

MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council Members, City Manager

FROM: Ian Thomas, Ward 4 City Council Member

TOPIC: May, 2020 agreement with the Mid-Missouri Radio-Control Association

DATE: March 7th, 2022 City Council Meeting

Background

Some time prior to 2018, the City Council approved an agreement giving the Mid-Missouri Radio-Control Association (MMRCA) permission to utilize City-owned property at the sewer treatment plant for the purpose of launching and landing radio-controlled model planes.

In May, 2020, at MMRCA's request, a new agreement (Appendix A) was approved, which replaced the original agreement and gave them the additional option of flying aircraft powered with gas turbines (jet engines). The new agreement is in force until 2025, although it can be terminated by the City with 30 days' notice.

Impact on Nearby Residents

Records going back at least as far as 2018 show repeated complaints by residents of the Longview neighborhood about the disruption to their lives caused by the model planes. This neighborhood, consisting of about 75 homes on Longview Drive, Barry's Bluff Court, Gabriela Court, and several other streets, is located on the bluff above Perche Creek about 1,800' from the take-off and landing strip.

Complaints have documented excessive noise (*"Constant buzzing/humming," "I can hear when the planes are flying from inside my house with all the windows closed," "Try enjoying a nice family dinner on your porch, patio, or deck with a chainsaw running over your head!"*) continuing without pause for extended periods of time (*"It is a constant problem every week," "Any weekend that the weather is somewhat fair the planes will fly ALL DAY," "When it is daylight savings time they will frequently fly in the late afternoon and evenings on weekdays"*). Planes, some of which have jet engines and 6-foot wingspans, have been reported above Perche Creek (*"flying the bluff"*) and directly over the neighborhood, creating concerns about property damage, personal injury, or death if a plane were to crash into someone's home or garden.

As a result of complaints, MMRCA has given verbal assurances that their flight paths will stay further away from the neighborhood. However, according to residents, these rules are routinely ignored and MMRCA appears to be unable to enforce them.

Concerns about the Process

In addition to the general issue of disruption to the lives of Longview residents, there are a number of specific concerns about process.

1. According to Mark Johnston with MMRCA, this location was originally suggested by former City Manager Mike Matthes and former Deputy City Manager Tony St. Romaine, and residents of the neighborhood were never consulted or informed about the proposal.
2. When the original agreement was replaced, at MMRCA's request, with a new one allowing them to fly jet aircraft, the residents were once again not informed and therefore unable to provide testimony to City Council, despite the fact that City staff had fielded multiple complaints during the previous two years.
3. The current agreement specifies that no rent will be paid by MMRCA to the City despite the fact that they have private use of a defined strip of publicly-owned property which measures three hundred feet by one thousand one hundred feet (about 8 acres) and permission to fly planes over the entire tract of land (between 50 and 100 acres).
4. There are vast undeveloped areas of land available, on which MMRCA can fly their planes without disrupting the lives of City of Columbia or Boone County residents and taxpayers.

Possible City Council Action

If the City Council feels that MMRCA is causing an unreasonable disruption to the lives of Longview residents, a number of possible actions can be taken, including the following:

- The agreement can be modified to restrict where and when model planes are permitted to fly.
- The agreement can be suspended or terminated.