

Manawatu Microlight Club Newsletter for September 2011

www.manawatumicrolightclub.org.nz/

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Hi folks,

My apologies for the lateness of this edition. I decided to delay publication until after today's Airfield Users' Meeting in case issues were discussed which were relevant to MDAC's proposal.

I've held over some material this month due to the number of Letters to the Editor I've received regarding the proposal. You will notice that I've attached a document which outlines 17 discussion points which the Sub Committee investigating the proposal presented to last meeting.

I've also contributed to the debate in my editorial, but I must point out that my views are not necessarily representative of the committees.'

Barry

I'm Worried! Barry Nolan

I'm worried because we will shortly be voting on measures which, I believe, have the potential to profoundly change the culture and direction of the club. I've been a member of for 19 years

I'm worried that many of our members may not have enough information to make an informed decision on this matter.

I'm worried in case the attendance at the Special General Meeting is low which means the vote won't reflect the wishes of all members.

Our club was founded about 25 years ago with the express intention of promoting microlight flying activities in this area. Since setting up the club, we've gained a freehold club room and hangar and now operate a low - cost training and flying facility. Other than annual subscriptions, our income is entirely generated from flying activity. Perhaps most importantly, we are autonomous and have the authority to use our club facilities as and when we need them and the flexibility to determine our own future direction. **So I'm worried - What if MDAC's 'customers' are using the building when I want access?**

Although the Manawatu Middle Districts Aero Club (MDAC) is also aviation related, they do not own any aircraft nor do they act as a pilot training agency. Currently, their income is derived from membership subscriptions but they plan to increase this by leasing the new building to external clients for social events, conferences

and the like. However, the airfield Committee has mandated that any such event held in the new building must be 'aviation related.' The committee has also indicated that the new facility could become the focal social point for the airfield. **I'm Worried – How many aviation related organisations would want to use a building in the middle of the Feilding rural area when they could lease a city venue? Also, how will they attract enough aviation related conferences, etc to make this viable?**

The new set - up will include a fully equipped bar and catering facilities. Microlight Club members would be expected to help operate these when the building is leased for events. We would also be expected to provide labour to prepare for, and clean up after, such activities. MDAC acknowledge that after the building is placed on site, a considerable amount of finishing work will need to be undertaken (build a deck, painting, etc) They will provide the materials and *members of both clubs* will be expected to provide the labour. **This makes me very Worried – Remember how many members turned up to the last working bee we arranged? And, is it appropriate to have a bar operating during flying operations?**

Under their proposal, the new clubroom would be owned by a limited company (Manawatu Wings Ltd) MDAC would own 90% of the shares in the building whilst the Manawatu Microlight club would own 10%. Under the scheme, both clubs would share any profits and expenses on a 50 / 50 basis. MDAC estimate the monthly running costs of the facility would be \$440.00 but our current outlay is \$120.00 per month so they have agreed to cap our contribution at this level until the Hanuman loan is paid off. **I'm extremely worried. - At the moment, we are not earning enough to keep the books balanced. Our current bank balance is dropping month by month and we still owe money for the Hanuman loan so how could we afford *any* increase in outgoings. At first glance, it would appear that we would own 10% of the new building, *but this is not so - we would own 10% of the shares in the venture!***

I can't help asking myself the following questions.

- Who needs a mega club room? I guess the answer to the question is – MDAC! We already have a very modest building which, by anybody's standards, is grossly under utilised, so for us, increased area would mean an increase in running and maintenance costs and an increase in wasted space.
- Do we *really* want to complicate our operation by adding the distractions of a bar, catering facilities, duty rosters and sharing our space with non members? Isn't it likely that our members would be less than enthusiastic about manning a bar or tidying up after an event? If I'm correct, what would the repercussions be?

- We are an active flying club so do we want to become the focal social point of the airfield. Wouldn't this distract us from our core business of microlight flying?
- Because of the uncertainty associated with MDAC's revenue generating plans it's possible that their venture would fail. If that happened, what would it mean for our club?

Try as I may, I can't find a single reason for our accepting the proposal. I have anecdotal evidence that the Gliding Club rejected MDAC's approach and feel we'd be wise to follow their lead. The airfield committee has given MDAC an assurance that they will be able to put the new building 'somewhere on the airfield' so if we reject their proposal we are not condemning them to homelessness.

I believe that our club needs new members, not bigger premises. I think the key to our financial success lies in attracting trainees because it is these people who rack up a high number of flying hours, particularly during the training phase. In the early stages of MDAC's approach, it was suggested that some of their members would join our club, but to date, only two have done so.

No! I believe we have nothing to gain and potentially a huge amount to lose if we accept the proposal. It's prudent to remember that there will be no going back if we sign up. We are not just talking about a new club facility; *we're fundamentally changing our entire operation forever!*

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

As a member of the microlight club for over 23 years I am quite upset and disappointed by what I have been hearing about the the way negotiations about the possible merger with the M D A C have been conducted. I have been led to believe there have been some negotiations in private without the clubs consent or knowledge and also some push and bully tactics.

It is my opinion that at this point in time we should have never gone down this track and as far as I can see there would be no advantage to the microlight club and it just seems to have caused division among our members. I do however wish the M D A C all the best in finding a new home.

Bill Steel.

To the Editor

Firstly, my perspective of the MDAC proposal comes from a different background to most members in the club. Namely,

1. I live in Wellington and it takes me approx 2 hours to get to Feilding (round trip 4 hours)

2. I was formerly the club secretary at Foxpine and was a principal supporter for the amalgamation of the Wellington microlight flyers group with the then Foxpine club. (Both no longer exist) It is well known that the success (or failure) of a club tends to fall on the shoulders of a few. Microlighters gel as a club when members have their own aircraft and common interests prevail e.g. hangar talk. The Feilding group of microlighters has endured over time, to the credit of the membership. Perhaps it could be said that this stability of the club has been a major factor of survival, in the face of rising costs faced by all.

The MDAC proposals can only dilute the camaraderie of microlighters as a group and this has the propensity to create a “them” and “us” situation. Whatever may be ultimately agreed to, my focus is emphatically microlights and my home-built Zodiac. Is this compatible with the proposals?..... because I am unable to reconcile these proposals given that ‘bigger’ is not always ‘better’ from my experiences in 2. above and will they beneficially impact in any way on my focus to fly my zodiac ?

The only perceived longer-term beneficial common denominator is probably social activity, but is the current microlight club membership short on social activities? I don't think so, given regular communications re club events for example. Unless (and until) there are tangible long-term benefits to the club, I remain opposed to the MDAC proposals. In the club interests, Kind regards

Peter Dunning ZK-SPD CH601HD

To the Editor,

Like many of you I am thrilled about the prospect of better clubrooms & an airfield facility. However, it needs to be done right. As a builder / architectural technician & designer, I would like to draw your attention to a few issues that I believe are important.

- There is nothing as cheap as getting someone else to do the job for free and take ALL the risk.
- Refurbishments are ALWAYS a bodge job unless huge amounts of money are thrown at it.
- A refurbishment is built to old building codes - not as warm / weatherproof / electrically safe etc.

- Refurbishments are never the ideal design.
- There is no getting away from the fact that it is second hand - & will always be so.
- Refurbishments ALWAYS end up costing MUCH more than estimated. They are like aircraft - work out the price, then double it, then keep on spending money until it is finished. Try and find ANYONE who has done a refurbishment and brought it in on budget. It simply does not happen.
- Put the building where it should go but not on our site - we don't want to lose potential hanger space.
- We need our clubroom while replacement is being built otherwise we will suffer loss of customers / money / income.
- It should go, with it's effluent system / water tanks etc, on the space next to the existing toilets.
- An ex-gay bar is still what it is - an ex gay bar. Everyone knows what it was. It has a bad track record / disgusting colour.
- To cater for 40-80 people needs at least 2 stoves @\$1000 minimum = \$2000. That leaves \$325 to put light bulbs - should be plenty!
- Fridge large = \$1500, beer fridge \$1000. Microwave... etc etc.... And you've still got a crappy gay bar. On our site! No way - Hosé.

Neil Colliver

To the Editor,

I would like to give my two cents worth on the proposed new venture between Manawatu Microlight Club and the Middle Districts Aero Club which I am most definitely against. My first reason is the proposed roster for all club members to provide labour for the “social” functions of the new club. While I don't mind helping out with the fixing of the planes and helping at certain functions for our club (and will probably be available in the future fill another role in the club) I am not going to be available to provide “free” labour to help run a bar. When talking to pilots around the country, they all say they have never seen an aero club bar make any money anyway! The word is that they all lose money which will not help the MMC as we can ill afford any more debt. I am not happy about the idea of only owning 10 percent of the company and being liable for 50 percent of the losses and I do not think it is very responsible to have a bar and catering functions on an airfield. Having potentially intoxicated people driving around out there, not to mention being far enough away from the towns, will encourage people to drive home. I am willing to continue to help and support the micro light club as it stands but not with this new venture.

Mark Dean

The vote.

It's likely that the motion to be voted on at the September 25th Special General Meeting will include some, or all, of the following items.

- That the Manawatu Microlight club (MMC) agrees to relinquish its sole tenancy of the current site at Taonui Airfield.
- That MMC agrees to allow MDAC to remove our current club room from its present site.
- That MMC agrees to the Middle Districts Aero Club's (MDAC) placing a building on the site currently occupied by the MMC clubroom.
- That MMC agrees to accept a 10% shareholding in Wings .
- That MMC agrees to sharing the building and facilities which MDAC propose to place on the site currently occupied by MMC.
- That MMC agrees to share the maintenance and operating costs of the proposed building on a 50 / 50 basis.
- That MMC agrees to share the income derived from or loss incurred by the new building on a 50 / 50 basis.
- That MMC commits its members to assist MDAC members on a 50 / 50 basis to prepare for, operate and tidy up after any function MDAC organises in the proposed building.
- That MMC commits its members to undertake any maintenance of the proposed building on a 50 / 50 basis which includes any work needed during the setting up of the building.

What are they talking about? Topics discussed at the September committee meeting.

- Repainting club sign would cost \$500 so we will cut & polish and add our web site address.
- New Tyres to be fitted to Sky Arrow
- 2 Members paid 10 years subs so have Life Membership.
- Some concerns regarding Glider Operations will be raised at Airfield Users' meeting.
- Sub committee reported findings on the MDAC proposal. Matter to be voted on at Special General Meeting.

Events Calendar.

MMC Special General Meeting 2.00pm Sunday 25th September at Taonui

***Opotiki Fly In. 1st - 2nd October**

***NZ 'Flair' Aviation event 13th - 15th October at Te Kowhai**

*I have a large amount of information regarding these 2 events. If you wish me to forward the data, please email me.

Barry

Please don't forget next Sunday's vital meeting. The future of our club hinges on the decisions we make at this!

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