

8/12/20

Maine Medical Center Neighborhood Advisory MMC NAC Notes

<i>Name</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Attending?</i>
1 Spencer Thibodeau	sthibodeau@portlandmaine.gov	District 2 City Councilor	no
2 Nell Donaldson	hcd@portlandmaine.gov	Portland Senior Planner	video
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7 Brett Gabor	brett.gabor@gmail.com	Libbytown	no
8 Ed Suslovic	esuslovic@gmail.com	Libbytown	video
9 Emma Holder	president@parksideneighborhood.org	Parkside	video
10 Liz Trice	liztrice@gmail.com	Parkside	video
11 Moses Sabina	mosessabina@yahoo.com	St John Valley Neighborhood	no
12 Tim McNamara	stjohnvalley@live.com	St John Valley Neighborhood	video
13 Jennifer L. McCarthy	JMcCarthy@mmc.org	MH Chief Operating Officer	video

Guests: Matt Wickenhauser, Walter Pochebit, Al Green, Dominic Gagnon, Nicholas Cusimano (LifeFlight), Thomas Judge (LifeFlight)

Standing Agenda Items (15 minutes total)

- Approve Previous Minutes
- Updates on MMC Expansion Project: Construction, updates, timeline, mitigation
- Subcommittee updates: Grants, Neighborhood Planning
- (MMC and Neighborhood Updates sent out prior to meeting, not discussed unless needed)

Helicopter Noise:

Jen: There has been more than 10 complaints on one flight, which triggers a new sound

Al: in the complaint pipeline there are two issues: compliance with flight paths, the other is noise. Both thresholds have been met for review.

104 complaints since June 1; total #callers is 15, 82 complaints from combined 19 Ellsworth and 19 Crescent.

of flights since december - has ranged from 22 (in April) to 54 (in July), average in the 40s.

Number of flights by Time of day: 45 from midnight to 4am, 26 4am to 8am, 45 from 4am to 8am, 79 from noon- 4pm, 76 from 4pm -8pm, 75 from 8pm-Midnight.

Thomas Judge: there were two anomalous flights; in high density altitude winds, pilots want to make clear straight line approaches to be most safe.

Nick: Helicopters move up and down and forward; and at density altitude - it has to do with heat and humidity. . . pilots are limited by power in these conditions and can't make steep bank angles. It's easier in the winter - in these humid hot conditions the pilot has limited power, and has to think, "if I have engine failure, will I be able to safely land?" Also, there may be low winds on the ground and higher winds at the height of the pad.

Thomas: This number of flights are not increased due to Covid. The vast majority of emergency deliveries to Maine med are by ambulance. We estimated that we would grow to about 750 flights per year, and we are on track to that.

Alvah: Wants to pass on the compliment from a neighbor that the hospital/lifeflight was responsive to complaints. Also points out that impacts of flights are double because the flight is taking off a few minutes later.

Thomas: Agrees, though takeoff is much less noisy than touchdown. Also, we currently treat every patient as if they're positive for Covid, and that can make transitions slower - we have to decontaminate aircraft every time.

Anne: it appears that this data was hard to collect, is there an easier way to do that?

Tom: We can provide this data monthly

Al: but translating this data to be visible like I shared today took me a whole morning.

Anne: the airport has a flight tracking system that shows paths - does Lifeflight have that?

Tom: you can get a general approximation from the satellite tracking system, but it's not perfect because it doesn't ping every second. Out of 349 flights there were only 2 anomalous flights.

Al: The airport subscribes to an expensive tracking system that gives them better tracking.

Jen: we need to talk about where to go forward from here. We understand that there is impact, but 85% of complaints have come from 2 people. We're not discounting those people, but we're interested in hearing from the rest of the neighbors.

Matt: Let's hear about the electronic wayeigh points.

Nick: I spoke to pilots. Two ways pilots get around - visual flight rules, and electronic points, we want to be clearer about under what conditions they use each.

Emma: Are there one pilot or two? (TWO). We're aware that helicopters don't impact people as much in Parkside, and don't want to invite complaints if it isn't a problem.

Ed: Everyone accepts that this is an emergency on-demand service. I find it comforting to know that there are only two flights of 349 that are outside the normal flight path and why.

Thomas: Pilots know that it's preferable to land on the primary pad for many reasons.

Walter: since in the last study (2017), we've added three floors and a tower, and by this time next month the garage will be gone. The new study will use the same 9 locations on map, and helicopters will perform 3 arrivals and departures on each path. Will happen by late september, early october, report complete about a month later.

Emma: not to be flip, it seems likely that we'll discover that helicopters are loud, and the number of flights is not likely to go down. If it's two people that are having issues. . . why not just deal with the people who are complaining?

Ed: I think the study is required, but if it does show that there are very highly localized effects, then we can focus on what mitigation is appropriate.

Nelle: There's a process so that mitigation occurs in a systematic way. not only the people that complain loudest get mitigation. It's very helpful to have Tom and Nick here talking about how they're working with their pilots.

Jen: we want to do the right thing.

Alvah: The helicopters came to the neighborhood, not the other way around. Only one building has been sold since it was clear that helicopters would be there.

Anne: How close are the sensors to the properties that have complaints?

Walter: one of them is within 50-60 feet of one of complaints. The other one is very close as well.

Al: Study captures LMax - loudest event - that will be captured

Liz: Considering that we know that helicopters are loud, and that people's sleep is being disrupted several times in a night, we don't need to wait another 6 months to talk about mitigation. If what we're saying is that we don't care if someone is woken up several times overnight if the standard is not met, that doesn't seem like a good process to me.

Ed: We have to have a level of standardization. Our role as a committee is to make sure that the study and data collection accurately portrays what's going on in the neighborhood. But that threshold will always seem somewhat arbitrary.

Nell: the helicopter pad has been there a long time, and there needs to be a threshold, so we looked to national standards. If thresholds have been surpassed, then there are mitigations discussed in the plan. There needs to be a process, if there's no process, then it's just about who is complaining loudest. There is also a broader context about how the hospital interacts with the neighborhood, and that's what the NAC is for.

Jen: That's the role of this committee.

Thom: in the sound study you do weigh night sounds more than day sounds.

Tim: what if we accept that the numbers are where the threshold is set. Then what would we do?

Jen: We don't have an answer to that. We want to be good partners in this? Do we put new AC & windows for everyone within a ½ mile radius? We need to get the study done quickly first.

AI: There are about 40 buildings nearby.

Liz: very concerned that the implication that if the threshold hasn't been met in the sound study then there is no responsibility to people who are being impacted in a very real way. The threshold may not be an appropriate measure.

Ed: Next month AI will bring us a proposal for what information we will get on what basis.

For reference:

Sara D and 4 other households on Crescent and Ellsworth are having issues with helicopter noise; helicopters are supposed to take Paths 1&2 over Congress Street and the old garage, but frequently have taken Path 3 over resident homes. Path 3 is supposed to be taken only during high winds as a safety measure. The city has communicated with MMC, and as a result more pilots are now taking the correct route, which causes less disruption for residents. There are still individual pilots who appear to be using Path 3 even in calm winds, including late at night, which recently (last Sunday) resulted in 4 wake ups between 2 and 4 am in one night. Neighbors are asking for 1. consistent outreach to pilots to ensure they are using Path 3 only in high winds, 2. In the upcoming sound study, measure the noise of approach and departures, not just the helicopters while hovering over the pad as was done previously, 3. collect data on the number of flights and routes taken, and at what time of day or night so that effects of noise impacts are measured properly.

Loose Ends from 7/8/20

Jennifer sent an email saying she had to meet with legal counsel, so Ed will meet with her and send updates.

Garage Demolition: Walter

TDM: AI Green: is Chris Chop being replaced?

Parking: Matt Wickenhauser: when the city stopped ticketing, more people started parking on Bramhall.

AI: monitoring report for IDP

Nelle: City projects updates

Moe and Nelle: Florence House

Ed/Liz: Staff for NAC committee