



Falcon Field Airport (FFZ) “Fly Friendly Program”

Falcon Field’s Mayoral Reception & Tenant Meeting Overview

On December 2, 2008 Mayor Scott Smith held a Mayoral Reception for Falcon Field Tenants.

Councilmember Dina Higgins opened the meeting with impressive statistics about Falcon Field including:

- *Nearly 87 percent of Falcons Field’s 207 acres are currently under lease.*
- *Ninety-five businesses call Falcon Field home and provide more than 1300 jobs to Mesa residents.*
- *Falcon Field was ranked the fourth busiest general aviation airport in 2007.*

Councilmember Higgins thanked the tenants for being involved in the airport and noted that the airport is an important economic engine for Mesa. She looks forward to working together as a community to make working, living and flying at Falcon Field a success.

Mayor Smith focused on the changing environment at Falcon Field and how tenants and pilots must adapt to the needs of the busy airport and the surrounding community. He acknowledged that change is difficult but it is a part of growing and that is exactly what is happening at Falcon Field. Over the years Falcon Field has grown from a WWII training facility to one of the city’s driving economic engines.

Mayor Smith emphasized the need to take proactive steps with a noise abatement program before extreme flight restrictions are needed. He described an airport in California where the program is forced on the pilots. He wants to avoid that approach at Falcon by implementing a program that is embraced by the pilots and tenants. Now it is time for pilots and tenants to lead the charge in adapting to the new Falcon Field by participating in a new program called Fly Friendly Zone. Mayor Smith then revealed the new Fly Friendly Zone logo and mascot.

Airport Director Corinne Nystrom outlined the history of noise abatement at Falcon field and the Fly Friendly Zone program. In 2007 the City began recommending that pilots comply with nationally-recognized noise abatement guidelines published by the



Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association and the National Business Aircraft Association. The City also at that time invited key stakeholders to be members of a FFZ Noise Committee to establish and maintain communication about aircraft noise. The Fly Friendly Zone program is the next step in promoting the noise abatement guidelines.

The Fly Friendly Zone program is designed to create a partnership between tenants, pilots, FAA tower, City of Mesa and the community to help Falcon Field be a better neighbor. The approach is three pronged focusing on providing education and outreach to the pilots, air traffic control tower and the surrounding community. Each audience is unique and will be approached with the appropriate information tools ranging from pilot guides to local meetings.

She also urged tenants, pilots and residents to participate in the Fly Friendly program by submitting ideas about how it can be a better neighbor. She also mentioned other ways Falcon Field is participating such as opening a noise complaint hotline at 644-NOIS, holding a yearly airport open house and conducting airport tours.

After the program the Mayor and Airport Director answered questions from the audience. A sampling of the questions follows.

Does the FAA or Falcon Field control the tower and airspace?

The FAA controls both the air traffic control tower and the airspace above Falcon Field.

The FAA regulations for Sky Harbor have recently lowered the airspace at Falcon Field to 5,000 ft. This causes more aircraft noise. Can the FAA reinstate the old 8,000 ft. airfield?

When the FAA changed the flight level at Falcon Field to accommodate the needs of Sky Harbor, the City of Mesa provided input about how the change would affect operations at the airport. The information may have been considered by the FAA but the needs at Sky Harbor outweighed the concerns at Falcon Field.

What are some of the recommendations you have for pilots about flying friendly?

- *Use a reduced power setting if flight must be low due to cloud cover or overlying controlled airspace or when approaching the airport.*
- *On takeoff, gain altitude as quickly as possible without compromising safety.*



- *Begin takeoffs at the beginning of the runway, not at intersections.*
- *Avoid low level, high power approaches.*
- *Fly a tight landing pattern to keep noise near the airport.*
- *Avoid flights between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.*

How can pilots find out more about the Fly Friendly Zone?

A new pilot guide is in the works that includes Fly Friendly Zone recommendations. The 2007 pilot guide has the noise abatement guidelines from the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association and the National Business Aircraft Association. The 2007 pilot guide is available at the airport terminal and online at www.mesaaz.gov/falcon_field. Also available on the Falcon Field web page is the Fly Friendly Zone program overview. Pilots can also attend quarterly tenant meetings and community meetings.

Flight schools contribute to the noise issues at Falcon Filed. Are you working with them specifically to adjust their procedures?

Yes, Mayor Smith and Airport Director Corinne Nystrom have already met with some of the larger flight schools about their flight procedures and will continue to meet with them in the future. The changes will take time but we are confident that if we work together we can meet the needs of our tenants and the community.

Is there another flight school coming to Falcon Field?

Another flight school has shown interest in leasing land at Falcon Field. A lease has not been signed. All new tenants at Falcon Field will be thoroughly educated about the Fly Friendly Zone program during the leasing process. Current tenants will also be educated through the lease renewal process. Since Falcon Field receives Federal funding, leases cannot be denied based on the type of operation or service provided by the tenant.

Some of the large military planes contribute to the noise issue at Falcon Field by taking off slow and low. Are you working with them to amend their procedures?

Yes, the outreach about the Fly Friendly Zone will be extended to our military tenants. The specific procedures to minimize noise impacts may differ for certain types of aircraft but we are confident that if we work together we can meet the needs of our tenants and the community.



Will the orange groves near the airport be removed?

No, the orange groves will remain near the airport until the grove is no longer viable. In the meantime, the City needs to find a way to take care of the groves. . This may change in the future, but for now, the groves will stay.

Why can't we tell people who bought a home close to the airport that they will just have to deal with the noise?

Residents who live near the airport are expected to accept a certain level of airport noise. But there is a point where the noise can be excessive and there are easy steps the airport and pilots can take to minimize the impact on residents. It's part of being a good neighbor. For example, avoiding early morning and late night flights will reduce the number of residents awakened by aircraft noise when it is most disturbing.

How will you measure the success of the Fly Friendly Zone program?

The best measure of the Fly Friendly Zone program success, and the only quantitative measure, is the volume of legitimate noise complaints received by the airport from residents. Those complaints will be compiled and the success of the program can be a topic at the second annual Mayor Reception and Tenant Meeting.

