

September 10, 2026

Oregon Department of Aviation Advisory Board

I have been following discussions about the future of the Pacific City State Airport at both the Tillamook County Commissioners' meeting and the ODA September Board Meeting.

My family has been part of the airport's history for over 60 years. We have homes on the north and south ends, plus an airplane hangar on the east side. Emergency response vehicles often trespass over our hangar taxiway to access the airport. We've been a good partner and have allowed this in the past to benefit our community members and visitors with medical emergencies. We watch hundreds of airplanes land each year. Planes from all over Oregon and the country. Pilots are delighted to find such a well-manicured, welcoming airport. Clean restrooms, picnic tables, bikes for use, walks to the town and beach.

I disagree with Tony Beach's evaluation of the airport safety concerns. For over 70 years, planes have been landing safely with no fatalities. These small planes land slowly. Experienced pilots know the runway length and wind conditions from the information provided by the cameras and weather station the "Friends" group has installed on private structures. We focus on keeping the airport safe. We immediately replace torn windsocks and alert pilots to seasonal flooding via our website and Facebook page. We clean storm debris off the runway after each seasonal flood.

Some of the information that Tony Beach shared at the September Board meeting was misleading. Negative comments from previous Board members were only 'cherry-picked,' and one picture of someone running across the runway happens at every airport occasionally. Tony is not a pilot, nor is he here day to day to see how enthusiastically volunteers support the airport or how many planes land safely every day. The airport is twice as wide because of brush and tree removal that was done at the September 2018 work party and every year since. Volunteers mow it regularly. Our nonprofit organization has taken a neglected airport and made it safer. Each year we add new projects to make the airport safer and more attractive to visiting pilots.

To now spotlight the surrounding buildings and houses bordering the airport as a reason to deny further improvements to the airport and the allocation of SOAR money is overreaching. These homes were built in compliance with County land use laws. It is now wrong to classify them as an encroachment.

Pacific City State Airport has had a working relationship with ODA for the past 8 years, 6 of which are defined through an MOU. Many small state airports want to form a similar partnership. ODA should promote small rural airports, not put up roadblocks, and work to understand each location's unique features and the community it serves.

Please read the letters of support you have been receiving from pilots and community members carefully, and do not rely on one person's assessment. Data and history inform decisions.

Sally Rissel

Co-founder and President, "Friends of Pacific City State Airport"

Long-time resident and airplane owner