



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 4/15/2025

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File #: 25-487

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** Clerk of the Board

**Agenda Section:** Departmental

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**SUBJECT:**

Consider Changes to the Humboldt County Aviation Advisory Committee

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Consider changing the number of committee members; and
2. Consider changing the composition of committee membership; and
3. Consider changing the focus of the committee; and
4. Direct the Clerk of the Board to return with a new resolution to formalize any changes to the Humboldt County Aviation Advisory Committee's structure and/or direction.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: A Diverse, Equitable & Robust Economy

Strategic Plan Category: 2001 - Promote strong economic resiliency and growth

**DISCUSSION:**

At the Jan. 7, 2025 Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board directed the Clerk of the Board's office to review the Humboldt County Aviation Advisory Committee (HCAAC) and bring back recommendations about its membership, the committee's focus and provide any and other information to help the Board determine if the committee needed to be disbanded or changed to meet the Board's needs and expectations.

**HCAAC background:**

The HCAAC was formed by Resolution on April 4, 1979 (Resolution 78-66 - Attachment 1). This resolution included 15 total members of this committee with three being appointed by each district supervisor for a one-year term. The purpose of the committee was "to serve in the advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors in all matters concerning the promotion of aviation development with the County of Humboldt."

On Feb. 23, 1999, the Board of Supervisors approved Resolution 99-17 (Attachment 2), which modified the membership to seven members, with one member appointed by each district supervisor, two members being at-large voting members and two alternate members as needed. The purpose of the Aviation Advisory Committee was changed to "advise the Board of Supervisors on airport issues as determined by the Board of Supervisors."

On Feb. 8, 2000, the Board approved Resolution 2000-17 (Attachment 3) which replicated the previously approved Resolution 99-17

and extended the expired resolution.

Lastly, on Jan. 18, 2011, the Board approved Resolution 11-06 (Attachment 4) which was the response to the Board asking for updates to the committee structure, policy and name. This resolution changed the membership to one member appointed by each Supervisor and 4 four members appointed as at-large members.

It also changed the representation to say “the appointing power should consider the current composition of the Committee when filling any position on the Committee. This should include, but not be limited to, whether the individual is a pilot, the number of pilots on the committee at any given time, representation from the business and traveling community, and geographic representation. The appointment and consideration given are at the discretion of the appointing power.”

The purpose of the committee was changed to read “to provide input to the Board of Supervisors and the Department of Public Works, Division of Aviation on the strategic focus of the Humboldt County aviation system, to regularly monitor and report on progress on the strategic focus and to provide a forum for input on operational issues, opportunities and concerns.” More importantly it added the key areas of focus for the committee which are listed as:

- A. General Aviation
  - 1. Facilities at the six airports in the system
  - 2. Operational policies and standards
  - 3. Support Systems and businesses
  - 4. Business recruitment and retention
- B. Commercial Aviation (Scheduled Service)
  - 1. Facilities serving the public
  - 2. Facilities serving commercial aviation
  - 3. Air services development, including improved and expanded services
  - 4. Promotion/marketing of the airport
- C. Leveraging the Airport Assets
  - 1. Finding and developing compatibility and complementary uses of County airport assets
- D. Public Support and Outreach
  - 1. Communicate with the public to identify issues to be addressed
  - 2. Assist airport staff with public outreach and education

This resolution further added a Function Section that included:

- A. Monthly Meetings
  - 1. Report on progress of projects in the adoption plan
  - 2. Input from airport system customers on current issues and concerns
  - 3. Report from airport management on issues and progress on specific items as determined by management, the committee or the Board of Supervisors
  - 4. Identification of short-term objectives/issues requiring addressing by airport management, the committee or the Board of Supervisors
  - 5. Creating of an annual report on progress on the strategic plan and other issues in collaboration with airport management and the board of Supervisors
- B. Annual Presentation
  - 1. Present to the Board of Supervisors an annual report on activities/progress on previous goals and objectives
  - 2. Create and present a draft of annual goals and objectives in collaboration with airport management for presentation and adoption by the Board of Supervisors
  - 3. Provide input and comment on draft Airport Capitol Improvement Plans
  - 4. Provide input and comment on the annual airport budget

Finally, Ordinance 2609 (Attachment 5) was adopted in August 2018 which created the Department of Aviation in Humboldt County. The HCAAC has not been updated since Aviation became a stand-alone department.

**Review Process and Data Received:**

To evaluate the HCAAC, the Clerk of the Board attended two HCAAC monthly meetings and interviewed each member of the Board of Supervisors, reviewed the current HCAAC membership composition, purpose and function. The Clerk of the Board also engaged in discussions with the Acting Aviation Director Karen Clower.

**Membership**

The membership has had some quorum challenges in the past. There are currently nine members, and a quorum requires five. Feedback received about the number of members suggested revising the membership consisting of one member appointed by each Supervisor plus two at-large members, reducing a quorum to four.

Board members also expressed interest in expanding representation to include an individual with an Economic Development background - this did not necessarily mean a county staff member, but this could be considered, someone with real estate or real property experience and someone representing the tourism industry.

There was also a request for a member of the McKinleyville Municipal Advisory Committee (MMAC) to have a seat. Given these requests, decreasing the size of the committee may not be feasible. Additionally, there were some concerns raised about the overrepresentation of pilots who are also airport tenants.

The number of appointments and representation on the committee is at the discretion of the Board.

**Key Areas of Focus**

The Board of Supervisors had several ideas about what the key focus of the committee should be. There was an agreement on refocusing the committee's priorities around:

- Economic development, primarily at the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt Airport (ACV)
- Destination tourism
- Development planning and land use strategies

Other suggested focus issues were:

- Safety issues and concerns
- 50% of committee focus should be on ACV
- Shifting focus away from private pilot issues towards commercial airline and industry needs
- Analysis and downsizing of the number of airports with suggested decommissioning of one or more airports
- Exploring options for decommissioning the Murray Field Airport
- Promoting aviation initiatives
- Collaboration with the Department of Aviation to develop a strategic plan aligning with the Board of Supervisors goals and community needs
- Developing an annual work plan, subject to Board approval, and report to the Board annually on its progress

These suggestions should be prioritized and included in an updated resolution.

**Other Issues:**

While there were some basic meeting structure and agenda management challenges, those have been advised on by the Clerk of the Board and will continue to be monitored through this transformation. Past communication challenges are also being resolved, including clarification of the HCAAC's role. The Clerk of the Board reminded the HCAAC that their primary role is to advise the Board of Supervisors, not to oversee departmental operations. The Aviation Department may provide brief updates as appropriate but should not be expected to run or be required to attend the monthly HCAAC meetings. The public may attend and make public comment as needed but should not direct the committee's priorities and focus.

It was also noted that the committee has not been submitting or advising Board members at Board meetings with annual updates on the committee work or directly with concerns. This was discussed and the committee agrees to work with the Clerk of the Board to have an annual report on the Board of Supervisors agenda in the future. There was also a suggestion that the HCAAC have a biannual report, one for the concerns and stats of each airport and one for the report of the work being discussed on other topics. This is to be decided by the Board.

**Conclusion:**

The HCAAC is an energetic committee who are invested in and have a passion for the future of aviation in Humboldt County. They have an engaged membership. With a more diverse membership and a clear focus, this committee would be better positioned to assist the Department of Aviation and the Board of Supervisors in furthering the goals and strategies of the county as it relates to aviation.

At your Board's direction, the Clerk of the Board will return to your Board with a resolution that formalizes changes to the HCAAC structure and direction. Additionally, the Clerk of the Board will work with the HCAAC to create a set of by-laws using the Board's decisions to guide the committee in the direction desired by the Board of Supervisors.

Your Board may also direct the Clerk of the Board to explore other options, leave the committee as is or disband the committee.

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

General Fund

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is minimal financial impact to reviewing and updating the HCAAC. Cost associated to this item are primarily in staff time to evaluate and prepare the staff report.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

None

**ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Your Board could direct the Clerk of the Board to further explore other options, leave the committee as is, or to disband the committee. However, this is not recommended as the review and investigation has led to a better understanding of the current committee's structure and the needs of the HCAAC and of the expectations of the Board for improvements.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Resolution 78-66  
Resolution 99-17  
Resolution 00-17  
Resolution 11-06  
Ordinance 2609

**PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:**

Meeting of: January 7, 2025  
File No.: File #25-95