

What has been said in the press and in council minutes has been reproduced and analyzed in further detail at the end of this summary.

In the entire course of recent events involving the airport it is important to remember that Scott Neal is only an echo of the Council - that is his job - not to disagree with the council but to echo its opinions to the best of his abilities.

There is a sequence of events to this issue that forms a troubling trail.

In January, the new council has a wholesale vote on items in the consent calendar, which includes statements to the effect that the city supports improvements to the airport. This appeared in a large packet of items that apparently few on the council actually read, yet they passed.

On February 20th The Airport Advisory Commission holds a workshop with the Eden Prairie Council where the subject of "marketing" the airport is brought up. This is picked up the next week in both of the papers, which have articles about the city's new position of "marketing" the airport.

On March 6th, Mayor Phil Young attends an Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce function with MAC. At the meeting, MAC expresses its lack of funding for the airport and also expresses its hope that it can "partner" with members of the chamber, business community and (we suspect but cannot confirm) with the city to develop revenue streams to complete the expansion or as MAC calls them - improvements at the airport.

By March 8th, Scott Neal has drafted his infamous letter addressed to federal legislators declaring the city's new position toward the airport and asked Federal legislators for administrative and financial help to expand the airport. The Federal Legislators included Jim Oberstar - The Chair of the Transportation Committee which has oversight of the FAA which directs the use of the Aviation Trust fund - where all General Aviation Airports - including Flying Cloud - get their Capital Improvement Project (CIP) monies. Without funding from the FAA it is unlikely that Flying Cloud will ever expand or as MAC says - improve.

On March 20th, several Zero Expansion members appear at the open podium part of the council meeting and question the city's new policy related to the airport.

On March 22nd, the first letter to the editor appears questioning the city's "new" policy.

By March 29th both the papers start running stories on the issue.

It appears in the beginning Neal was saying one thing in his letter - that the council has a new position toward the airport - and the council leadership was saying something different. If you look at what Neal originally said and compare it with the council statements (with the exception of Kathy Nelson) the council is making an error in stating they support the 2002 Final Agreement, when in fact they've gone above and beyond the precepts that define their their commitments to MAC. No where in the Final Agreement does it state that the city of Eden Prairie must seek funding, or advocate for improvements at the airport. In this way the city has gone way beyond what the agreement asks them to do: that's city advocacy on behalf of the airport that is not contained in their commitments to MAC in the Final Agreement. The issue is a change in position of neutrality toward the airport to advocacy for the airport. Neal changes his position later in May to one that echoes what the rest of the council members are saying, with the exception of Kathy Nelson, once the Zero Expansion's Resolution of Neutrality is proposed.

We are concerned that in the Sun article written by Lyn Jerde, Young doesn't answer the question Jerde asks - "Has the city lobbied for federal funding for the airport?" Butcher responds to the question. Neal responds to the question. Young states something entirely irrelevant to the question - that no one is changing the 2002 Final Agreement. He does not respond to the accusations by residents that the city is advocating, marketing and lobbying on behalf of the airport, things that the Final Agreement does not address.

By May, Neal shows that he has changed from what he originally came out in the press with, which stated that the city had changed its position. Now Neal mirrors the Mayor and Council member Aho, who both say

the city still supports the 2002 Final Agreement - which (again) really does not answer the question about whether or not the city has changed its former position of neutrality to a position of advocacy supporting and promoting the airport.

Neal takes responsibility for using the word "expand" instead of "improve". But, now in May, Neal states that the city has not changed its position toward the 2002 Final Agreement (but they have). He states that there has been no conspiracy with MAC and no back room door meeting with the EP Chamber of Commerce. He states that the word used (expand) implied the city had changed their position toward the airport, but he says now the city has not changed its position. He states that the 2002 Final Agreement describes the future of the airport.

We disagree adamantly about what the future of the airport is. Until it is built, there is great possibility that it won't be built. Advocacy and lobbying on the part of the council and city can make expansions and improvements happen at the airport, when there's a possibility that without the city's support, any improvements at the airport might never happen.