

Airport Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – February 24, 2009

Members in Attendance:

Mayor Ralph “Buddy” Fletcher, Chairman
John Burton, Vice Chairman
Joel Adams
Jeff Kincart
Skip Larson, Jr.
Ken Willaford

Members Absent:

Robert Knight

Also in Attendance:

John DuBose, Airport Director
Teresa Cornett, Airport Administration
Sandra ‘Nan’ Walsh, Assistant Airport Director

Introduction:

At 3:30 PM, Mayor Fletcher, Chairman, noting a quorum was present, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

Mayor Fletcher then asked if all members had read the minutes from the last meeting. Following a motion from John Burton and seconded by Skip Larson, minutes were approved 6-0.

Old Business:

Airport Staff:

John DuBose distributed an updated version of the “Rates and Charges” document. He requested input from the board for discussion in future meetings. He noted a copy of the Miami-Dade Aviation Department Rates, Fees & Charges was available for comparison and noted the depth that this type of document can take.

Board Members:

Jeff Kincart stated that during the time of the t-hangar rate increases and the public forum, 20 to 30 tenants came to him and expressed their displeasure in not having Advisory Board meetings posted in advance so they could plan to attend.

Joel Adams referred to the Sunshine Law with respect to the notice of the meetings and the posting of the meeting minutes.

Mr. DuBose stated that the posting of meeting dates is established according to City of Lakeland requirements. He expressed that he had no issue with the dates and times being posted and that the agenda allows a specific time for others in attendance to bring their concerns to the board.

Discussion ensued concerning communication on the Airport and the board noted that when tenant issues die down so does tenant interest in the issues.

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New Business:

Airport Staff:

Ms. Walsh gave a short presentation on the outcome of the Super Bowl Event and NetJets operation which took place in the last week of January at the Airport. The presentation had recently been presented to the Super Bowl Aviation committee in Tampa as Lakeland Airport had chaired the Polk County Plans and Procedures portion of the Committee. The recap included photos of NetJets operation on our Airport, statistics from LAL, TPA and PIE and noted the involvement of LPD and LFD in making this a successful event. Ms. Walsh noted that the Airport encourages aviation events and distributed a copy of all Lakeland Airport Events for 2009.

Mr. DuBose distributed an email received from board member Bob Knight which introduced the following concerns for discussion: Airport management was pursuing commercial air service at the expense of corporate and general aviation; Lakeland Airport Fuel Prices; the Airport Terminal Restaurant; status of Columbia's new facility; and utilization of the large hangars at Lakeland Airside Center for smaller hangar space. Mr. DuBose stated we have been seeking to increase corporate traffic and have recently had inquires from an MRO.

Discussion ensued concerning the different economic development avenues being explored by the Airport and the current economic climate of the aviation industry. Airport management stated that they are actively seeking development in three areas: Corporate/General Aviation, Commercial Service, and Development of the Airside Center for maintenance or cargo.

Board Members:

Ken Willaford brought the concerns of several established general aviation businesses, operating on the airport, to the Board. The perception of these businesses is that general aviation may not be welcome at the Lakeland Airport.

Mr. Willaford provided airport history beginning in 1980. Some of the tenants operating at that time were; Roberts Flying Service, the Lakeland Air Service, Globe Aero, Piper Manufacturing Plant and Cypress Aviation. Mr. Willaford began work at the airport in 1980 in hangar II, a City owned hangar and described ongoing maintenance issues with hangar II such as hangar doors, roof leaks and inadequate drainage. He stated that these issues caused injuries to personnel and water damage to aircraft and the building which prompted maintenance action by the City.

During the next ten years Piper, Globe Aero, Aero Space Projects, Roberts Flying Service several flight schools closed. Cypress Aviation was asked to leave hangar II due to delinquent rental payments. During this same period, Mr. Willaford started his current business in hangar II and made capital investments of \$125,000 to bring the building up to code and remodel. He stated that maintenance issues identified in the 80's were still occurring and approximately \$30,000 in damages was sustained during his first year in business due to lack of maintenance on the ditch line.

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As a result, he hired an engineer and installed pipe to prevent flooding. He stated that throughout the years many businesses have come and gone, and there have been several airport managers, yet some of the maintenance issues still remain at hangar II, a City owned building.

Mr. Willaford stated that currently the terminal building, its restaurant, the old Piper manufacturing building, and the R & D building remain mostly empty except for city offices, a trucking company and a portion of the Lakeland Police Department.

He stated that investments have been made on consultants and engineering firms to promote 'airline type' businesses and that there are only about five general aviation related businesses left on the airport. He expressed concern that security requirements have inconvenienced current aviation tenants and that City buildings do not look presentable due to damage sustained from the hurricanes in 2004.

Mr. Willaford stated that he has experienced high workmen's compensation claims and insurance rates due to on the job injuries caused by lack of maintenance on building and hangar doors. Aircraft parts have sustained water damage and airport burns have caused damage due to blown ash. He described inconveniences during Sun 'n Fun and confrontations with City police officers due to the location of the air show line.

Mr. Willaford stated that he has not received compensation from the city for his maintenance efforts as a sub tenant and has always been current with his lease payments.

Mr. Willaford stated that as a member of the advisory board, he has recently been approached by several general aviation tenants with the following question: Does the City of Lakeland and the airport's management staff really want general aviation companies on this airport? He stated that if the answer is no, the general aviation businesses will consider moving to more welcoming airports. He expressed concern that general aviation is secondary to airport efforts to attract an airline.

Ms. Walsh, the Assistant Airport Director, stated that her answer to the question would be a resounding "yes", and that every type of airport business is important. She advised that the airport provides for funding for each of the three economic development areas described earlier. She also stated the airport should take a more proactive role in providing answers to specific concerns.

Mr. DuBose stated that in recent years maintenance was provided by the City of Lakeland Facilities Maintenance division, but the airport regained responsibility for its' own facilities maintenance.

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Mr. Willaford reiterated that the ongoing maintenance issues at hangar II, the Florida Aero hangar at Lakeland Airside Center and other airport buildings have been occurring for years.

Mr. DuBose noted that expenditures for airport consultants are a necessary part of airport planning. For example, the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) is currently being updated as required to ensure grant funding. He addressed Mr. Willaford's comments on security by stating that we are under TSA and State of Florida directives to secure the airport. He also stated that some maintenance issues are the responsibility of the primary tenant, as in the case of the old Piper delivery building, while others are the airport's responsibility.

Ms. Walsh asked Mr. Willaford if his ongoing concerns were due to lack of communication or lack of action. She also stated that there are many airport projects that need to be accomplished; however budgetary constraints play a large role in prioritization.

Mr. Willaford stated that he believed it was lack of action on the part of the Airport.

Ms. Walsh stated ditch line maintenance is now an annual budgetary item and budgetary constraints preclude completion of similar issues every year. She asked the Board their opinion on how best to communicate the difficult decisions the airport makes on prioritization of projects. Ms. Walsh compared aviation in the 80's to current economic times.

Mr. Adams stated that tenant perception is that leasehold responsibility lies with the City and perhaps that is not always the case with maintenance. He stated that in the 1990's the city decided to enter into the property management business when they purchased the Lakeland Airside Center and that decision requires funding for a capital improvement plan. He suggested that the city's priority may have been pursuit of new business vs. maintaining current inventory. He suggested revisiting funding for capital improvements with the City Commission and noted that both the airport and the tenant have a responsibility to comply with the terms of the lease with respect to maintenance and other items on their leasehold.

Mr. DuBose stated that assessments of the airport properties (i.e. buildings, runways, and taxiways) have been completed, and are being prioritized for future capital projects.

Ms. Walsh stated the assessments were extremely over our current budget. She asked the board their opinion on measures the airport could take in this economic atmosphere. The airport has looked at many possibilities however tenant personnel injuries should be addressed as a priority for funding.

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Ms. Walsh also stated that airport management is prioritizing capital projects, and that the airport master plan does not adequately address funding for these projects. She also noted there are two restaurants on the field, Brima and the Hilton Hotel. She posed the question of the necessity of a third restaurant.

Mr. Adams stated the market would dictate the viability of a restaurant

Mr. DuBose provided information on the Winter Haven Airport which only has a satellite space from a restaurant downtown and on the Bartow Airports restaurant which is struggling to stay open. He stated it is in the best interest of the airport for every business to succeed and administration is willing to look at alternative lease structures.

Ms. Walsh stated that although Lakeland's traffic count is down by 25% and a number of flight schools have recently gone out of business such as Air One Aviation and Suncoast Helicopters, one success on the airport is the Central Florida Aerospace Academy at Sun 'n Fun which is part of the Polk County School system. They are anticipating growing to 150 students next year. This is a good example of a private/public partnership at work.

Mr. Mayor stated businesses want to be around the airport.

Mr. Burton asked Mr. Willaford to put his concerns in writing so that the airport could address them. He also stated that Mr. Knight's email should be answered. He stated that information on some issues is not getting to tenants.

There was discussion on ways to promote communication to the tenants such as an airport newsletter, providing copies of meeting minutes, and setting dates for future meetings in advance. It was noted that meeting minutes are recorded and available for public inspection.

The Chairman asked if there was any other new business.

2009 Sun 'n Fun Event:

Mr. Burton stated that Sun 'n Fun Fly-in is 4/21 – 4/26/2009. Attractions include the 50th anniversary of the Golden Knights and a gathering of Grumman Amphibious Aircraft. VIP speakers will include a Viet Nam pilot who was shot down in a Mig 21 by and American pilot and have been reunited to tell their story. John and Martha King will also speak on their experience with bush pilots in Africa. Earth day is 4/22/09 and will include Eco Friendly Exhibits and activities. Mr. Burton stated the economy may impact the fly in, however Sun 'n Fun is taking steps to meet their budget.

Ms. Walsh distributed an email from Robin Young, a t-hangar tenant requesting to host two large parties at the t-hangars during the fly-in. She stated that tenants may

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host guests within the confines of the tenant leasehold and that T-hangar lease allow a vehicle to be parked inside the hangar so as not to encroach on neighboring t-hangar tenants. Because the proposed party cannot be contained within the confines of Mr. Young's leasehold, the airport staff is proposing to offer him space outside the airfield fence northeast of the terminal.

Mr. Kincart commented on small gatherings at the t-hangars and the need for tenant awareness. He suggested a policy on parties may be needed as it is important to pilots to expose friends and family to the airport. He continued to plead the case on behalf of the t-hangar tenants.

Ms. Walsh cited an example which occurred at an event at the t-hangars during the Fly-in in 2008. LPD was called to investigate the incident which included vandalism, disregard of tenant responsibility for security and inappropriate actions on airport property. LPD noted that over 200 cars had entered the AOA security gate.

Discussion of the issues ensued and the Board agreed that tenant events should be held on their respective leaseholds and that the airport should offer the alternative space to Mr. Young. All agreed that this solution would continue to promote aviation while insuring the safety and security of airport tenants and that additional event requests should be addressed on a case by case basis.

Due to a prior commitment, Chairman Fletcher passed the chair to John Burton, Vice Chairman.

2009 Sun 'n Fun Event continued:

Ms. Walsh stated that transportation to SNF from the terminal would not be available during this year's Fly-in and that SNF tickets would not be sold in the terminal this year. This is a joint decision between the airport and Sun 'n Fun to promote the event on the south side and to ensure that airport businesses can continue to operate as normal as possible during this time.

Mr. Burton, Vice Chairman asked if there was anything else on SNF.

Agenda Items for Next Board Meeting:

Mr. DuBose requested agenda items for the next meeting be submitted within the next ten days so that the agenda may be distributed as far ahead of time as possible.

Scheduled Advisory Board meetings will be held on:
March 31, 2009, May 26, 2009, August 25, 2009 and December 8, 2009.

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Other:

Mr. DuBose announced there were two Board members appointed to a second term; John Burton – Citizen At-large representative and Ken Willaford – Airport Tenant representative. Both were appointed to a 3-year term. (1/1/09 – 12/31/2011)

Mr. DuBose also announced that Skip Larson would be leaving on 4/1/09 and thanked Mr. Larson for his service on the Board.

Mr. Larson stated that Watkins was closing their aviation department and he had enjoyed his tenure on the Board.

Adjournment:

There being no further comments and/or items for discussion, there was a motion by Mr. Burton and seconded by Mr. Larson for adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 PM.

Respectively Submitted,
Teresa Cornett
Airport Liaison for the Airport Advisory Board