

MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

PORT OF ASTORIA
AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
KAST TERMINAL BUILDING
1110 SE FLIGHTLINE DRIVE
WARRENTON, OR 97146

Call to Order

Chairman Steve Dillard called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Attending

Steve Dillard, Henry Balensifer III, Henry Idica, John Ferreira, Andrew Bush, Port Commissioner Jim Campbell, Mark Smith, John Raichl, Deb Toland, Andy Whitten, Chris Gibbs, and Dianna Delgado.

Reports

2a. Report by Port Staff

- Deputy Director Matt McGrath was not present, but printed notes were provided. Highlights included:
 - The former driving school tenant that occupied the Bales Hangar is no longer in operation, and a new auto-detailing business has proposed occupying the hangar. The five-year lease was approved by the Port Commission, but the approval is contingent on FAA and ODA approval. Several members voiced concerns about a non-aviation business using aviation space and suggested that the hangar might be better suited for transient hangar rentals.
 - Work continues on the development of the Industrial Park, with plans for two 10,000 sq. ft. buildings.
 - T-hangar repairs are moving forward. Railings on A Row and B1 will be replaced in the coming months, and upgrades will be made to hangar door wheels.
 - An invitation to bid was issued for FBO building upgrades, which will include the replacement of doors and restrooms, showers, and kitchen updates. A larger expansion remains in the long-term plan.
 - Life Flight crews are using temporary trailers after their building suffered water damage. Repairs are expected to take two to three months.

2b. Report by USCG – CDR John Ferreira

- Ramp repairs are almost complete, with operations expected to return to normal in roughly two weeks.
- Upcoming projects within the next year include HVAC cleaning and repairs in workspaces and improvements to flood lighting and roofs. These projects will not affect air operations.
- Frequency “bleed-over” from neighboring airports has been causing problems with communications within the Coast Guard, and while conducting training. The Coast Guard inquired whether something could be done to change to a different radio frequency to mitigate safety risks.

- Efforts are underway with the FAA to lower the ILS 26 approach minimums, but the changes are on hold until improvements have been made to the lighting system to increase reliability.
- Long-term planning may bring a fourth aircraft to the Coast Guard station in Astoria, and discussions are underway about a potential joint helicopter rescue training school.
- The retired Coast Guard Falcon jet is on site awaiting final disposition after the failed test lift. Options include salvaging or donating part of the aircraft for display.

2c. Report by Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) – Deb Toland

- The Flying Start program was held in May, which introduced adults to flight training. Nine participants attended and received introductory flights.
- In July, the Puget Sound Antique Aircraft Club visited the Astoria Regional Airport with 20 aircraft. EAA volunteers hosted the group and provided lunch.
- In August, the Young Eagles rally flew 10 kids. This was fewer than last year's rally, and pilot availability was limited. Plans are in place to increase pilot volunteers for next summer.
- The EAA continues to hold monthly meetings on the first Saturday of each month.

2d. Report by Camp Rilea – Henry Idica

- The Air Guard has transitioned its mission from radar support to cybersecurity operations. The cybersecurity group will relocate to the Portland Air National Guard (PANG) Base and demobilize its activities at Camp Rilea.
- A new Griffin radar has been installed. The new radar will help expand the radar range and capabilities even with poor visibility.
- Drone training will be expanded at Camp Rilea. Training will include low elevation, medical drops, and law enforcement, among others.
- Improvements to the helipad are being planned, including lighting and better facilities for a helicopter air support area.

2e. Report by Tenants/FBO Report

- A grass strip next to Runway 32 is available for taildragger aircraft. Although it is not FAA-approved, pilots may call it in as “Runway 32 on the grass” to avoid conflicts.
- Oshkosh Aerotech reported that production of the 88i line is expected to return to Warrenton after a short-lived attempt to outsource. Additional staff will be needed to support the production.

Discussion Items

3a. External Speaker

Airport tenant Andy Whitten suggested installing an exterior radio speaker near the observation deck so visitors can hear radio traffic. Many of the members agreed and supported the idea and raised questions about cost and placement.

3b. Hangar Use

- The Committee spent time discussing hangar use. Concerns were raised about non-aviation businesses operating in aviation areas. Suggestions included making the current hangar and future hangars available for transient rentals and other uses, such as combined hangar/apartment spaces for destination stays.
- Henry Balensifer III mentioned that zoning, floodplain rules, and FAA approvals will need to be considered for any plans.

3c. Warrenton Fire Department Training

John Raichl talked about the importance of joint training between Warrenton Fire and the Coast Guard, especially regarding aircraft equipped with ballistic parachute systems. The Coast Guard mentioned that plans are in motion to improve coordination and safety training and will make sure that training on that type of aircraft is incorporated into the training.

Good of the Order

No additional items were raised.

Upcoming AAC Meeting Dates

- January 12, 2026, at 4:00 PM

Adjourn

Chairman Dillard adjourned the meeting at 5:03 PM.

APPROVED:

Dirk Rohne, Board Chairman
Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Thaddeus Fickel, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

Respectfully submitted by:
Dianna Delgado
Office Manager

October 7, 2025

Date Approved by Commission