

MEETING MINUTES**JANUARY 12, 2026**

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

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

All Present: Steve Dillard, John Raichl, Mark Smith, Deb Toland, Wes Toland, Ryan Brosik, Port Commissioner Thaddeus Fickel, Natasha Cannon, Mike Thomason, Andy Whitten, Jay Corella of *The Daily Astorian*, Dianna Delgado, Port Commissioner Jim Campbell, Henry Balensifer III, Port Commissioner Dirk Rohne, Matt McGrath, Chris Gibbs, Nic Newsome.

Reports**a) Port Staff**

Deputy Director Matt McGrath reported on the following:

- A Request for Qualifications was issued for Airport Engineering Services, with qualification statement evaluations to be done in mid-February. McGrath requested that the AAC appoint one member to the evaluation committee. The estimated time commitment is approximately 2 hours per proposal. The existing contract with Precision Approach Engineering expires at the end of March, and the goal is to make sure there is a seamless transition to the new provider. Chairman Dillard volunteered to serve as the AAC representative. McGrath will provide a schedule and the necessary evaluation materials.
- The invitation to bid for improvements to the FBO Building has been reissued. The remodel will include three unisex restrooms (one ADA-compliant with a shower) and kitchen upgrades. The initial bids received exceeded the estimated budget of \$200,000-\$220,000. The scope has been refined and reissued with detailed specifications for materials and appliances to help reduce costs. The project aims to be completed by Summer 2026 to support the Airport Open House event and seasonal traffic.
- Repairs on the Airport T-Hangar are expected to start on January 26, beginning with the five hangars in the north row, followed by the five in the south row. The project is expected to take around four weeks, finishing by the end of February. Aircraft will be moved into empty hangars during construction to reduce disruption.
- In 2025, about 185,000 gallons of Jet-A fuel were sold, including around 68,000 gallons to military customers. This qualifies the Airport to pursue a government fueling contract, with a decision expected in late February or early March.
- Sales of 100LL fuel remained strong, ranging from 300-500 gallons per day, even in bad weather. This success is due to the competitive pricing strategy, which continues to make Astoria a preferred fueling stop for transient and military traffic.
- New equipment and vehicles have been acquired for the airport through a FEMA grant. This includes a skid steer for airfield maintenance and a rental van for military personnel and visitors.

- The Port has been collaborating with the City of Astoria on plans for a cruise ship terminal and related infrastructure. This includes demolishing the Riverwalk hotel, enhancing the boardwalk, and adding both a pedestrian bridge and a welcome center. An application for a Build grant is underway, with positive feedback from MARAD indicating strong alignment with their criteria. Cruise ship visits are expected to rise from 15 to between 50-70 calls annually.
 - A preliminary plan for the FBO Expansion Concept is being developed, which currently includes a second-story addition featuring a glass fishbowl observation area and conference space. The Port plans to begin searching for a designer in 3-4 months. The AAC will have the opportunity to review rough drawings and provide input before the design is finalized.
- b) Astoria Aviation
Thaddeus Fickel reported on the following:
- Astoria Aviation is well-prepared for spring, with two new flight instructors, Ryan Brosik and Natasha Cannon, joining the team to enhance local training options.
 - Thanks to the Port and FBO for maintaining competitive fuel prices. This continues to attract pilots from other airports, making Astoria a popular stop.
 - On clear days, there is a significant increase in traffic with planes arriving from all directions.
 - The Airport has a great atmosphere and strong tenant support.
- c) Brim Aviation
Mike Thomason reported on the following:
- There are no concerns about the increase in traffic. The Bar Pilots seldom use the runway aside from practice approaches, so the additional activity has not resulted in any problems.
- d) EAA
The EAA reported on the following:
- Planning another Young Eagles Day during the Airport Open House, aiming for ~60 flights compared to 21 in 2024.
 - Continuing the Flying Start program for adults, covering training and costs, followed by an introductory flight.
 - The Chapter has grown to 21 members, including 10 pilots, up from 17 members and 8 pilots last year. Local flight instructors are providing strong support for events and outreach.
 - Considering a visit to Seaside airport hangars and planning more community events.

Discussion Items

- a) Potential Commercial Service – Boutique Air
Nic Newsome from Boutique Air presented a proposal to establish scheduled commercial air service to Astoria. The plan aims to connect Astoria with Seattle (Sea-Tac or Boeing Field) utilizing Pilatus PC-12 aircraft. These flights would be non-TSA, eliminating the need for significant terminal upgrades. Key details of the proposal include:
- Aircraft & Capacity: Pilatus PC-12 turboprop, seating 8 passengers, plus optional front seat.
 - Flight Time: About 30 minutes to Sea-Tac under ideal conditions; roughly 45 minutes to Boeing Field.
 - Schedule Concept: Initial plan for a four-day weekend service (Friday–Monday), with multiple round-trip flights and positioning flights to Portland.
 - Estimated Cost: Around \$33,000 for four days. Tickets could start at about \$200 one-way, with pricing adjustments on later seats to cover costs.

- Booking: Flights would appear on major travel sites (Google, Expedia, Priceline) through Boutique Air's GDS system.
- Connections: Boutique Air has interline agreements with American and United, but passengers would still need to clear security at connecting airports.

Port staff will collaborate with Boutique Air to evaluate various scenarios and explore funding options, including potential grants. Marketing is critical, so the Port plans to contact the chamber of commerce and tourism groups to enhance awareness. This is projected to launch in the Summer of 2026, dependent on the availability of funding and the completion of marketing preparations.

b) 2026 Activities

- NW Aviation Conference (February 21-22)

John Raichl mentioned that this is a yearly event in Puyallup, attracting pilots, mechanics, and aviation businesses from all over the region. It is a great opportunity to highlight the Astoria Regional Airport. Carpooling will be available for those interested in attending.

- Airport Open House and Fly-In

The tentative date for the Open House is Saturday, August 22, 2026, to avoid conflicts with Hood-to-Coast and other major events. The event will include Young Eagles Flights, static displays, and other community activities. The planning will start soon and coordination on logistics like restrooms and parking will be important.

- Flight Physicals

Dr. Henry Hochberg will be at the airport on February 28 to conduct second-class, third-class, and Basic Med physical exams. Those interested in scheduling an appointment should reach out to John Raichl.

c) Traffic Pattern Review and Safety

Steve Dillard mentioned that the increased traffic has sometimes caused pattern conflicts, such as incorrect runway callouts and unexpected entries. Also, some aircraft are operating without ADS-B, making them more challenging to monitor. The committee discussed several ideas:

- Log the tail numbers of aircraft involved in incidents and provide constructive feedback to flight schools.
- Send a general reminder to all regional schools about the preferred procedures at Astoria.
- Consider changing the CTAF frequency to reduce radio overlaps at higher altitudes.

d) Committee Logistics

- Dillard inquired about email voting; Henry Balensifer clarified it isn't allowed under Oregon law, but hybrid meetings via Zoom or phone are acceptable. Dillard suggested making this option available to maintain quorum.
- Dillard will draft remote participation procedures.
- McGrath explained that public meeting training applies to governing bodies, not advisory committees, but will confirm with legal counsel.

e) Election of Officers and Terms

- Henry Balensifer moved to appoint Steve Dillard as the Chairman. John Raichl seconded. All members of the committee were in favor.
- Deb Toland moved to appoint Henry Balensifer as Vice Chair. Andy Whitten seconded. All members of the committee were in favor.
- Dianna Delgado will continue providing secretary support for minutes.
- Committee members Mark Smith, Wes Toland, and Steve Dillard volunteered to extend their terms.

- Officer terms will now align with the fiscal year and extend through June 2027.

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- Raichl mentioned that the NOAA weather webcams on the beacon tower are currently inaccessible. The Port Staff will look into this and, if possible, link them on the Airport webpage for the convenience of pilots and weather reporting.
- Whitten asked about volunteer activities and opportunities at the Airport. The Port will compile a list of volunteer tasks, such as painting and event setup, which will be shared with the EAA and Airport tenants.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

- Airport Advisory Committee – April 13th, 2026, at 4:00 PM

Adjourned

Steve Dillard adjourned the meeting at 5:25 PM.

APPROVED:**ATTEST:**

Dirk Rohne, Board Chairman
Board of Commissioners



Thaddeus Fickel, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

Respectfully submitted by:
Dianna Delgado
Office Manager

February 3, 2026

Date Approved by Commission