

Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
March 9, 2021

File Number: 3900-2305 & 3900-2116

To: Sean Smith, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Greg Lewis, Director of Corporate Services
Date: March 3, 2021
Subject: OCP amendment

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council give first reading to OCP Amendment Bylaw No. 2305, 2021

And

THAT Council give second reading to OCP Amendment Bylaw No. 2305, 2021

And

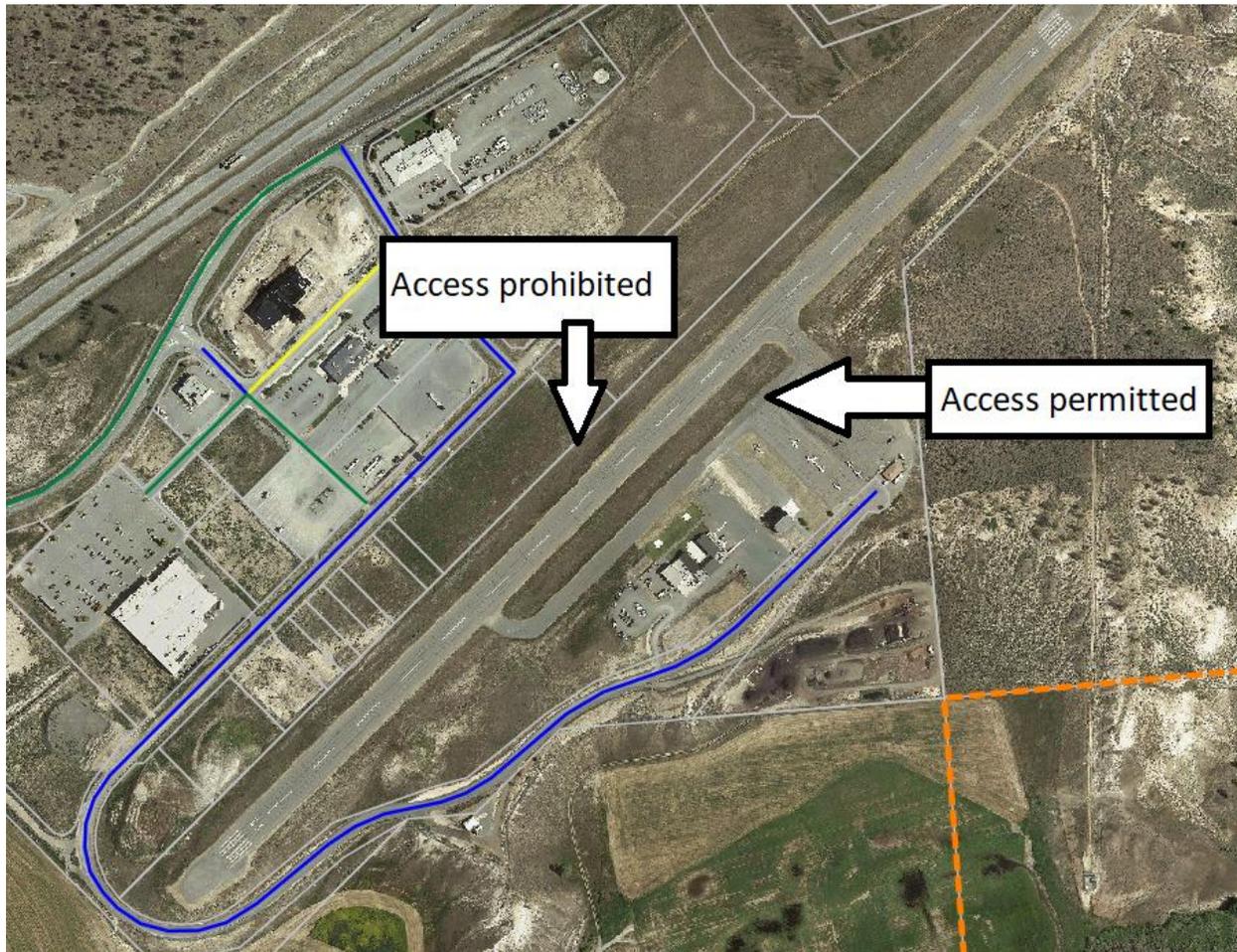
THAT Council direct staff to arrange a public hearing on OCP Amendment Bylaw No. 2305, 2021

Background:

The Official Community Plan currently contains clause 5.4.11.2.5, which states that it is Council policy to “Restrict airside access for properties directly adjacent to the west side of the Airport runway. Airside access will only be permitted from the east side of the runway.”

The map below indicates the effect this has on permitted access to the runway at Saunders Field. Although cardinal directions are not particularly clear (as what is described as the ‘west’ side might also be called the ‘north’ side), and when looking at a map as below, it might even be preferable to refer to it as the ‘upper left’ side, there is clearly one long side of the runway which has taxiway access, and one long side which

does not. As the term 'west' was used in the OCP, that is the term that will be used in this report.



In March 2020, the Airport Advisory Committee recommended to Council THAT Council direct staff to research and prepare an amendment to the Official Community Plan that would allow runway access from properties on the West Side. This was carried by Council, as Resolution 2020RC-06-08.

Accordingly, staff have performed diligent research into the history of this clause, why it was written into the Official Community Plan in the first place, and the impact that its removal might have.

In 2002, a local resident who owned property on the west side of the airport requested to the City that he be allowed to build a pair of private taxiways connecting his property to the runway. He and staff consulted with Transport Canada, and Merritt's Flying Club.

Transport Canada expressed a view that private taxiways were not prohibited, but that they were discouraged, particularly if there was room to build a standard taxiway, due to the potential limitations on a future standard taxiway that the construction of a private taxiway could impose. Airports such as Salmon Arm, Vernon, and Qualicum Beach

were cited as examples of communities whose airports had private taxiways and were closing them.

After hearing this, Council resolved to consult with the Flying Club. At this time, they expressed a strong opinion that changes to the taxiway system could endanger YMB's classification as a type IIb airport, and that due to the slope of the sight, visibility concerns would make the operation of private taxiways dangerous.

Due to the Flying Club's concerns, on July 23rd 2002, Council resolved to inform the applicant that west-side access would be refused based on that information. In 2004, the line stating this as Council policy was written into the Official Community Plan.

Following resolution 2020RC-06-08, staff have consulted again with Transport Canada. They have stated that as a registered aerodrome, YMB has less formal regulation than it would as a registered airport, and that the landowner (in this case, the City) has broad latitude within the required specifications. As private taxiways are not prohibited, they did not wish to take a stance any stronger than noting any construction would need to comply with regulations, and that we would want to consider the future impact of any construction performed, and whether or not it might impact on future plans for Saunders Field.

Considering the Airport Committee's request to allow such access, indicating that as of 2020/2021, Merritt's flying community is supportive of this, and Council's expressed instruction to staff to research and prepare the amendment, staff are now providing a technical recommendation that in order to advance the views expressed so far, Council provide two readings to this proposed bylaw amendment which would remove from the OCP the prohibition on west-side runway access.

Permitting west-side runway access could aid in opening up the parcels on that side to commercial use, but could also limit future opportunities for a unified design scheme performed by the City as the landowner. That was a larger concern in 2002 when reports indicate that staff anticipated some 6,000 annual aircraft movements, against the approximately 350 currently recorded. Although staff believe this is likely an undercount, it appears that Saunders Field is not operating to its potential, and opening access while constraining potential development in one way could allow expansion in others.

Such a lifting of the current prohibition would not require west-side access to be constructed, and would not remove Canada's airport guidelines on how such access would need to be constructed, it would merely remove the current prohibition on any request even being considered.

If Council do provide readings and then proceed to a Public Hearing, the community would as always be encouraged to provide their views, following which Council would need to decide about whether or not to proceed with the OCP amendment.

Options / discussion

1. Council could give two readings to the Bylaw and arrange a public hearing
2. Council could request further information before deciding whether or not to proceed
3. Council could receive this report for information and not advance the Bylaw

Financial / Risk Implications:

There are no direct financial or risk implications, as no specific activity would be authorized or commanded by this bylaw. Future construction could potentially result in increased use, or limitations upon use of the airport, and any such proposal would need to be considered on its merits at the time it was proposed.

Others Consulted:

Transport Canada
City of Merritt archives

Attachments:

Schedule "A": Bylaw 2305, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Lewis
Director of Corporate Services