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Tracy Airport - Continued Mismanagement Loses Airport Its Only FBO

Posted on Saturday, February 24 @ 02:05:46 PST by [editor](#)

By Jake Armstrong
 Record Staff Writer
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TRACY - The city suddenly finds itself in the aviation fuel business, and pilots at Tracy Municipal Airport will be looking elsewhere for aircraft maintenance and training after the airport's fixed-base operator - essentially a service station for planes - recently picked up and left. For 15 years, the Tracy Flight Center has sold aviation fuel, repaired and rented planes, and taught people how to fly from its hangar near the tarmac.

That came to an end about three weeks ago, after flight center operator Lloyd McFarlin closed the center and moved to Stockton Metropolitan Airport, citing frustration with Tracy's management of the airport.

While the city has grown exponentially in the past two decades, the flight center remained the only business at Tracy Municipal Airport, and that's not much incentive for pilots to visit, according to McFarlin.

"You can't do business at a facility where there is no business," McFarlin said, adding the airport has few if any niceties to lure pilots and their planes. "When you show up here in your airplane, it's not really a place you want to hurry back to."

McFarlin said his attempts to attract businesses to the airport were rendered ineffective by the city.

A corporation that sought to lease land to house aircraft was denied a lease, and a 30-plane flight school was told it would have to connect to sewer lines at a cost of \$1 million before opening, he said.

"That type of thing has been going on for 13 years," McFarlin said.

McFarlin exits his lease on the flight center owing the city about \$13,000 in back rent and fuel charges, according to a city memo.

McFarlin's company, Port City Aviation, paid \$1,050 a

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month in rent and gave the city about 7 cents from every gallon of gas sold.

The lease was set to expire in 2012.

With the termination of the agreement with McFarlin, however, the city stands to see gross fuel revenues increase from roughly \$3,000 a year to about \$30,000, according to Deputy Public Works Director Rod Buchanan, who oversees the airport.

Taking back fueling rights was among the list of recommendations The Boyd Group, a Colorado-based aviation consultant, offered the city in its report on ways to keep the airport viable.

Buchanan said the city will solicit a new fixed-base operator.

Based on The Boyd Group's recommendations, the City Council in January approved spending about \$500,000 on septic system upgrades, new restrooms, a concession area and a full-time employee to coordinate airport business.

The city will also seek a roughly \$2.1 million state loan to add 44 hangars to the 75 at the airport. About one-third of the hangars are privately owned.

City staffers will present the council with plans for putting the improvements in place at the council meeting Tuesday, Buchanan said.

Editor's Note: The municipality of Tracy has done an abysmal job managing it's airport. The City Council fails to understand that an airport manager needs to know something about airports and aviation.

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