

Harbor Soaring Society

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AMA Charter Club # 128

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PROPOSED USE AGREEMENT FOR HARBOR SOARING SOCIETY AT FAIRVIEW PARK FEBRUARY 2021

Background

This proposal addresses concerns listed in the Fairview Park Fly Field Compatibility Evaluation document, dated March 6, 2020, more specifically those on page 41. Harbor Soaring Society has been operating model aircraft at this site for approximately 60 years, and has been governed by the "USE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE HARBOR SOARING SOCIETY AND THE CITY OF COSTA MESA FOR THE USE OF A PORTION OF FAIRVIEW PARK" (2019-2020) signed July 1, 2019 and its referenced documents.

We strive to be a partner with the city and park with our flying activities, training, and educational programs. We also want to be good stewards of the site and work collaboratively with park rangers to insure safe operation of the flying site.

Community Outreach and Education

We strive to be a conduit through model aviation training and educational programs to encourage youth towards science and engineering careers in addition to a lifelong recreational activity. We do this in multiple ways, including flight training and certification under the Academy of Model Aeronautics Intro Pilot training program. This certification would also be utilized by HSS as a method to test each person seeking a city permit to fly at Fairview Park in order to verify their ability to safely operate their model aircraft in accordance with the site rules, boundaries, and safety required to fly at this site. We teach anyone interested how to fly an RC airplane, and we even provide the airplane! Because of our influence on young children, we know of many who have gone on to become engineers and pilots. The commission may not be aware, but the world is facing an extreme shortage of airline pilots, as the baby boomers reach mandatory retirement age, and the aerospace industry is facing a similar shortage of engineers.

Additionally, the club's ongoing STEM activities include: annual participation in Imaginology, where ours is continually the most popular booth. Imaginology is an annual event at the fairgrounds where elementary school kids are exposed to various clubs, businesses, and educational opportunities. On Friday, schools send busloads of students, and on weekends the event is open to the general public. We operate a room where we help children build and fly a paper airplane, we have several flight simulators where the public can practice flying an RC airplane, we team with another club to help children fly a control-line model, and we have numerous models on display.

We have members go to schools to conduct mini classes on aeronautics. The club would like to purchase ads in the periodic catalogs of classes by PACS. HSS will work with PACS to provide classes in aviation and aeronautics, similar to the present dance classes, swimming lessons, computer classes, etc. At present, we are not aware of the city's curriculum and instructor requirements, but if the city is interested in such classes, HSS will work with such requirements.

Flight Parameters

Many years ago, most of our models were gliders, primarily flown in the air rising from the bluff, known as slope lift. We also used electric winches to tow gliders up to launch altitude. However, at some point, a grove of non-native trees was allowed to grow below the bluff, destroying the smooth updrafts

allowing for slope lift, and the area for the winch lines was reduced such that they are only marginally viable. Technology has advanced in recent years and this has led to more diversity in types and styles of aircraft being flown at the HSS airfield in addition to various flight characteristics. HSS recognizes that certain types of models are inherently noisier and/or faster than others and this should be addressed by updating rules to encompass which types and sizes of aircraft are permitted to fly and which are not. We propose to evaluate the various types of aircraft by flight characteristics and sound to clearly define what is permitted to fly at the site and what is not permitted. We will update this periodically as new models get developed. One issue that has been raised is the noise from our model planes. There are many types of aircraft that have been flown at the park: pure gliders, electric propeller aircraft, electric ducted-fan jet models, pusher-type flying wings, and quadcopters (commonly and hereafter referred to as “drones”). For example, drones, pushers, and the noisiest jets should not be permitted to fly. The club has a decibel meter; this meter can be kept at the site so it will be available at any time to monitor sound levels. We ask for onsite periodic review and collaboration with park rangers to understand any concerns they have or that have been raised so we can be a partner in managing safe flight at the site. We will purchase an additional meter to be provided to the city for use by the park rangers. These meters will be calibrated annually, at HSS expense. HSS proposes that we assemble an assortment of the various types of planes at the field with a group of administrators in order to evaluate what is an acceptable noise level, in accordance with the city’s noise ordinance, and to evaluate the speeds of the various aircraft types, in order to determine what is deemed excessive speed. When excess noise is perceived, a meter reading will be taken and information recorded: date/time, person complaining, pilot name & type of aircraft, meter reading, and action taken. These reports will be retained by HSS and emailed to a person or dept. designated by the city.

There presently is an upper weight limit of 10 pounds that we propose reducing to 8 pounds, as the larger models create more noise.

We propose that no more than 5 pilots be flying at any given time. This is not a scientifically derived number, but is a number that works well at other fields.

In order to evaluate safe and proper control of one’s aircraft, we propose to establish a process to test pilots and issue a certificate of safe flight capability that should be used to issue the required city flying permit. These safety meetings will include all rules, demonstration of allowable flying areas, and will be conducted at least twice annually; it will be mandatory that every pilot attend at least one meeting per year, and every pilot will need to attend before flying is resumed at Fairview. The club will also have pilots demonstrate their ability to safely fly their model. After proving their flight proficiency and attending the safety meeting, the club will issue pilots a letter of certification. Such letter will be required before any pilots will be allowed to purchase a city flying permit. Pilots violating safety procedures will need to appear before the HSS safety committee. The safety committee can revoke the club’s certification letter, and thus, the city permit will also be revoked. Any such revocation will be emailed to the city.

HSS welcomes any input from the park rangers, FVPSC, PACS, and administrators to help establish these parameters.

Public Safety/Nuisance Issues

One safety issue that has been raised concerns the area of the park over which our model planes fly. After taking off, we are to turn right and fly over the area north of the runway. This area has several user-defined footpaths, which we assume are not part of the original pathways of the park. While there have been no incidences of models colliding with pedestrians, model flying areas should be secured from pedestrian areas. We propose these areas be secured using the method successfully used to exclude pedestrian traffic from the vernal pools: fence posts with cables, with the red plastic streamers. Our members observed that the fence around the vernal pool was very effective, and we anticipate a similar success rate in keeping people out of the overflight area. Such a fence would also protect the flora and fauna of this area from pedestrian traffic. The club membership is prepared to participate in this project. We also propose that a marker, similar to roadway Bott’s Dots, be placed at each corner of the runway to define it.

We propose that no flying take place when the children from Waldorf School are on their park walks. Typically, each weekday, what appears to be one classroom of children will walk from Waldorf towards the grassy area of the park, then about 30 minutes later, walk the other direction back to the school. When these groups approach from either direction, we can notify anyone flying at the time to land until these groups have passed. The importance of and process for notifying pilots will be incorporated in the safety meeting.

Park Flora, Fauna, and Natural Resources

Although HSS members respect and enjoy all things that fly, including birds, none of us can recall instances of model plane flyers harassing birds. The writer has been flying in Fairview Park for more than ten years and has never witnessed a bird take evasive action due to model aircraft operation. Biologist Scott Thomas has responded to our inquiry regarding times and seasons to fly that would be least intrusive to the wildlife he recommends that flying be suspended in case of unforeseen circumstances. HSS proposes that flight hours be established as 8am to 4pm during non-daylight savings time months, and 8am-6pm during the DST periods, and that flying not be permitted on Tuesdays and Thursdays. HSS can install a timer on the charging circuit so that no one would be able to charge their batteries during any "no-fly" time. HSS suggests the city biologist visit the flightline together with HSS leadership in order that each can understand the other more clearly. Additionally, HSS will not conduct winch operations during the rainy/muddy season.

Enforcement

Another issue is enforcement of the rules. Presently, there is no requirement that flyers have any competence in flying models, only AMA or other insurance and \$65 for the permit fee. In 2018, Park Rangers were given the responsibility to issue warnings and suspend permits of those who violate city regulations. HSS believes enforcement is best done through cooperation between HSS members and the park Rangers. The club proposes no one be issued a city permit until they have demonstrated some proficiency of flight and understanding of flight areas, field rules, etc and has received a signed certification letter to that effect. Violators would be subject to having the club's certification withdrawn, and, thus, having the city permit revoked. HSS will post updated rules and signage in collaboration with City mandated requirements. HSS membership will request all flyers comply with posted rules, and in the event of non-compliance, will call park Rangers for assistance in enforcement. HSS asks that park rangers spend a half-hour twice a month on a random basis to enforce the city requirement that all flyers must display a city-issued permit. This would greatly reduce the number of unpermitted flyers. HSS would like to examine the possibility of reimbursing the city for one hour per month of rangers' time enforcing that badge requirement.

The club will also post the rules on the kiosk in the park and include wording to the effect that anyone who observes violations should notify the park rangers. The club will also post at the kiosk any signs or notices the city provides. The club is also willing to set up video camera(s) to monitor activities at the field. If we could get Wi-Fi access, perhaps via Waldorf School, we could set up a camera in our container, and allow the city to view activity in real time, as well as have a stored quantity of perhaps a month.

Mike Costello
President