

## Virginia Helicopter Association

2006 November

Bob Reid opened the meeting at approximately 2 pm with a welcome and outlined the meeting's agenda (Frank Tucker's hearing, an update from the Virginia Department of Aviation, club officer selection for 2007, the club's annual meeting, an HAI presentation, and a safety presentation).

Bob then asked Frank Tucker to update the club on his council hearing.

As a background note, Frank has been restricted from operating his helicopter on his 3-acre zoned-for-agriculture property because of complaints from a neighbor. Frank has requested the hearing with his local government to have this restriction lifted.

Frank explained that the hearing was well supported and that 99% of his neighbors had signed a petition allowing him to operate his aircraft from his home. The one complaining neighbor, however, is politically savvy and well connected and had a personal friend serving as a commissioner on the board. Because of this, points in favor of helicopter operations were not brought up at the hearing and the council voted 6-2 against allowing Frank to operate his aircraft. A final hearing will follow on 21 November at 6:30 pm with the Chesapeake City Council. A list of key contacts on the council was circulated to the club and Bob encouraged as many members as possible to support the event by attending, with phone calls, or by email. One club member with experience in this area suggested as much face-to-face and/or phone contact as possible with council members before the hearing so that you would have one or more members "in your corner" to champion your cause, make a motion on it, and have someone second it. An additional recommendation was to use this experience as a model for future requests by documenting all the steps required in the process. A final recommendation was to hire a professional helipad consultant and an attorney to assist in the process. The attorney is not necessarily used as a representative, but instead someone who can document and then make a post-application appeal for "capricious denial" or "denial of due process". This approach has been very successful in other cases.

Bob then asked Randy Burdette, Director of the Virginia Department of Aviation, to update the group on the department's recent activities. Randy explained that the new session of the General Assembly was about to meet but that the VHA was so new that not much involving us is expected. He's focusing on next year and what initiatives we can develop and possibly introduce to open up helicopter operations in Virginia in 2008. He also mentioned that federal and state support for aviation was quite strong, but inroads remain to be made at the local level—as in Frank Tucker's example.

Bob then took the floor and reminded the club that the officer slate would be opening for 2007. Bob felt that there might be more experienced pilots in the club that might wish to serve as president and offered that up to the group. He went on to explain that all officers could be selected from the floor or through the Board of Directors and that this would be presented at the annual club meeting in December.

Bob then introduced Dave York and Matt Zuccaro of HAI. Bob and Matt presented Bob and the VHA with the official Affiliate Membership plaque and warmly welcomed the club into the HAI family.

Dave and Matt then presented a slideshow on HAI. It gave an overview of HAI (private, government, and military membership); a membership profile; and the board and staff. Other parts of the presentation focused on their website ([www.rotor.com](http://www.rotor.com)) and Heli-Expo (their big event), as well as a scholarship program for pilots and maintenance personnel.

Big changes in Part 135 operation control back to certificate holders were also explained as were fights to keep an ADIZ/TFR out of New York City and ongoing efforts to reduce the Washington, D.C. ADIZ and frequent attempts to increase it's size and scope.

Dave and Matt also spoke on the Next Generation Air Transport System (NGATS) as the future of airspace in the US. Volunteers are needed on 8 different teams to help insure that helicopters are not left out of the process.

HAI has also developed an aircraft first responder database where aircraft owners can register their aircraft online. The program is voluntary and they are working on an airman first responder database as well.

Education on the Road is another HAI initiative. They currently have 15-20 courses reaching 600-700 students. They can be seen at [www.rotor.com](http://www.rotor.com).

One of their newest and largest programs is the ADSB pilot program in the Gulf of Mexico. Air traffic in the Gulf is as busy as the northeastern US but without benefit of ATC. ADSB will replace radar and will be used for communication and situational awareness in the Gulf. This program will increase both safety and efficiency. But it is a huge undertaking.

Safety is HAI's primary concern and they've outlined a goal of reducing helicopter accidents by 80% in the next 10 years. We face many challenges in this area as safety is difficult to market, most accidents are not prevented by just improving technology, and the overall experience level of the average helicopter pilot declines each year.

Matt concluded by talking about the Eastern Regional Helicopter Council. He was a part of it's founding in 1974 and explained that their many ideas, programs, and outreach attempts had allowed them many opportunities to operate helicopters while providing the non flying public with a good feeling about helicopter community. He feels that VHA is at a historic crossroad and that we will do much the same thing in the commonwealth.