

## **Information item for Rogers Park Residents – Helicopter Noise from Merrill Field September 2014**

The issue: Over the past year, several Rogers Park Residents (Paul Reich, Steve Nelson and Tom Crowley) became concerned with disturbances from low flying helicopters over their homes. Most of the problem was tracked to two flying schools operating out of Merrill field. They were taking student pilots for repetitive loops over Rogers Park for ‘touch and go’ landing practice. The Robinson helicopters utilized by the flying schools are much louder than other types of helicopters, exacerbating the nuisance to the neighborhood.

Action to resolve the problem: Individually, the group noted above contacted Merrill Field Manager (Paul Bowers) and the FAA tower operators with complaints about the level of noise and the number of overflights. Initially, the group had little success. They received a low level of concern for their complaints, and in more than one instance, outright insults from the person they were complaining to.

At the request of the Rogers Park residents, Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson requested a meeting between herself, Rogers Park residents, Merrill Field Manager Paul Bowers, and FAA Tower staff. This meeting was held on Monday, May 19<sup>th</sup>.

The take-home message from the meeting was that: (1) Paul Bowers was focusing his efforts on a voluntary “Fly-Friendly” program with the two helicopter schools to modify their flying practices over Rogers Park, and (2) It was likely to take some time for changes to filter through and result on diminished noise problems for Rogers Park.

The Rogers Park residents who attended the meeting submitted a response to the meeting on May 21<sup>st</sup>, requesting that the two helicopter flying schools voluntarily cease using the north-south Merrill Field runway for touch and go training. It was clear that other options existed, and the pattern of overflights that was causing the problem did not have to occur.

Response from Merrill Field management: Paul Bowers, Manager of Merrill Field sent a response to both the meeting discussions and the solution proposed by Rogers Park residents in an e-mail to Elvi Gray-Jackson dated June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (*copy attached*). Mr. Bower’s letter outlined a written agreement of practices to be followed by the two helicopter schools to reduce problems for Rogers Park residents.

The Rogers Park residents met among themselves to discuss the Merrill Field response and decided the following:

- The new plan was less than what was requested in our May 21<sup>st</sup> letter, but on the plus side it contains a written plan that, if followed, would reduced the noise problems in Rogers Park.
- We wanted to see a program for collection of future complaints to Merrill Field management of the FAA so that the Municipality of Anchorage and residents of the area could determine the incidence of problems.

The current/ongoing situation: Rogers Park residents should be aware that despite a great deal of effort on the part of several homeowners, very little response from either Merrill Field management or the FAA happened until Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson became involved. **We owe her our thanks!**

And Elvi-Gray Jackson has followed through with Paul Bowers and the Municipality of Anchorage to establish a credible publicly accessible system for resident's complaints.

Residents of Cottonwood Street and Glenwood Street have noticed a substantial change as a result of the 6/5 agreement. Very few helicopter overflights have been observed since that time. It appears as if the agreement has been successful thus far in reducing noise problems.

Any resident observing low, noisy overflights in the future should contact the Merrill Field Manager, Paul Bowers to record the incident. The time of day, the direction of flight and other details (color of helicopter, etc.) would all be helpful.

Mr. Bower's phone number is 343-6303.