

# MICHIGAN AERONAUTICS COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting  
Lansing, Michigan  
September 15, 2021

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Pursuant to Section 31 of Act 327 of the Public Acts of 1945, the Commissioners of the Michigan Aeronautics Commission (MAC) met at the Crystal Mountain Resort and Conference Center, 12500 Crystal Mountain Drive, Thompsonville, Michigan on Wednesday, September 15, 2021.

## COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Rick Fiddler, Chairperson  
Russ Kavalhuna, Vice Chairperson  
Flight/Lieutenant Brian Bahlau, Designee for Michigan State Police (MSP)  
Kelly Burris, Commissioner  
Ben Carter, Commissioner  
Kevin Jacobs, Designee for Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Laura Mester, Designee for Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT)  
Dr. Brian Smith, Commissioner  
Mike Trout, Director  
Bryan Budds, Commission Advisor  
Alicia Morrison, Commission Analyst

## COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Brigadier General Bryan Teff, Designee for Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

## I. OPENING REMARKS

Director Mike Trout began by welcoming everyone back to the fall Airport Conference and the second in-person MAC meeting since 2019. He reminded all attending to sign in and for those joining virtually via Microsoft Teams to mute their microphones and turn off their cameras. He then turned the meeting over to Chair Rick Fiddler.

The September 15, 2021, MAC meeting was officially called to order by Chair Rick Fiddler at 10:01 am.

Chair Fiddler thanked the Commissioners and all in attendance for participating, noting it was good to be back in person. He then asked for a formal roll call. Roll call was taken. It was announced that eight out of nine Commissioners were present for a quorum.

Chair Fiddler then led the attendees in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

## II. COMMISSION BUSINESS

### A. Minutes of the July 21, 2021, Meeting



Chair Fiddler asked if there were any revisions to the minutes of the meeting held on July 21, 2021. There were none. He entertained a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was moved by Commissioner Ben Carter and seconded by Commissioner Kelly Burris to approve the minutes as presented. **All voted in favor. Chair Fiddler announced the motion is carried.**

**B. Request for Approval and Transfer of Appropriated Funds**

Chair Fiddler called on Jim Hartman, who then presented the Airport Sponsor Contracts and Supplemental Transfers.

**Airport Sponsor Contracts**

1. Southwest Michigan Regional Airport, Benton Harbor
2. Southwest Michigan Regional Airport, Benton Harbor
3. Tuscola Area Airport, Caro
4. Willow Run Airport, Detroit
5. Reynolds Field, Jackson
6. Oakland County International Airport, Pontiac
7. Oakland County International Airport, Pontiac
8. Oakland County International Airport, Pontiac
9. White Cloud Airport, White Cloud
10. Statewide American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

*Supplemental Transfers >15% of Original Transfer*

11. Oceana County Airport, Hart/Shelby
12. Mason County Airport, Ludington
13. Mount Pleasant Municipal Airport, Mount Pleasant

**Supplemental Transfers – No Action Required**

1. Frankfort Dow Memorial Airport, Frankfort
2. Lakeview-Griffith Field, Lakeview
3. Monroe Custer Airport, Monroe
4. Gladwin Zettel Memorial Airport, Gladwin

Chair Fiddler asked if there were any further comments or questions. There were none. Chair Fiddler then asked for a motion to approve the transfers as presented. The motion was moved by Commissioner Russ Kavalhuna and seconded by Commissioner Brian Smith to approve the transfers as presented. **All voted in favor. Chair Fiddler announced the motion is carried.**

A complete list of contract descriptions can be viewed at [www.michigan.gov/aero](http://www.michigan.gov/aero) under the Commission tab.



### C. Automated Weather Operating Systems (AWOS) Task Group Recommendations

Chair Fiddler called on Bryan Budds to present the AWOS Task Group recommendations.

Bryan Budds began by describing Michigan's non-federal AWOS network of 41 weather briefing systems currently in place. 21 of those systems are currently beyond useful life with 11 more becoming outdated in the next five years. These systems are all maintained by the Office of Aeronautics Electronic Facilities Team.

Bryan Budds then explained the AWOS Task Group – led by MAC Chairperson Rick Fiddler with support from Bill Brickner, Mark Johnson, and Mike Soper – was formed to reassess the practical impact and level of service provided by the state AWOS network; examine future AWOS needs necessary to continue providing real time aviation weather observations at airports to enhance the safety of flight operations; to make recommendations ensuring ongoing maintenance and upgrades of the existing network; and if required, to advocate for financial and policy support necessary for upgrades.

Bryan Budds next explained that outdated technology is driving the need for system upgrades with MDOT's inventory of replacement components being depleted or no longer produced at all, despite the aviation community, as well as others, reliance on the systems increasing.

Three recommendations were presented to the Commission for consideration:

1. The state maintained AWOS network, in conjunction with the federally supported AWOS/ASOS network, continue to provide unparalleled safety benefits to the aviation community in Michigan. With a greater than 99% reliability rate, the 41 non-federal AWOS stations in Michigan allow safe and efficient access to all areas of Michigan, many of which would experience tangible declines in services offered to the public and reduced economic impact without the benefit of the Michigan AWOS network. The AWOS Task Force recommends that the state continue its efforts in maintaining a resilient non-federal AWOS system.
2. The MAC supports ongoing efforts of MDOT Office of Aeronautics to educate, retain, and preserve the dedicated staff needed to maintain the Michigan AWOS network.
3. Considering aging AWOS infrastructure and limited replacement components for the majority of existing AWOS systems, the AWOS Task Force recommends the MAC request the Michigan Legislature consider a one-time, multi-year appropriation of \$4 million to support a phased upgrade of existing AWOS systems over the next five years.

Chair Fiddler asked if there were any questions or comments on the AWOS Task Force recommendations. There were none. He entertained a motion to approve

the recommendations as presented. The motion was moved by Commissioner Kevin Jacobs and seconded by Commissioner Brian Smith to approve the recommendations as presented. **All voted in favor. Chair Fiddler announced the motion is carried.**

### III. PRESENTATION

Director Trout introduced and welcomed Kathleen Gleeson, MDOT's Assistant Attorney General. Kathleen Gleeson began by introducing herself as the Commission's legal representation, noting she began in this role at the beginning of 2020 as the pandemic started and was appreciative of the chance to speak to the Commission in person for the first time.

Kathleen Gleeson then reviewed the Aeronautics Code of the State of Michigan, Act 327 of 1945, noting it is the Act which created the MAC and its purpose "...to further the public interest and aeronautics progress by providing for the protection and promotion of safety in aeronautics..." She provided the Commissioners and attendees with a hard copy of the Act, which can also be found at [www.legislature.michigan.gov](http://www.legislature.michigan.gov).

Kathleen Gleeson next discussed the MAC Bylaws, which were last updated in 2018. These are the governing guidelines in place for conducting MAC business, including when and where meetings are held, how elections for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are held, and how votes are conducted. She noted that Commissioners are not paid a salary or compensated for their time. She also noted meetings are held six times per year and that no action could be taken by the Commission unless a quorum of Commissioners (at least six) were present.

Kathleen Gleeson concluded her presentation with a review of the Standards of Conduct for Public Officers and Employees, Act 196 of 1973, specifically highlighting the prohibited conduct of public officers. She provided the Commissioners and attendees with hard copies of both this Act and the bylaws and this information can be found at [www.michigan.gov/aero](http://www.michigan.gov/aero) as well.

### IV. REPORTS

#### A. MAC Director's Report

Chair Fiddler called on Director Trout who then presented his report.

Director Trout started his report by giving an overview of the multiple coronavirus relief packages currently being worked on.

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided \$256,958,769 to 94 Michigan airports.
  - All state block grant agreements have been awarded for a total amount of \$2,628,000 to 75 airports.
  - 18 direct Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grants have been awarded for a total amount of \$239,625,000.



- 131 reimbursement payments to 82 airports for a total amount of \$187,239,207 have been processed.
- Additional information can be found at [www.faa.gov/airports/cares\\_act](http://www.faa.gov/airports/cares_act)
- The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) provided \$55,841,582 for 92 eligible Michigan airports.
  - 30 grants have been awarded to date totaling \$55,828,582 including State Block Grant.
  - State appropriation for these funds is pending.
  - Additional information can be found at [www.faa.gov/airports/crrsaa](http://www.faa.gov/airports/crrsaa).
- The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided \$169,677,474 for 92 eligible Michigan airports.
  - 11 grants have been awarded to date totaling \$140,564,176.
  - MDOT Aero is currently verifying with State Block Grant Airports on accepting funding.
  - State appropriation for these funds is pending.
  - Additional information can be found at [www.faa.gov/airports/airport\\_rescue\\_grants](http://www.faa.gov/airports/airport_rescue_grants)

Director Trout gave a state legislative update stating adjustments to the Aeronautics Code are expected in late 2021. He noted the CRRSA and ARPA funds are unable to pass through until appropriated by state legislature as stated above. He highlighted Aero's requests for the FY 2022 budget including an increase to \$1.5M for the Air Service Program; \$350,000 + two FTE's for UAS program; and \$3.9M for the AWOS upgrades.

Director Trout then discussed the current aviation gallons versus credits for FY 2021 (October through July.) He emphasized that although total gallons were still down -6.14% and credits were still down -7.44%, there was a definite upward trend showing recovery from the pandemic months. He also shared enplanement statistics for Michigan's commercial service airports, noting all had shown decreases from CY2019 to CY2020.

Director Trout highlighted a recent airport project at Canton Plymouth Mettetal Airport (1D2). This was a rehabilitation of Runway 18/36 and Taxiway D. The project was started and completed in 22 days including connectors and bringing the project up to FAA current design standards, at a cost of \$1,307,990.20. The project contractor was Ajax Paving Industries, the consultant was C&S Engineers, and the Aero Project Manager was Laura Wise.

- Director Trout shared the following events and information from around the state:
- Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport was featured in Business View North America, on their website and in their digital magazine.
  - Western Michigan University College of Aviation Education Center is holding their dedication event on Friday, September 17.

- September 13-19 is National Drone Safety Awareness Week.
- The 2022 NASAO Youth Aviation Art Contest is open. The theme for this year is “Design Your Perfect Aircraft” and the state deadline for entry is January 10, 2022.

Director Trout provided the following Aero staffing updates:

- Welcome Joel Camfield as the new Aviation Manager for the Air Transport and Safety Section.
- Welcome Heidi Spangler as the new State Block Grant Specialist.
- Aviation Manager 14 position currently posted

He concluded by thanking everyone for their hard work and support throughout the pandemic.

## V. **MAC AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE**

Chair Fiddler called on Director Trout to present the MAC Awards of Excellence.

Director Trout began by stating in 1990 the MAC began a tradition to recognize individuals and organizations whose innovative contributions have led to significant improvements to facilities, operations, or public relations that support aviation in Michigan. Since that time, many groups and individuals throughout Michigan have been recognized by the MAC for their significant commitment to aviation and their extraordinary efforts.

Director Trout began with the Organization Award, announcing the winner as MDOT’s Alpena Transportation Service Center (TSC). He then read from the award, “In recognition of your outstanding work assisting the United States Air Force and Michigan Air National Guard in the testing of six military aircraft landings and take offs on a northern Michigan highway. The dedication of all those associated with this national, first of its kind exercise by closing the roadway, conducting public outreach to keep residents informed, coordination of national media coverage, and relocation of utilities and traffic lights went above and beyond the normal duties. Your staff represented the Michigan Department of Transportation at the highest level in supporting this important aeronautical test mission.”

Garrett Dawe, Alpena TSC Manager, accepted the award on behalf of the TSC staff stating what an unexpected honor it was. He stated many people were to thank for their efforts in the roadway landing initiative and was very grateful for the recognition by the Commission. Commissioner Laura Mester, Chief Administrative Officer at MDOT, also noted what an awesome experience it was to be a part of the landings and take offs and that she was proud of MDOT’s role.

Director Trout then announced the recipient of the Individual Award as Gary Kellan, Oscoda Wurtsmith Airport Manager. He then read from the award, “In recognition of your outstanding contributions to the aviation industry through your many years of





dedicated service in the State of Michigan. Your commitment to innovation and improvements during your 11 years as Airport Manager of Oscoda Wurtsmith Airport resulted in multiple airport developments and let to being named 2020 Airport of the Year by the Michigan Department of Transportation Office of Aeronautics and a featured article in Business View magazine. Your accomplishments are a true example of leadership and dedication to the aviation industry.”

Gary Kellan accepted the award stating what a surprise the recognition was and thanking the MAC for their support throughout the years.

## VI. ELECTIONS

Chair Fiddler led into the elections by announcing his term had come to an end. He thanked the Commission and Commissioners for his successful tenure as Chairperson.

Chair Fiddler then stated in accordance with MAC bylaws and pursuant to agreement from members of the Nominating Committee, comprised of Chair Fiddler and Commissioner Brian Smith, the following nominations were tendered for the offices of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the MAC, for a one-year term beginning immediately upon election. For the office of Chairperson, Commissioner Russ Kavalhuna and for the office of Vice-Chairperson, Commissioner Kelly Burris. These nominations required a vote of majority approval.

Chair Fiddler asked if there were any further comments or questions. Hearing none, he entertained a motion to approve the nominations as presented. The motion was moved by Commissioner Brian Smith and seconded by Commissioner Brian Bahlau to approve nominations. A majority roll call vote was conducted. **All voted in favor.** *Note: Commissioner Kavalhuna abstained on the vote due to conflict of interest.* **Chair Fiddler announced the motion is carried.**

Chair Fiddler then turned the meeting over to new Chairperson Russ Kavalhuna.

New Chair Kavalhuna thanked the Commission for the honor of being elected Chairperson. He then gave thanks to Rick Fiddler for his leadership. Chair Kavalhuna recalled Rick Fiddler’s heroism and his recognition as a Living Legend in Aviation. He stated Rick Fiddler is a leader and advocate for aviation education in Michigan and is honored to have served with him for many years and hopes to continue his leadership. Director Trout also gave his praise and thanks to Rick Fiddler for his contributions and success.

Rick Fiddler graciously thanked Chair Kavalhuna, Director Trout, and the Commission for the opportunity to serve and that he looks forward to continuing his time on the MAC.

## VII. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

New Chairperson Kavalhuna stated in accordance with Article VI of the MAC Bylaws on Standing Committees, he has the honor and duty to appoint members to the Executive Committee. He continued the bylaws state the Committee is to be comprised of three commissioners, at least two of whom shall be appointive, with the Commission Chair serving and acting as presiding officer. Chair Kavalhuna then appointed Vice Chairperson

Kelly Burris and immediate past Chairperson Rick Fiddler to serve with him on the Executive Committee. No vote was required.

Chair Kavalhuna then stated it had been past practice to establish various special committees to evaluate issues that may arise, drawing on the expertise of the commissioners as necessary to establish specific task forces or groups. He then confirmed the continuation of the established State Aviation Resource Efficiency Committee with the current membership of Commissioner Rick Fiddler, Commissioner Brian Bahlau, Commissioner Kelly Burris, Director Mike Trout, Bryan Budds and Joel Camfield, with additional members to be added as needed for future involvement. No vote was required.

#### **VIII. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Chair Kavalhuna began the Commissioner comments by stating this was his third time serving as Chairperson and had served a total of nearly 11 years on the Commission. He stated he looked forward to the future and had great appreciation for the airports and the work the MAC does supporting aviation in Michigan. He stated he hopes to stay engaged with the Legislature to boost the Air Service Program as well as other aviation programs. He noted that aviation touches everyone in one way or another and is a large contributor to a successful society. He thanked Kathleen Gleeson for her presentation, remembering her predecessor Dave Brickey who is no longer with us. His concluded by saying he is proud to work for the Commission which crosses political divides and does excellent public service.

Chair Kavalhuna asked if any other Commissioners would like to make a comment. There were none.

#### **IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chair Kavalhuna asked if anyone would like to make a public comment.

Jeff Barker, East Lansing, made a public comment asking the Commission to recognize Mary Creason, a pioneer in aviation who passed away over the summer. He also expressed his concern regarding the safety of new airfields going up in lower Michigan. Vice Chair Kelly Burris responded that she knew Mary Creason and agreed that she was an instrumental figure in the promotion of women in aviation. Commissioner Brian Smith stated she was nominated for the Aviation Hall of Fame as well. Both thanked Jeff Barker for his comments on Mary Creason.

Michael Soper, Office of Aeronautics, made a public comment thanking the Commission for their recognition and action on the AWOS upgrades. He also acknowledged Candace Spillers-Wood, one of the only AWOS manufacturers in the country.

#### **CLOSING**


The next MAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 10:00am at the Office of Aeronautics, 2700 Port Lansing Road, Lansing, Michigan.





Chair Kavalhuna thanked the Commissioners, Aero staff, and the public for their participation today, reminding everyone that information presented today could be found at [www.michigan.gov/aero](http://www.michigan.gov/aero) or by calling 517-335-9568.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 p.m.



Russ Kavalhuna, Chairman

Michael G. Trout, Director

