



Gillespie Pilots Association Meeting Minutes

P.O. Box 711591
Santee, CA 92072-1591
December 2, 2023
Membership Meeting

GPA President Captain Denis Breslin welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 0900 hours. The meeting is open to all GPA members and those who were signing up. There were approximately 55 in attendance.

GPA President Breslin presented the meeting agenda and briefly introduced the guest speakers, Phyllis Trombi representing the GFDC and Kay Sundaram from STEM Aviation Academy.

Gillespie Pilots Association Website <https://www.gillespiepilotsassociation.org>;

- **GPA membership dues** – still only \$20 for the whole year!
- Check out the GPA on **Facebook**.
- **Socialflight.com** – What’s happening in Aviation – GPA meetings are listed under ‘Events’
- List of the **2023 GPA Board** members.
- **Classic Aircraft Display** from 0900-1000 on the Admin and East transient ramps.
- **GPA Webcam**: The webcam is up and running again. Here is the link: [GPA Webcam](#)

- I Toy for Tots:** This is the 17th year the County of San Diego Airports has partnered with the annual Toys for Tots program. Immediately following the GPA meeting, several members planned to fly the collected toys to Ramona Airport.
- II New Year’s Day Fly-Out:** Due to the New Year’s Holiday, there will not be a January GPA meeting. There will be an “unofficial” fly-out to Chiriaco Summit (L77) on Monday morning, January 1st, 2024. This is an annual tradition, and pilots will meet at the café for breakfast. The airport is located on I-10 just east of Palm Springs. It is only about a 45-minute flight from KSEE.
- III Gas Prices:** The average fuel price in San Diego County is now \$6.62, down \$0.52 from a year ago. SAN remains the highest at \$9.15, with OKB now the least expensive at \$5.15. SEE is still in the middle of the pack, with prices between \$6.69 and \$7.09.
- IV Gillespie Field iPark:** The longtime vacant field on the west end of Gillespie Field is taking shape. A large construction project by Chestnut Properties, presented to the GFDC in November, will affect nighttime traffic at KSEE in January. It has been officially named “**Gillespie Field iPark**, *Where Industry Takes Flight*.” The anchor business is GKN, an aerospace company aka *Chemtronics*. They plan to increase capacity and build over 130,000 sq/ft of manufacturing space. That growth is expected to bring at least 500 new jobs to the area.

GKN is the primary lessor, but they are attracting more companies offering more jobs and adding a significant amount to the AEF (Airport Enterprise Fund), which is the primary funding source for all eight county airports.



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At the November GPA meeting, concerns arose over construction, specifically the use of tall cranes and their impact on Gillespie's flight operations. Chestnut Properties worked with stakeholders and county staff to limit the cranes to night work for a one-week period in January 2024. Chestnut Properties owner Lee Chestnut presented their plan to the November GFDC meeting. Feedback from the GFDC meeting reduced the impact to six nights (2130-0630) in January 2024, with an additional six nights in reserve for inclement weather. (The meeting PowerPoint online shows the date and times of runway closures and approach availability)

- V Gillespie Field Development Council (GFDC):** President Breslin introduced Phyllis Trombi, GFDC Chair, to give an update and insight into what is happening on the Board and with the Board of Supervisors. Thanks to GFDC council member Barry Bardack for his comments as well.

The November GFDC meeting was very productive, with several items being discussed and worked through, including the previously mentioned crane scheduling adjustment with Chestnut Properties. Chair Trombi also outlined the three main motions sent to the County Board of Supervisors. The first was to extend all airport leases for five years due to the impacts of COVID. The second motion was to require the County Real Property Dept to continue issuing lease agreements and extensions while environmental "*Sustainability*" language is approved for inclusion in lease contracts. The county had suspended lease extensions pending the language. [**President:** *It made no sense to hold airport businesses hostage to a paragraph that had not even been created...*] The last motion to extend leases for five years was modified from citing COVID as the cause – to explaining that Gillespie Field businesses need relief because they have not recovered from its economic impact.

Chair Trombi voiced concern that GFDC motions were not being forwarded to the Board of Supervisors as the Joint Powers agreement requires. It seemed the motions were being "*held up*" by county staff. In response, Chair Trombi resorted to hand-delivering the motions to Mike Kulis, Policy Director for Supervisor Joel Anderson. [**President:** *And just like that, the Supervisors became aware of these important airport issues...*]

There has been no response for the first motion as yet, and with COVID-19 funds closed out, it's unlikely there will be. The motion on leases has not been addressed, but GALA and the County have resumed negotiations.

The GFDC meetings are important to Gillespie's future, so the GPA leadership is asking all members who can attend to get involved and attend the meetings. The next GFDC meeting is:

Wednesday, January 17th, at 6:00 at the El Cajon Council Chambers
200 Civic Center Way, El Cajon.

- VI GALA and County Admin:** After giving the updates, "Capt. Eddie" Kurdziel joined Chair Trombi in explaining some of the issues leaseholders are facing and what they are doing to address them. Recently, GALA (Gillespie Airport Lessees Association) held a meeting with multiple Departments from the County, specifically Sarah Aghassi, Deputy CAO; Derek Gade, Director of County Public Works; Jaime Abbott, Director of County Airports, and Mel Millstein, County Policy Director for Land and



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Environment. Capt. Eddie mentioned this is likely the first time this many County Leaders at this administrative level have met to discuss the issues facing Gillespie Field.

Though no specific resolutions came from the meeting, we have aired our complaints - which puts the county staff on notice that their action, and more pointedly, their inaction, is being tracked. It was stated the County funds 10%, and the US Govt. provides 90% of the funding for airport infrastructure. SB 654, which clarifies airport lease language, passed unopposed by a bipartisan vote, and becomes law on January 1. All buildings on KSEE except for the County Admin building were funded through private investment. (For a complete list of talking points regarding the issues around leases at Gillespie Field, see the meeting PowerPoint online)

VII Airport Manager's Report: Cathe Johnson, sent her airport update for President Breslin to share, including airport operations and noise complaints. Historically, in the grid around KSEE, there are only a few noise complaints except for a group of 2 or 3 homes from which the majority of these complaints emanate. Most complaints during quiet hours are associated with medical or law enforcement flights. Recently, though, there has been an extreme spike in complaints from presumably a single resident. It's common for this complainant to make over 100 monthly complaints. (See the meeting PowerPoint presentation online for the updates and projects mentioned in prior meetings)

VIII Kay Sundaram-STEM Aviation Academy: Kay Sundaram is a CFII, aircraft owner, co-founder of AOPA's "*You Can Fly*" program, and now the founder of the STEM Aviation Academy. The STEM Aviation Academy is a non-profit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to create positive experiences in general aviation and inspire America's youth to pursue careers in Flight Operations while also promoting a culture of aviation safety within the pilot community. STEM Aviation Academy is located at KCRQ, and though it is not a flight school, it brings youth to the airport, where they can experience the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings of aviation. That experience will then give that youth the understanding that they can realistically pursue an aviation career.

Kay's focus is not just on young people interested in aviation but also on those who have never been exposed to aviation and wouldn't know where to start. STEM AA partnered with local high schools to bring groups of students to meet with pilots, touch the planes, and ask questions. They work with 30 high schools but could easily reach more. Their expansion to Gillespie Field is to reach youths in East County.

The STEM Aviation Academy works strictly off donations, both corporate and individual, so every bit helps. It's much more expensive to conduct discovery flights, so those are limited, but they are always looking for volunteers who can help with the groups. You don't need to be a pilot, just someone who is a supporter of aviation. For those looking to donate or volunteer, reach out through the following link:

www.stemaviation.org

IX Raffle: Leslie Day selected the monthly raffle tickets, which included 10 gallons of gas from Golden State, a 1-hour training session in the Redbird Simulator donated by the GPA President, and either an IFR or VFR Aircraft Certification donated by Neal Aviation.

Three winners were selected and the meeting was officially adjourned at 0950 hours by GPA President Breslin and turned over to Vice President Leslie Day.



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X Auction Items: GPA Vice President Leslie Day and her husband Mike donated some unique aviation items to an auction to raise funds for GPA. They donated many items, including “a child’s airport desk” and a large hardwood “Airplane” rocking chair. There was also a desk-sized Wright Flyer model. These items were auctioned, bringing in over \$400. There were multiple ties, notepads, desk items and other clothing given to anyone present with the request for a small donation to the GPA.

No January meeting due to the holiday.

The next GPA meeting is scheduled for 9:00 AM on **Saturday, February 3, 2024**, at the Airport Administration Building.

Respectfully submitted,
J. Wes Morris, GPA Secretary