Watsonville Municipal Airport

"Watsonville Municipal Airport is owned and operated by the City of Watsonville, and located in the northern portion of the City about three miles from the central business district. The unincorporated community of Freedom lies immediately to the north and east of the airport. It is the only major airport in Santa Cruz County. The airport provides general aviation services for Santa Cruz County and the adjacent areas of Monterey County. No scheduled airline service is currently [1991] available, although air taxi services are experiencing ever growing demand. The California Aviation System Plan and the NPIAS identify the airport as a utility airport serving general aviation and business jets."[1]

History

"In 1939 the site for the Watsonville Municipal Airport was acquired by the City at a cost of $125,000."[2]

"Development of Watsonville Municipal Airport began in 1939 after passage of a local bond issue and receipt of a grant from the Civil Aeronautics Authority. The site was acquired and two runways with parallel taxiways were constructed. During World War II the airport became a military field known as the Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Watsonville. The Navy acquired additional property and constructed various improvements including a large apron area and numerous buildings.

"After the war, the airport reopened for public use in March 1946 and formally reverted to the city in accordance with an Instrument of Transfer dated July 13, 1948. A portion of the main military building area was separated from the airport and became city school property. New airport construction undertaken during the 1950's and 1960's included T-hangars, runway and taxiway lighting, a midfield exit taxiway, and new fencing. Airport Boulevard was built in stages on a new alignment along the airport's east side replacing the existing Roache Road. Many of the military buildings were removed during this period.

"More recent development has included apron lighting installed in 1971, a terminal building constructed in 1974, VASI installation on Runways 1 and 19, and expansion of the apron area in 1980 and additional T-hangar space added incrementally as recently as 1984. A Localizer installed in 1976 enabled establishment of a nonprecision instrument approach and a Marker Beacon added in 1980 improved the procedure. A city fire station, Station No. 2, was established at the airport in 1978 to serve the airport and surrounding areas.

"Another important event in the airport's development history was the beginning of the West Coast National Antique Fly-In in 1964. This annual affair, now one of the largest in the U.S., requires the set-up of an extensive amount of temporary facilities both to park aircraft and accommodate the large crowds. No substantial permanent facilities have, however, resulted solely because of the Fly-In."[3]

Layout and Facilities

"... Today [1991], the airport covers 330 acres and is the base for approximately 400 aircraft."[4]

"... The two runways remain in the configuration and length originally constructed. Runway 1-19, oriented roughly northeast-southwest is the primary runway, 4,501 feet long. The crosswind runway, 8-26, runs east-west and is 3,999 feet long. The airport's building area lies in the southeast quadrant of the intersecting runways."[5]

"... Runway 8-26 is 100 feet wide and Runway 1-19 is 150 feet wide. Both runways are served by full length 50 ft. wide asphalt parallel taxiways. The apron areas provide parking for 314 aircraft. ... In the terminal area, there is a 4,500 square feet concrete block administration building, approximately 92 T-hangar units, and several hangars for aircraft storage and maintenance shops."[6]

Activity

"An understanding of an airport's current and past activity forms the basis for projecting and evaluating future facility needs and financial condition. The two primary measures of activity at a general aviation airport are the number of aircraft based on the field and the number of aircraft operations which take place there annually. At Watsonville, a particularly significant issue is whether the airport has or soon will have sufficient activity to justify establishment of an Air Traffic Control Tower."[7]

Based Aircraft

"The number of aircraft based at Watsonville Municipal Airport has historically shown a steady and substantial increase. The growth has been particularly dramatic in recent years, more than doubling from 145 in 1977, when data was assembled for the last Master Plan, to some 320 today [1986]. Much of the increase occurred in 1982 following closure of Santa Cruz Sky Park which had been the only other public-use airport in Santa Cruz County. Lack of developed space has limited growth in the last two years.

...

"Watsonville Municipal Airport serves a countywide area. This fact is demonstrated by the geographic distribution of the airport's based aircraft owners (determined by a list of their mailing addresses [1986]), as illustrated in Figure 9 [not included in web version]. Only some 22% of Watsonville aircraft owners (including fixed base operators) have Watsonville addresses. The surrounding unincorporated communities bring the total for the Watsonville area to about 27%. Most of the remaining owners are from the City of Santa Cruz and other central Santa Cruz County communities. Altogether, 85% of Watsonville based aircraft are registered to owners with Santa Cruz County addresses.

"Not surprisingly, the Watsonville airport's countywide role has become more prominent since Santa Cruz Sky Park has been closed. Data from the previous Master Plan reveals that about half of the aircraft based at Watsonville Municipal in 1977 belonged to people with Watsonville city addresses."[7]

Footnotes

1. Final Report: Regional Airport System Plan Update, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG); 1991, p. I-4.
2. Ibid., p. I-49.
3. Watsonville Municipal Airport: Master Plan Report, Watsonville City Council, 1986, pp. 25-26.
4. Final Report: Regional Airport System Plan Update, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG); 1991, p. I-50.
5. Watsonville Municipal Airport: Master Plan Report, Watsonville City Council, 1986, p. 26.
6. Final Report: Regional Airport System Plan Update, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG); 1991, p. I-50.
7. Watsonville Municipal Airport: Master Plan Report, Watsonville City Council, 1986, pp. 31-32.

Sources

- *This article is excerpted and compiled from: Watsonville Municipal Airport: Master Plan Report, Watsonville City Council, 1986 and Final Report: Regional Airport System Plan Update, the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG); 1991.*

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