

Town of Bluff

Planning and Zoning Commission

Public Hearing to consider whether the Town of Bluff should adopt an ordinance limiting or restricting aviation traffic within town boundaries

APPROVED Minutes for Public Hearing, Monday, May 22 at 6:00 pm

In-person & Virtual - Bluff Community Center

190 North 3rd East, Bluff, Utah 84512

The meeting was called to order at 6:08

Roll Call:

Amanda Podmore (chair), Marcia Hadenfeldt (vice-chair), Malia Collins, Ed Dobson. Brian Whitney (excused)

1. Review of public hearing protocols - Podmore chaired the meeting and led with the purposes and procedures for the meeting:

- * to allow for and record public comment
- * to follow respectful rules of conduct
- * the P&Z Commission will listen to, but not respond to public comments.
- * Hadenfeldt will be responsible for timing.
- * Collins will record speakers' names and comments on a spreadsheet.
- * Sign-in sheets are provided for attendance, sign-up sheets are available for speakers and paper blanks are available for written comments. Some written comments have already been received and will also be considered.
- * outline of the order of comments as follows: first, in-person at the Community center in order of the sign-up sheet, then, those online in order of the chat requests. Written comments can be submitted by mail @ PO Box 324, email or on the Town of Bluff website until 5PM on June 1, 2023.

2. Public Comments (3 minutes per person with the option for an additional 2 minutes... Speakers can simply agree with previous comments by referencing the previous speaker's name and by stating support for their comment.)

*** in-person at the Bluff Community Center:**

1. Jared Barret spoke in favor of responsible aviation and noted that the airport is within the town boundaries and could be helpful and beneficial to the town since the town does not have a huge tourism base. Caps could be set on how much tourism to allow; how much is too much and would be detrimental. Businesses in town contribute to its financial success and he would hate to see the town become unincorporated due to finances.

2. Ann Brown spoke from experience, has been in touch with the FAA and is pro-business and working cooperatively but does not want anything flying over town or over her house due to the noise; too loud. Bluff has an airport facility with an asphalt strip. Moab's helicopter operations are outside of town and Zion was able to do no-fly zones.

3. Rusty Munn is new to town, largely because of the peace and quiet. He opposes a zoning change allowing aircraft within town but hopes the town can find something outside the limits to allow that activity to occur.

4. Vaughn Hadenfeldt stated his opposition to aviation activity over the town of Bluff. Bluff's history is of hiking and non-motorized recreation. Many people come to town for the peace and quiet and because we don't have aviation. The airport should be considered as well as the National Monument management plan.

5. Bill Crowder is pro-business but prefers the solitude and silence over commercial aviation. He is opposed to a change in the ordinance which would allow that. Private aviation is acceptable.

6. Marx Powell stated that an ordinance is not being changed since there isn't one. For years, ultralights and balloons have been flying over Bluff and up and down the river. The town needs to promote business and develop working relationships with those who have a flight plan, but don't allow flights over town. The incorporated town includes an airport so if aviation is eliminated from town, that includes eliminating aviation at the airport. The airport does not have amenities close enough to make it safe to fly. The future of the airport should be worked on by the town, businesses and Planning and Zoning. He does not want flights over his house but is in favor of aviation.

7. Gene Gruette mentioned the condition of the roads, too many stop signs at the school and that allowing helicopters could help get people to the hospital.

8. Mike Yaris spoke in favor of allowing Amer to build a helipad in town. He and his wife, Pam, own Coral Sands RV Park and are closest to the proposed helipad. He supports tourism and does not think it will be a problem at all.

9. Gary Lichtenstein agreed with Jared and Marx and that we need collegiality; that as a community, we have to work together, identify opportunities and find solutions for traffic. We don't have an airport. We have an airstrip without fire suppression, mechanical abilities and reliable communication. Here is an opportunity to build that in a way that serves the entire community. He has spoken to Amer and looked at the flight plan. The focus should be on the airspace above Bluff.

*** on-line:**

10. John Rudd is one of the attorneys involved in this process; a real estate attorney involved in land-use. He noted that aviation has been occurring in Bluff for a very long time, uninhibited, and in a previous hearing there were multiple people who talked about how this has been going on with their businesses. This is an opportunity to be a part of a co-op and to benefit from this process and determine the best flight pattern which appears to be very non-intrusive, to be on the outskirts of town. Also to receive great benefits to have access to amenities which can greatly enhance the town such as safety and rescue procedures and anything else which may occur. It is also vital to the town to be progressive in ways to

support business and still retain the beauty and ambiance of the town; an opportunity to come together to make a plan and come up with the best solution.

11. Leigh Marymor opposes the placement of the helipad. It is within his direct view and sound shed over the river corridor. He has no objection to crop-dusting or med-evac or any of the other multiple uses that benefits the common good. He does object to regular comings and goings which would disrupt the peace and solitude. He is in favor of a process for all vested interests to come up with the best solution and that maybe the airport would not be the best place, but maybe there is a different place that would be suitable. He has a vested interest in not having air traffic over his house.

12. Dawn Dilego spoke as a private citizen and agrees with the majority of people who do not support commercial aviation over the town of Bluff. As one of the assistant fire chiefs of Bluff Fire Department and as one of the few EMTs currently active in town and as a first responder, she is concerned about the safety concerns associated with hosting commercial aviation over the town, specifically helicopters. We do not have the infrastructure to provide for the safety of the guests. She wondered whether there environmental or safety impact studies had been done. We do not have the proper training, personnel or equipment to manage a catastrophic event. Appreciates that business want to grow but that tourism is already growing beyond the capacity we have to protect it.

13. Cody Little agrees with Vaughn that guests enjoy solitude and come for a wild and scenic adventure. As a business owner, he notes that Bluff is on the map and that business is growing. He also lives near the hospital in Flagstaff and that helicopters are allowed and do crash; the outcome of the recent one was not good. He is curious about the flight path; over the San Juan Corridor would ruin his business model; out to Monument Valley? but there is no one from Monument Valley at this meeting, which doesn't seem respectful.

14. Patrick McDermott agrees with Gary and would like to see the airport upgraded. A better airport would bring many benefits to town. We should use this opportunity to seek a grant for the development of the airport: water, electricity, communication and fire suppression. He is not necessarily in favor of increasing motorized flights over town but favors using an upgraded airport. He also mentioned his support for the balloon festival and would be concerned about any ordinance which would negatively impact it.

15. Jim Hook recommended that P&Z look at where aviation can use our space. His suggestion is that in commercial areas with enough land and in agricultural areas aviation should be allowed and needs to be a part of our plan and where we live. He also noted that at the hospital, the incoming helicopter was only heard 20 seconds before landing and had shut down within a minute. It's a good tool.

16. Mark Meloy lives next door to Desert Rose and is opposed to helicopter traffic in front of his house.

More in-person comments:

17. Amer Tumeh requested an additional 2 minutes. Amer stated that he had a petition of 67 land and business owners, none of which are his employees, that he would present to the mayor and P&Z. He said he would ask 4 questions and tell 2 stories. He asked the audience how many would, no way in hell, want anybody to fly over their house, ever. (Ed Dobson, P&Z Commissioner addressed the chair and asked about the propriety of responding. Podmore responded that P&Z would not respond but that a hand-raising is fine.) He stated that he didn't want to fly over anybody's house. How many think that this

meeting is a result of me planning on putting in a helipad? How many have received a cease and desist from the town or their lawyer other than me? His first story was about his son's desire to become a search and rescue pilot. He is now a commercial pilot. The second story was that he felt as if this was deja vu all over again; 27 years ago he wanted to put in 5 cabins behind the Jens Neilson house but was opposed and built a world-class resort instead. He hopes the mayor and council will do the right decision and come up with a win-win solution. The flight path can be over the river or over the bluff on the south side but he does not want to fly over town. If the town kicks him out like they did 27 years ago from their sewer district, he will be more than happy to take it to Blanding. He added that the town doesn't have jurisdiction over airspace, that's the problem.

3. Closing and next steps - Public comment was closed at 6:54 PM. Public comment, in writing, closes 10 days beyond today, by 5PM on June 1, 2023. Written comments can be sent by email to planningzoning@townofbluff.org or by mail to PO Box 324. Following the closure of that comment period, the P&Z Commission will review every single comment heard or received. At the next regular P&Z meeting on June 7 at which the comments will be discussed and may consider making a recommendation to the Town Council at that time or at the next meeting.

Dobson made the motion to adjourn, Hadenfeldt seconded, the vote was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.