

To: The Blue Sky Membership
From: The Blue Sky Board
RE: Fall 2022 Membership Survey
Date: 11/17/2022

Your Board of Directors has reviewed the results of the survey and has spent considerable time reviewing every response. It has been a helpful exercise. We received many useful comments, which will drive some changes to our operations and have given us a better understanding of how you feel about your club. What follows is a topic-by-topic answer to *almost every* issue. There were some nearly identical responses and others that have been combined with similar topics. The following “Board positions” are listed in no particular order:

Communications and club cohesion improvements: In an attempt to improve communications and offer additional options, the Board will shortly be trying out “Discord”, a communications app. If we find it useful, we intend to roll it out to the entire membership. More on that later.

Easier opportunities for shared flights: This may be addressed through the potential new use of “Discord”.

Social opportunities: The Board fully endorses increased social gatherings and would be happy to see that happen. If you are interested in serving/chairing such a committee, please contact a Board member.

Bio page: The Board agrees; this is a nice way of introducing members but is concerned about creating another layer of work in keeping the website updated. For the time being, we will work to have such a column in the newsletter.

Hybrid meeting improvements: We feel that we’ve made significant improvements with our new webcam. A limiting factor is bandwidth, which we will explore improving.

Cost containment - keeping rates low: The club always strives to keep rates as low as possible while still budgeting for known/anticipated expenses. We are well aware that long term expenses, like improved tie-downs and snowplowing, once accepted, become a “forever” expense.

Electronic Blue Book: This topic generated a spirited discussion. There are significant concerns e.g. how to split flights, lost chronology, snowballing errors. These off-the-shelf systems are often designed with a dispatcher. We cannot/must not lose billable hours. The Board is looking into it and may pursue it on a trial basis.

“Club has become a flight school”: During potential-member interviews we inquire about goals and tell members that it’s a social flying club. Typically, there are a few members working on ratings/certificates at a time, which equates to a relatively small percentage of the club when spread over three planes. We do not want to discourage members from getting additional training and ratings because it enhances overall club safety. The Board felt that this comment may be more about scheduling. How do we solve that? The Board has agreed to conduct an internal review and consider new rules.

Minutes, notifications, agendas - more timely: Our bylaws state that minutes should go out seven days prior to meeting. This will be fixed. We also agreed that notifications and agendas for meetings will be sent one day before.

Develop a short, medium, and long term plan for the club: This would include upgrades, replacement, and cost containment strategies and be shared with members.... A strategic plan. The Board agrees and has put it on our radar to discuss in our meetings.

Address scheduling abuses. This problem comes up periodically and will be addressed through a reminder to the members from the Board and a reminder to the CFIs who can have a positive impact also.

Member perception of Solberg - not good. Good things have happened at N51. We have improved our parking situation with “drive through” and snow plowing. We are the only tenants with plowed parking and the cost is nominal. The runway expansion is a huge plus – especially the lighting and PAPIs, which should be operational soon. N51 has been under pressure from outside sources.

Bylaws should change to give members a say in replacement aircraft: The bylaws do involve the membership currently by requiring a justification document to be presented and also by providing veto power. Nonetheless, the board will discuss and consider further enhancements.

Blue Sky “Young Aviators” group or “Young Eagles” group and Wings-credit presentations: Young Eagles programs are coordinated through an EAA chapter. The Board agrees - it’s a great idea, it’s the next generation and future of aviation. If a member were interested in spearheading such a project or using a club aircraft to participate in a Young Eagles program, we would endorse it but would caution that it should be viewed as a long-term project and long-term commitment. As to Wings credit, this would need to be sponsored by FAAST and we do not have a facility.

Move the club to an airport that appreciates how good we are as tenants: The topic of moving the club comes up from time to time. N51 has an excellent new runway and lighting, few approach path obstacles, and two good 24-hr. instrument approaches. We’ve been here for a long time and moving would be sure to upset some members while making others happy. You can’t please everyone. Additionally, the bylaws require 2/3rds membership approval.

Fleet size - add a fourth aircraft; reduce to two aircraft: These both present obstacles. Regarding adding a fourth plane – this would require increasing the membership to 72, otherwise costs would increase dramatically because our fixed costs would be divided among a smaller group of members. Some have advocated reducing the fleet size too. This would necessitate downsizing the membership. Who is going to “take one for the team” and step down? The Board’s view is that IF the membership shrank sufficiently, the club could downsize. Still others have mentioned NOT changing the fleet size.

Numerous comments on changing the fleet e.g. sell the Diamond/upgrade avionics etc: This has been addressed by our decision to upgrade and our exploration of replacing the Diamond. When it comes time to purchase a replacement plane we will solicit input from the membership again, in accordance with our bylaws and consistent with what was done on previous acquisitions.

Create a CFI group on email, text etc to make plane check-outs easier: While seemingly simple, this poses another problem for the club. For legal reasons, we cannot be seen as a flight school and we have always steered clear of anything even remotely close. As a club, we cannot state that “these are the club instructors”. All CFI contact info is available on the website. Some CFIs are not active in teaching; some are.

Add a VOR check sheet to the plane: Historically, instrument flyers have simply recorded this in the Blue Book. The regs only require that it be recorded. It could be written on a paper napkin or on a scratchpad on a tablet. The Board sees no need.

Scheduling problems: The Board has agreed to conduct an internal review and consider amending the rules.

Board term limits: The survey indicates broad scale satisfaction with governance of the club. Our bylaws do not contain term limits. Getting volunteers to step up to the plate and do this work is often difficult and this would seem to make it more difficult. The Board does plan to conduct a review of the bylaws.

Planes found dirty, needing fuel and/or maintenance: The Board sends periodic reminders to keep our planes clean e.g. take oily rags and empty oil containers home etc. On rare occasion a member has been “spoken to”, but thankfully it is rare.

Better options for longer reservations with one plane down: Board position: The “Local Rule” covers this. See Operating Instructions.

Avionics should be the same across the fleet – “dump the S-TEC A/P”: The Board generally agrees. It is safer. Regarding the S-TEC autopilot, we’re concerned about its functionality and the Board is looking at options, subject to finance restraints.

Economy is changing; suggest a conservative approach with respect to our finances: The Board has always been cautious. We budget for the future - for emergencies, for insurance, for annuals, for upgrades, and for overhauls.

High membership standards; ensure standardization across pilots: We do have an annual checkout requirement. Beyond that, we are not a flight school, we’re a club with a variety of skillsets. For the most part, CFIs are available for training, when needed.

Expand the size of the Board: The Bylaws call for five members of the Board. An odd number is important, so the next larger size would be seven. Each board member needs a job/function. A lean, agile board is important.