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# Controversial advisory group to continue quarterly sessions

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SEATTLE-TACOMA AIRPORT — A long-awaited proposal to reorganize or restructure the controversial Port of Seattle Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) was bypassed last week as members decided to continue quarterly sessions for another year.

PAC, born in 1973 to put together the Sea-Tac Communities Plan, was reorganized about 18 months ago as a continuing body that would oversee carrying out the plan.

The group is made up of representatives from the airport, the airlines, the Federal Aviation Administration, King County, the Highline School District, businesses, cities and the neighborhood.

The latter has been a stickler. The idea was to have four community representatives selected by the Highline Community Council to represent the communities east, west, south and north.

But some airport-area residents have complained they weren't represented on the committee. Calling themselves the "Zone 3 Committee" (their neighborhood is in an area designated that by F.A.A.-mandated noise standards surrounding the airport), last January they convinced the Policy Advisory Committee to add a community member from their group. But even that didn't satisfy them.

"We're the people most affected by the airport," Jean Pihlman, a Zone 3 member, has said at meeting after meeting. "But we have the least say. We aren't fairly represented on PAC, and we must be."

As a group, PAC has had little time to "oversee implementation of the Sea-Tac plan," as its mandate requires. Instead, its meetings have repeatedly disintegrated into heated discussions with Zone 3 members and with other special-interest groups. The rest of the time the group has heard reports from Port and county officials about various developments both within the airport and in the general surrounding areas.

Since PAC's function is only advisory, many have felt the group to be an ineffectual waste of time.

Oris Dunham, the airport's manager and chairman of PAC, said he was frustrated with the group.

"PAC isn't serving its purpose anymore," he said. "After the meetings, I feel people don't come to hear about the airport or other plans; they come with specific problems in the community. We end up listening and spinning a lot of wheels."

Dunham said he didn't want to cut off communication between the airport and the surrounding communities.

"PAC is like a jury that people address," he said. "Instead, I'd be willing to go out and hold monthly public forums in the community. Then we could answer people's questions and face their problems."

The forum idea intrigued some PAC members, who suggested that representatives from the airlines, the F.A.A. and other groups might accompany Dunham.

But Hal Robertson, chief of the county's Community Planning Division, objected.

"One of the pluses of PAC," he said, "has always been the idea that it brings everyone — the Port, the county, the airlines, the F.A.A. and citizens — together once every few months to discuss issues relating to the airport communities.

"Maybe PAC isn't the best vehicle we could use, but right now it's all we've got. If we disband it, we face a real void."

Dr. James Jennings of the Highline School District, agreed.

"There has to be some place to have dialogs among all of us," he said. "Maybe PAC has let operational questions intrude. Probably we've considered too many one-on-one concerns instead of setting policy, but at least we're still coming together. It would be hard to find any other format that would bring everyone together."

A community spokesman, Richard Goe of McMicken Heights, suggested that PAC continue its quarterly meetings but that the Port also begin community forums.

"That would take the smaller problems off PAC," Goe said. "It would improve relations between the Port and the community. And it would leave us more time for planning and policy-setting — our original job."

Bob Nelson, representing the cities of Des Moines, Tukwila and Normandy Park, suggested that a more formal mode of operation be adopted.

"PAC should still be a public meeting," he said. "But people should take their problems to their community representatives. Then the representatives could conduct the business — more like a City Council would."

That would work if there was broader citizen representation, Pauline Conradi responded from the audience.

PAC is the only group where there's face-to-face response, said Marjorie Currie, another area resident.

"I've written to the Port and been told I'll be kept informed of all sorts of things," she said. "Then I never hear from anyone again."

"We're here today because we want PAC, the Port, the county and everyone else to know we exist. This is the only place we can come and everyone will hear us say that."

"Moreover, we're not going away unless someone drops a plane on us."