

Some PDK History Highlights (04-26-2005)

While developing the National Aviation Noise Policy in 1990 Congressman James Oberstar said, "I think it is clear most airports...just grew like topsy. And they do. They just sort of developed."

Unfortunately, that statement applied to PDK Airport when the runway was extended, when our County Commissioners would not adopt airport policy to protect our community from airport growth and noise and which may lead to scheduled passenger service (Hartsfield North). Absence of airport policy will continue to guide our airport unless we take action to protect our investments in DeKalb County and to protect our quality of life. PDK is our airport.

The strategic airport issues PDK Watch addressed for years boil down to growth with its adverse consequences on our communities and an elected governing body that adopts policy for everything but our airport. Unfortunately, we had to revert to the courts to address the issues our County would not address on behalf of its citizens. What a shame on a democratic society.

By years, as I recall them, significant events at PDK were:

1952 My residence in Ashford Park was constructed.

1959 PDK became a full-fledged department of DeKalb County government.

1963 The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) furnished personnel and equipment to take control of PDK air traffic.

1964 A new 5,000-foot all-weather runway was completed providing a parallel runway and sites were leased to private corporations.

1965 The first fixed base operator (airport business) opened shop at PDK.

1973 I was informed by an airport official that PDK was a small recreational and business oriented airport and was to remain so. Thus I purchased my home in Ashford Park.

1978 Long-Range Transportation Plan adopted by the Board of Commissioners (BOC) included the designation of PDK as reliever for Hartsfield traffic, installation of an Instrument Landing System (ILS), and extension of the runway by 900 feet to serve 100% of the Basic Transport Fleet.

Citizens adversely affected by these proposals were assured they would not happen without public input. Citizens requested costs and benefits be established prior to any expansion. Projects were put on hold.

1980 An independent benefits study showed an annual economic impact of \$74 million. No costs of airport expansion or costs to homeowners were considered.

1982 A Noise Abatement Advisory Committee was formed.

Additional hangars were planned and constructed.

1985 The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) approved a recommended PDK capital improvement program, most of which would enhance and encourage capacity, including construction of a new terminal building.

The BOC and the FAA approved a development plan calling for a 1,000-foot rather than a 900-foot runway extension with the rationale shifted from serving 100% of the basic fleet to safety.

1986 An Environmental Assessment for the runway extension was completed.

1987 FAA approved a 1000-foot runway extension for PDK without conducting the federally required Environmental Impact Statement.

1988 Citizens were forced to take the runway extension issue to court to seek full consideration of impacts. Such a study would place all aviation, community, and economic issues before the Board of Commissioners to provide them all relevant factors upon which to make rational policy for our airport and the community. The 11th Circuit Court decided the full environmental impact statement was not required because airplanes weighing more than 66,000 pounds could not be accommodated at PDK.

The FAA completed a new 132-foot, freestanding, air traffic control tower at about this time.

1989 Concerned citizens recommended that the BOC apply to the FAA for funding for a Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 150 Noise Compatibility Study.

PDK Watch requested County to collect ad valorem taxes on all airplanes based at our airport.

1990 To support airport opposition to the Part 150 Study the Airport Manager provided night flight statistics that turned out to be inaccurate.

DeKalb Chamber of Commerce urged BOC "to reject any notion of conducting either a FAR Part 150 study or imposing any Airport restrictions at PDK."

1991 The BOC adopted some noise related policies.

Airport Advisory Board recommended an economic impact study be conducted in conjunction with the Part 150 Study.

The Part 150 Noise Study started.

1992 At the request of a commissioner, a citizens group compiled the documentation required to get a night restriction as allowed under a Part 150 Study. The Noise Abatement Advisory Committee rejected the proposal and airport staff did not offer support to improve the report and take advantage of this noise reduction opportunity. The Noise Abatement Advisory Committee was abolished at the request of citizens.

New PDK Master Plan was approved by BOC. All parts of it have been implemented.

PDK mission statement requested by citizens, cooperatively developed with the Airport Director and approved by BOC.

The BOC approved a \$2 million lighting improvement program at PDK.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) informed the Airport Director and the BOC that she wanted night restrictions now.

CEO expressed support for comprehensive cost-benefit study.

CEO's appointee to the cost-benefit study task force recommended the study include the possibility of airport expansion per the master plan of adding "a commuter or origination and destination airline terminal."

1994 The County sought funds for RPZ.

FAA conducted an Environmental Assessment for airport enhancement at PDK, but the public was not informed of this by the Airport Director, the FAA, the CEO or the BOC.

1996 An Ordinance to prohibit regularly scheduled passenger and cargo service is proposed by PDK Watch.

1997 The Cost-Benefit Study was completed. It did not comply with contract and it misrepresented benefits considerably.

A Good Neighbor Policy proposed by citizens was adopted by Airport Advisory Board.

NOMS (Noise and Operations Monitoring System) was purchased by PDK.

Developer tried to get a sweetheart lease on 38 acres of land on Clairmont. Citizens helped squash this.

1999 Airport Director tried to increase weight limit of aircraft using PDK to 105,000 pounds.

Developer tried to get a “through the fence” operation off Clairmont.

Same developer got a sweetheart hangar lease at PDK.

Same developer tried to get a sweetheart hotel lease at PDK.

2000 Same developer brought flightserv.com arrived at PDK.

At citizen request, BOC designated some property purchased in noise abatement program and the 38 acres as greenspace.

FAA demanded reimbursement for buyout property designated as greenspace.

An airline offering regularly scheduled passenger service came to PDK

Airport Compatibility Overlay District proposed by Airport Director but defeated by citizens.

2003 Citizen proposal to reduce noise from jet take offs over Drew Valley and North DeKalb proposed to FAA and is under study.

Environmental Assessment for this project is underway. Citizens must get involved in this effort.

Effort with pilots to get joint agreement on PDK’s future prepared but rejected by pilots.

2004 Lawsuit filed on behalf of impacted community.

2005 New Master Plan is being prepared. Citizen input is assured by efforts of PDK Watch.

What does this mean?

This is our airport and together we can accomplish things that will benefit our communities and not hurt operations at PDK.

PDK Watch has been a consistent observer and advocate on our behalf. Support them.

The county is trying to kill the lawsuit every way they can. We cannot let this happen.

--Mickey Feltus

For additional history and information, see the PDK Watch web site: www.pdkwatch.org