county that the issues not resolved may be done at a later date. Rogers Field had similar small tasks to correct that included cutting down trees along the airport's perimeter. Nervino had tall brush and weeds to cut down and an old truck to remove.

Finances

Total expenditures for 2008-2009: \$358,674

Total revenues for 2008-2009: \$373,070 *

- Rents and concessions: \$103,117
- Sale of fuel: \$225,705
- State aid for aviation: \$30,000
- Fuel Facility-other: \$7,286
- Landing Fees: \$5,940
- Interest-Investment funds: \$693
- Reimbursements: \$328.00

* Pumping fees of \$8,291 come out of these revenues. Ten thousand dollars a year is paid on a loan that was taken out in 2006. This loan has been repaid.

Additional funding is available through the FAA for specific improvement programs. The DOT inspects airport grounds once a year and provides major maintenance (e.g. resurfacing) through Cal Trans. This is funded by the FAA through their Airport Improvement Program. Plumas County employs an airport consultant to obtain FAA grants and oversee project designs.

Mid Year Budget Report

Revenues for this part of the year 2009-2010 are down by 23%. However the airports are currently running in the black by \$7783. The shortage in revenue is partly due to the state freezing the California Aid to Aviation Program, in the amount of \$30,000. Revenues were further diminished by the expected loss of fuel sales and the reduced rent when a lessee defaulted on last fiscal year's lease. This property has since been leased to the Chester Fire Department in exchange for fire service. This default can result in loss of revenues in the amount of \$18,000. Cautious optimism prevails for this next fiscal year. The state program for aviation is possibly going to be released on July 1, 2010. Additionally, this fiscal year, a loan to the state for the Roger's field fuel farm has been repaid. This will allow a little more breathing room in the coming year.

Other

All three airports are in compliance with FAA regulations.

Procedures

To ascertain the leadership and general operation of our airports the Grand Jury gained information from the following sources:

Interviews

- Director of Facility Services
- Rogers Field airport manager
- Nervino Airport manager

Airports Toured

- Gansner Field
- Rogers Field
- Nervino Airport

Documents reviewed

- Supplier contracts: Branding and fuel from Exxon Mobile
- Manager contracts
- Land lease contracts
- Plumas County 2008-2009 budget
- 2008-2009 Airport budget
- Airport mid-year (2009-2010) budget report to Chief Administrative Officer and Board of Supervisors
- DOT/FAA permit compliance reports
- Airport capital improvement program (projected costs 2010-2024)