

August 28, 2007

To: The Sierra Vista Aviation Community

From: Ted Berns, SVAA

I recently heard of two instances in which Sierra Vista Police Officers, acting per the direction of the Public Works Department, threatened to issue citations to pilots who were loading or unloading their airplanes at their hangars or were otherwise stopped in front of hangars briefly with their vehicles attended. This sort of silliness illustrates far better than I ever could the need for a professional, full time Airport Manager who is dedicated to the operation and promotion of our beautiful Airport.

Following the presentation by the Airport Task Force last Tuesday, I heard comments from various sources to the effect that the Task Force was recommending that the Economic Development Foundation (EDF) "take over" the Airport. To the extent that my presentation left such an impression, I apologize. To the contrary, I believe everyone on the Task Force agreed on the need for an independent, full time Airport Manager with the authority to both run day to day operations and pursue a development plan aimed at moving the Airport toward economic self-sufficiency. The Task Force discussed a variety of reporting relationships ranging from a city staff position to an independent contractor. For a variety of reasons, it was felt that an independent contractor who was not part of the City bureaucracy had a better chance of bringing the sort of independent judgement and focus that will be needed if the Airport is to grow and prosper.

Two contract reporting relationships were discussed. The first was to have a contract administered through the City Department of Administrative Services and the second was to contract through the EDF. In either case, however, it was clearly understood that the Airport Manager would be independent and would look to the City Manager for policy direction. Having EDF administer a contract seemed logical since that Agency has established administrative support and since the Airport Manager would want to coordinate Airport development planning with the broader economic development activities of EDF.

At the Task Force presentation, it became apparent that there are political issues involving EDF that have nothing to do with the Airport or an Airport Manager. It would be a tragedy if these political issues, whatever they may be, interfere with the need to hire a dedicated, independent Airport Manager. The Task Force Final Report is posted on the SVAA website (www.svaero.org). Please read it carefully and draw your own conclusions. If we as pilots and persons concerned about our Airport have ANY chance of getting a full time, professional Airport Manager, now is the time for all of us to be united in urging the City Council to act. We may not all agree with some of the Task Force recommendations or findings, but I would hope we would all agree on the need for a dedicated, professional manager. If we send the Council conflicting signals by sniping about individual issues, we will, in my opinion, get and deserve the status quo.

Contrary to what you may have heard, there is a good chance that a talented Airport Manager can get the Airport to self-sufficiency within a reasonable time frame. Once that happens, the stage is set to pursue an independent Airport Authority. I urge everyone who cares about the Airport to contact every member of the Council and urge him or her to approve hiring a dedicated Airport Manager as soon as possible. The contact info for the Mayor and Council is published every week in the Herald City page.