



Department Source: City Manager

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: July 18, 2022

Re: Report on Mid-Mo Radio Control Assoc use of Utility property

Executive Summary

After radio control airplane noise concerns from residents of the Longview neighborhood were brought to Council's attention, staff from the City Manager, Utilities Department, and Councilperson Nick Foster, met at the Mid-Missouri Radio Control Association's (MMRCA) flying field for a tour and demonstration. After watching multiple-sized airplanes with various propulsion engines engage in typical flight patterns, city staff then visited several different locations in the neighborhood. The noise of the airplanes could be heard but most decibel meter readings were registered in the 45-63 db range. Staff is recommending that MMRCA continue with their current lease and that periodic reviews be conducted by staff during the upcoming year especially during the winter months (when leaves are off trees) and during large MMRCA events.

Discussion

On August 6, 2012, Council authorized a license agreement with the Mid-Missouri Radio Control Association (MMRCA) to use a portion of City-owned land used by the wastewater treatment plant to fly remote control airplanes for recreational purposes. This property was selected as it is well suited for use by the MMRCA to fly airplanes due to relatively flat pasture land, road access, and is located approximately 2,000 feet from nearby homes or other buildings. The property was originally used for disposal of sludge generated at the WWTP and is currently used only for hay production. The use for sludge disposal was discontinued in 1995 due to changes in federal regulations related to sludge disposal and excessive levels of nitrates in groundwater monitoring wells on the site. In addition to use by the Mid-Missouri Radio Control Association, future uses for this property include a natural resource for the Army Corps of Engineers Hinkson-Perche Wetland Mitigation Bank and the Perche Creek Trail. Use of this site by MMRCA will not interfere with the City's current or proposed uses. The lease was renewed by Council on May 4, 2020 and the MMRCA has met all terms of the lease including required insurance policies. A copy of the 2020 lease is attached.

On June 17, 2022 staff from the City Manager's office, Utility Department and Councilperson Nick Foster met with representatives from the MMRCA at their flying field for a demonstration. MMRCA demonstrated typical flight patterns of various sized planes with the largest weighing approximately 35 pounds. Most planes that use the facility are in the 5-25 pound range. MMRCA flew planes that were powered by electric, fuel, and one that used a turbine giving it a jet engine appearance.

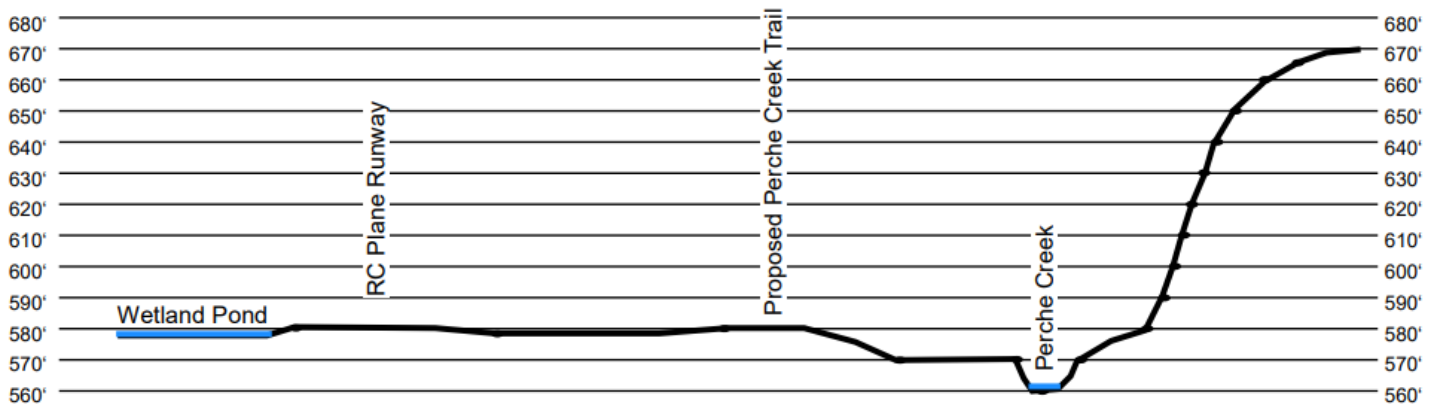
Attachment A shows the typical flight patterns as documented by on-plane GPS systems. These patterns highlight the distance to the Longview neighborhood which makes it



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improbable that a pilot would be able to maneuver planes over any homes. The flying field is in the Perche Creek Valley and is approximately 90 feet below the streets in the Longview neighborhood. MMRCA indicates that most of their flying occurs below approximately 400 feet. From the flying field, it is difficult to see the Longview homes due to a dense tree cover along the bluffs.



Following the demonstration, staff relocated to the cul-de-sac of Gabrianna Court, the nearest street location to the MMRCA flying field. At this location, staff listened to numerous planes conducting typical flight patterns. Using decibel meter reading apps for smartphones, several individuals including staff recorded readings with a peak reading of 63 which is associated with traffic noise and lawn power tools. It was difficult at times to get accurate readings as adjacent air condition units and lawn power equipment caused delays in recordings. The planes never got high enough above the trees in the neighborhood for staff to see them. Staff went to other street locations further away and did not hear the planes. The Columbia Police Department reported two noise level complaints in this area within the last 12 months: one for fireworks and one for four-wheelers on the park trail.

MMRCA has reached out to the Longview Neighborhood Association representatives and are willing to continue discussion on moderating their relationship with the neighborhood. See attached Longview Neighborhood MMRCA Discussion summary.

Staff is concerned that neighbors have reported that planes have been flying over their homes which is illegal for unmanned flight units (drones or planes). MMRCA members strongly indicate that they don't fly over homes. Therefore, it could be planes or drones from other locations or the perception is that a plane flying 300-400 feet high may appear to be over a house. As the Perche Creek Trail gets built, this will further restrict planes from venturing near the Perche Creek providing additional buffer between the neighborhood.

As the lease states, MMRCA is responsible for all construction and on-going maintenance of the facility so there is no cost to the City. MMRCA has spent over \$35,000 constructing the entry road, natural surface runway, shelter, parking lot, storage facility, safety fence, and numerous airplane preparation tables. The 2022 replacement costs are likely significantly higher if they were required to relocate from this location.



Staff understands the frustration of neighbors that have to listen to the noise generated by the planes. Unfortunately, as with many recreation amenities, noise is part of the activity. It is like other recreational amenities such as a sports complexes that generates its own level of noise; has sports lights that last until the mid-late evening; causes increased traffic issues; and has weeknight and weekend events approximately 200 days per year.

The MMRCA is an amenity that does provide recreational opportunities that would otherwise not exist in Columbia. It is staff's recommendation that the May 4, 2020 MMRCA lease continue as approved by Council and that discussions continue between the MMRCA and the Longview representatives. Staff will also conduct periodic inspections during various times of the year as well as during special events.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: NA
 Long-Term Impact: NA

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Not Applicable, Secondary Impact: Secondary, Tertiary Impact: Tertiary

Legislative History

Date	Action
05/04/2020	R60-20. Authorizing a license agreement with Mid-Missouri Radio Control Association to use a portion of City-owned land used by the City Utilities Department - Sewer/Stormwater Division for the wastewater treatment plant to fly remote control airplanes for recreational purposes.



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08/06/2012	<p>https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4430473&GUID=C1CF5AAF-B9F6-42F3-AED5-EF5B39FF3CA1&Options=ID Text Attachments &Search=radio</p> <p>R14-12. Authorizing a license agreement with the Mid-Missouri Radio Control Association to use a portion of City-owned land used by the Public Works Department for the wastewater treatment plant to fly remote control airplanes for recreational purposes.</p> <p>https://www.como.gov/Council/Commissions/downloadfile.php?id=5908</p>
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Suggested Council Action

If Council supports continuing with the May 4, 2020 MMRCA lease, no action is required.