

## Rebman, Kevin

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**From:** DVStarr@aol.com  
**Sent:** Friday, November 09, 2007 9:09 PM  
**To:** DVStarr@aol.com  
**Subject:** MAC Committees, 7 Nov. 2007

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### Finance, Development, and Environment (FD&E)

The proposal for keeping MIC open with fewer runways hit severe turbulence in this committee.

Commissioner Lisa Peilen, whose MAC District includes MIC, urged the Commissioners to give due consideration to all views. She added that Commissioners should be open minded to other presenters as well as to MAC staff.

Bridget Rief gave an excellent Power Point presentation about the staff analysis of MIC. Much of her presentation was delivered to RAAC on Oct. 30 and an email newsletter was sent out after that meeting.

Bridget began by saying that two years ago the Commissioners had directed staff to analyze what would be required to close MIC. Bridget explained that closure would be a multistep process. The first step would involve numerous studies that would need to be prepared and sent to the FAA. One FAA requirement is that closure would actually have to benefit general aviation. Preparing a request to send to FAA would cost in the neighborhood of \$1 Million. She noted that 81% of MIC pilots live in Hennepin County. MIC is the fifth busiest airport in Minnesota. The Reliever System has adequate airside capacity but lacks sufficient landside capacity (hangar storage). She said that staff estimated the land value for MIC to be between \$70M and \$120M. Closure would necessitate developing new hangar areas at other Relievers to house displaced Crystal tenants. This would be very expensive. If all MIC tenants were moved to other MAC airports, those airports would soon be hard pressed for space for future growth. The 2025 forecast shows a traffic increase due to Very Light Jets and Light Sport Aircraft. Although MIC does not have any based corporate aircraft, there are corporate landings and takeoffs.

If the crosswind runway were closed, there would be times when wind direction would necessitate closing the airport. Hence, staff recommends keeping a primary and a crosswind runway. There is a possibility that the MIC tower could become a "contract tower" like ANE's. There would be land available for non-aeronautical revenue that could amount to \$1M. MAC staff has consulted with the Bottineau Blvd. (Hwy. 81) group and believes MAC plans will not interfere with the highway upgrades. There has been extensive public involvement during the past two years as this proposal has been prepared.

The next step would be for staff to complete the Long Term Comprehensive Plan, hold public hearings, and send the Plan to Metropolitan Council.

Committee Chair Bert McKasy invited ReNae Bowman, Mayor of Crystal to speak to the Commissioners. She stated that for two decades the city has maintained the airport is a public safety risk. Airport operations should cease due to an "overreaching safety concern." There is, she said, no compelling need for the airport. Rather, MAC should be closing airports to meet public need. She added that there were 325 residents living near the runway safety zones. She claimed the airport was just for recreational flying. She also asserted that MAC staff had ignored city staff comments. She said that MAC staff assumptions were flawed because region wide and nation wide flying is decreasing because there are fewer recreational pilots. She proposed that the state as a whole would benefit by closure of MIC. "The airport is not needed and will not be needed." She concluded by urging the Commissioners to delay their decision and have an impartial study made.

Next, Elwyn Tinklenberg addressed the Commission. He is presently a consultant working with potential commercial developers of the land currently occupied by the airport. He said he had been Mayor of Blaine and had spent a lot of time defending Relievers whose value he appreciates. He told the Commissioners that the question today was whether MIC should be part of MAC. Broader issues should be considered. He asserted there was a need for a broader discussion about this regional asset.

**Unfortunately, not even one Crystal Airport tenant chose to attend this vitally important meeting to speak up in its defense. Only opponents were present to influence the discussion.**

Having heard from these three people, the Commissioners began an intense discussion. Commissioner Mars asked Bridget why Forest Lake, Buffalo, Rochester, and St. Cloud were not considered in the analysis. Bridget replied that 50% of Minnesota aviation was based in the metropolitan area. Commissioner Mars said that out-state Commissioners are appointed to MAC to be sure MAC looks at the whole region.

Commissioner Molly Segal thanked staff for all their hard work before asking what it would cost to keep Crystal Airport open. Bridget replied that the MIC Capital Improvement Plan cost from 2008 thru 2010 is between \$1.8M and \$2.8M depending on what projects are undertaken. She added that MAC is not saving by closing MIC when hangar areas must be developed at other Relievers to take in the displaced aircraft. Commissioner Segal said that hangar owners at MIC are older people and the planes are older. They may leave the system rather than move to another Reliever. She stated that she was not convinced the staff proposal was the way to go.

Bridget reiterated that non-aeronautical revenues of \$1M are forecast and those monies would go a long way toward supporting MIC.

Commissioner Boivin said he echoes Commissioner Mars and Segal's concerns. He wants to know more about country trends. He said he was very concerned about "forecasts." He stated Relievers were not self sufficient yet. Then he asked, "Why are we supporting a rich guy's hobby?" He questioned whether VLJs will even impact MIC. He concluded that he was not prepared to support the staff proposal.

Commissioner Landy, who represents the Commissioners at Reliever Airport Advisory Council (RAAC) and who is Chair of Management & Operations Committee, said that we, MAC Commissioners, are here to deal with and protect aviation, not regional economic development. He described how at RAAC, there had been a long discussion about the "black cloud" of closure that has hung over MIC for years. He added that Jack Lanner's Task Force study of all aspects of Relievers has led up to this day. He reminded Commissioners that establishing new capacity is very difficult. Proximity to the cities is very important. He noted that state parks are supported by the state and there is parallel between recreational boating and recreational flying. He asserted that a strong point of MIC was its proximity to downtown Minneapolis. He explained that without MIC, there would be no airport in the northwest corner of the metropolitan area. Inserting some humor, he remarked that Central Park (NY) was also ripe for development. He concluded that he was a MAC Commissioner and supported the proposed plan.

Committee Chair McKasy announced that the committee would not be taking a vote this day.

Commissioner Nelson interjected that Cirrus airplanes and light sport aircraft are going to go somewhere for training.

Commissioner McKasy called the Mayor back to the podium. She asserted that the Crystal position is all about safety, not about economic development. The city council favors closing as part of the Bottineau Blvd. development. Area residents do not presently object to the airport because it is quiet: if light jets start using it, it will no longer be quiet.

Chair Lanners said he supported Commissioner Landy's statement that clearly expressed MAC's mission.

After the Committee meeting adjourned, staff members including Bridget Rief, Gary Schmidt, and Jeff Nawrocki were clearly upset and disappointed by this turn of events. Gary remarked to me, "**Where were the tenants? Don't they care?**"

### Management & Operations (M&O)

During the afternoon M&O meeting chaired by Commissioner Lanners, the Crystal Airport long term comprehensive plan update was an information item, not an action item. Therefore, Bridget Rief simply explained that there had been a good discussion at the morning meeting resulting in the proposal being tabled. She asked those who have additional questions about the staff proposal to send them to her or to Nigel Finney.

Commissioner Landy invited Glenn Weibel, Chair of the Reliever Airports Advisory Council, to address the Committee as he had missed the morning FD&E meeting. Glenn began by saying this Reliever Airport review had been a long process lasting over two years. However, the same question occurred over and over. "Can MAC be trusted?" He quoted Warren Buffet's mantra that "The best way to grow a business is to build trust." He said tenants have expectations that Commission promises will be met and now those promises are in question. After nine years of tenant involvement through RAAC, tenants want to see MAC move forward and make a decision rather than having further delays. RAAC representatives have committed to additional tenant involvement, but "where is the trust we have been led to expect?"

Committee Chair Landy said, "I think in the end, MAC will look trustworthy." **However, he noted, opponents of Crystal Airport are passionate.**

Vivian Starr

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