

25 August 2016

Jack Hellbusch, Chairman  
New Meadows P & Z Commission  
City of New Meadows  
401 Virginia Street  
New Meadows, ID 83654

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*By Jacob Qualls at 11:06 am, Aug 25, 2016*

The New Meadows Airport Commission met on 22 August 2016 to review the application from BMA Towers LLC to erect a cell tower within the City of New Meadows. The Commission identified three issues regarding this proposed cell tower which could have a negative impact on the safe operation of aircraft using the New Meadows Airport.

The first issue was the possible use of communication frequencies which could interfere with pilot radio communications at the New Meadows Airport. After review of the FCC letter provided by the applicant, the Commission agreed with the FCC determination that there would be no radio interference problems, and this issue was resolved.

The second issue was the 182 foot height of the proposed tower and the possible penetration of one of the New Meadows Airport protected zones. The letter from T-O Engineers provided by the applicant concluded that, even though the proposed tower was within the horizontal limits of the Airport Horizontal Zone, the tower height of 182 feet did not penetrate that zone. The Commission agreed with the engineering analysis provided and approved a maximum tower height of 182 feet.

The third issue was the absence of any aviation obstruction lights shown on the drawings as submitted by the applicant for this proposed tower. The applicant provided documentation to show that, since the proposed tower is less than 200 feet in height, the FAA does not require obstruction lights for aviation safety. While this is true, the tower is more than twice as tall as any tree or structure in the local area, and the Commission is concerned that the lack of obstruction lights on a tower 182 feet tall would compromise the safety of pilots using the New Meadows Airport and the surrounding airspace, and the safety of the local population in the vicinity of this tower.

While fixed-wing aircraft do not normally operate at such low altitude in the vicinity of a city or a populated area, this does not take into account adverse weather problems, pilot error, or mechanical emergencies. It also does not take into account helicopter operations in the local area, which frequently occur at low altitude. There are plans to construct a heliport at the New Meadows Airport within the next 2 to 5 years, which will increase the number of helicopters using the airport for emergency services. In the meantime, these emergency services use the City Park which is within 2 blocks of the proposed tower location.

The New Meadows Airport Commission recommends that the applicant be required to include aviation obstruction lights in compliance with FAA Advisory Circular 7460-1L on this proposed tower, which would provide an extra margin of safety for the local community.

These lights should be mounted on the top of the tower for maximum visibility to pilots and minimum visibility to the local population. A standard Dual Lighting System should be provided, consisting of a flashing red aviation light for use at night and a flashing white aviation light for use in the daytime. The flashing white light should be automatically selected for use only during daylight hours.

Jack, I plan to attend your P & Z meeting on September 6, but if you have any questions or need any additional information before the meeting please let me know.

Dennis C. Nau, Chairman  
New Meadows Airport Commission