

Airport Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – May 26, 2009

Members in Attendance:

John Burton, Vice Chairman
Robert Knight
Tom Dunn
Jeff Kincart – arrived at 3:40PM

Members Absent:

Mayor Ralph “Buddy” Fletcher, Chairman
Joel Adams
Ken Willaford

Also in Attendance:

Tony Delgado, Deputy City Manager
John DuBose, Airport Director
Doug Thomas, City Manager
Jim Verplanck, City Commissioner
Gow Fields, City Commissioner
Howard Wiggs, City Commissioner
Samantha Blaschke, Airport Admin Assistant

Introduction:

At 3:34 PM, John Burton acting Chair, noting there was presently not a quorum, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. At 3:40 PM with the arrival of the fourth Board Member a quorum was present. Due to the high audience attendance Agenda Item number five “Audience” was moved to the beginning of the meeting.

Audience:

Bob Highley explained he would like better communication with the Airport. He said that emails or a newsletter could be sent out to all of the tenants. He said the Airport has good facilities and air traffic control and Sun ‘n Fun which is very unique. He explained the price of fuel drives people away; he said that it is \$1.00 a gallon difference compared to other Airports. He would like to know what the goal of the Airport is. He can not see where the Airport is going.

Rick Garcia explained he had been trying to get on the Airport Advisory Board for several years and asked why he had been overlooked. He mentioned State Statute with reference to inclusion of a minority on the Board and stated he was in fact a minority.

Tony Delgado explained that the Board appointment decisions are made by the City Commission and not the Airport.

Mr. Garcia asked why the meeting notices are not posted or emailed to the tenants.

John DuBose said we are becoming compliant with posting the notices.

Mr. Delgado explained the City Attorney is reviewing the requirements for posting advisory board meeting notices as it pertains to the ‘State Sunshine Law’ and that the meeting notices will be posted for tenants and interested parties alike.

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Mr. Garcia asked why he was not provided copies of the meeting minutes he had requested.

Mr. DuBose apologized for not providing the minutes with the other documents that were provided to Mr. Garcia and explained he would give him the copies after the meeting.

Mr. Garcia then addressed the Rates and Charges document.

Mr. DuBose said this document could assist someone if they were to consider coming to the Airport.

Mr. Garcia asked why look at Miami-Dade's T-Hangar rates and not at local airport rates.

Mr. DuBose explained that we looked at twenty different airports and that is how we set the rate at \$300.

Mr. Garcia provided a list of local rates provided by Winter Haven to the Board. He pointed out that Lakeland was the highest. He said the cost of living was higher in Miami than in Lakeland and should not have been used as a comparison.

Bob Knight read the list of Airports that were used for the Lakeland study.

Don Stephens asked if we have a waiting list for T-Hangars and how many are on that list.

John Von Preysing explained that there are about 30 on the list and explained we do not get any takers until about the twelfth name down on the list.

Mr. Stephens said he has asked about buying land to build T-Hangars at the Airport.

Mr. DuBose said that he has met with Mr. Stephens several times and has shown the available land.

Barry Ford asked why there were no plans to rebuild the old T-Hangars that were destroyed by the Hurricane's several years ago.

Mr. DuBose explained that it was not in the Master Plan to rebuild the T-Hangars. There were a number of issues regarding this including insufficient funding from insurances in order to fully rebuild the hangers.

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Mr. Ford said he was one of the T-Hangars that were destroyed. He said it would be nice to see what is available for lease and copies of meeting agendas and minutes on the website.

Mr. Stephens explained the Airport lost \$1.7 million this year and we need to increase the activity. He would like to know what we are trying to do at the Airport and is anyone trying to market the Airport.

Mr. DuBose said we do have a Marketing Consultant and have begun revising the facilities Marketing Plan and a Business Plan. We will be putting brochures and tenant information on the website.

Mr. Delgado said as mentioned at last weeks' meeting that City administration understands that there needs to be a balance between General Aviation and greater commercial aviation business. We are putting together a Marketing Plan and a Business Plan. We are trying to do more to solicit business in these tough economic times.

Mr. Stephens explained that we are missing the little guys; they are leaving because there's no business here.

Mr. Delgado explained we are in the position of looking for more dollars all over the City and not just at the Airport.

Doug Thomas explained the original concept behind the Economic Development Consultant that was hired by the City. In concept we have in house management and outside expertise. There is still debt associated with some areas of the Airport. Example: The City owes the remainder of purchase price debt for Lakeland Airside Center. We have tried to get aviation business people into that space. At least recently Publix and PCC have leased space there. The City is trying to do Aviation Marketing.

Mr. Garcia asked why a Business Plan is just now being done. He also asked why the self service pumps are not working and why there was no local geographic area comparison of fuel.

Tom Dunn said the self service pumps were out of service only during Sun 'n Fun and it has been that way for years. The self service pumps are currently working.

Mr. Delgado said there were major customer concerns in 2001 when coming up with the criteria for fuel comparisons and explained that not everything was fuel based. They took into consideration the services that could be provided and customer service.

Mr. Garcia provided the Board with a fuel proposal and asked that they take this into consideration. He would like to see the price of the self serve fuel lowered.

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Mr. Dunn explained that it costs money for all of the equipment, staffing and rental to run the FBO. Bartow is selling fuel lower than he can purchase it for. He said the reason they can sell their fuel cheaper is due to the fact that the fuel that is being pumped is from a few months ago at the lower fuel rate. He also said if anyone is having a problem with the Self Serve pumps they need to inform Steve Leidigh the General Manager of Columbia Air.

Allen Sale who is in Hangar number 68, asked why are we just working on instead of doing. He said we could make this the greatest General Aviation Airport in America. Mr. Sale gave prices at other airports and explained he was overcharged during the merger with Landmark and Columbia. He feels that the single most important thing at the Airport is the price of fuel.

Mr. Dunn said as he stated in the last meeting he will be happy to give anyone that was overcharged during the merger a full refund.

Frank Pajares, Hangar number 80, explained that we should not compare ourselves to International and Regional Airports. They have more, and longer runways and services. He also has a complaint regarding the price of fuel.

Joe L. Ruthven, with the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce asked that we consider expanding the membership of the Airport Advisory Board. He also explained the Ruthven's bought property and have invested in the Airport and have had a good relationship with Columbia Air and with Airport Staff and explained to the audience that they will listen and work with you regarding your concerns. He also encouraged the Board to work with Mr. Garcia regarding all of his concerns.

Mary Ford explained her concern with the lack of communication from the Airport to the tenants. She said the website needs more on it such as meeting agendas and minutes. She also has concerns regarding the fuel prices. She said the Airport also needs to have access to charters and covered hangars for large jets that fly in. She has maintenance issues, their roof is leaking and the paint is peeling off of the walls. She said there is no commitment and no focus. She also wanted to point out that the Insurance amounts required by the City are ridiculously high amount and cost a lot of money.

Mr. Sale said in response to Mr. Dunn's earlier comment regarding Bartow fuel prices he called Bartow during the meeting and they had their tanks filled three weeks ago.

Mr. Dunn told Mr. Sale he would be happy to sit down and meet with him tomorrow and he go over the fuel pricing with him. Mr. Sale agreed to meet with Mr. Dunn.

Mr. Pajares asked the status of the Restaurant in the terminal and if it was a requirement for the FBO to have a Flight School.

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Mr. Dunn said he did not believe that was a requirement of the FBO.

Teresa Cornett explained that the Airport does have two restaurants on the airfield. One is Brima and the other is at the hotel. We do have a list of people interested in opening a restaurant in the terminal and we are looking at doing an RFP. Should a restaurant be opened, whoever may open it will need to be able to afford the electric bill as it has its own meter and they will need to fully furnish the space. The only equipment left in the restaurant is the Cooler/Freezer and the Hood System for cooking that are owned by the City.

Mr. Ford explained that he had sent emails to Nan Walsh more than a month ago and has not heard anything back from her. He would have liked an acknowledgement of the email at the very least.

Mrs. Cornett apologized for no response and explained that there were minimum standards issues and a staff meeting has been set up regarding these issues.

Mr. Stephens said there are a lot of things that need to be changed in the Minimum Standards – they are too restrictive and extensive. He asked again for a list of available properties for lease and price per square foot for each.

It was noted that a list of properties available for lease will be provided at the next Board meeting.

Mr. DuBose said that we are currently updating the Master Plan for the FAA and a part of it includes a financial feasibility aspect of business types that are suitable at this Airport. We would like to have a Board of Stakeholders help in the Master Plan process to gain knowledge and need information. The list of available properties may be modified due to FAA requirements at completion of the new Master Plan.

Mr. Ford asked if the Master Plan was flexible. He referenced the demolition of hangars as in the current Master Plan and the economics of not demolishing them at this time.

Mr. DuBose explained that it shows which buildings are to be removed but if there are current leases within those buildings the leases will have to be reviewed and the building will not be taken down until it is financially feasible to the City and the Airport.

Mr. Stephens asked Mr. Burton if, in his experience with other Airports, are they mostly run by City and County entities.

Mr. Burton explained from his experience most are run by government agencies and not by Airport Authorities and most are highly subsidized.

Mr. Burton thanked all the tenants for giving there thoughts and concerns and thanked City Management, Commissioners and the Chamber for their participation.

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Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Burton then asked if everyone had received and read the minutes from the last meeting. Bob Knight made a motion to approve the minutes, Jeff Kincart seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Old Business:

Airport Staff:

John DuBose explained that two items from the previous meeting were being carried over to this meeting: Garbage/Dumpster problem and Updated Rates and Charges Handbook. There are a number of dumpsters that need to be relocated and Airport staff is in the process of gathering information and detail of specifications for those changes.

Mr. DuBose explained some of the changes to the Rates and Charges Handbook; there are minor typo changes and the differences between Aviation and Non Aviation. Introducing landing fees is being looked at. Mr. Burton does not feel that charging landing fees will be a good idea. Mr. DuBose mentioned that if any landing fees are to be introduced it should be based on weight and only be for large aircraft. Mr. Burton said if landing fees were introduced it could affect the charter service. A charter service will be going in the Airport sometime in June and will operate similar to DayJet. Mr. DuBose mentioned Mr. Garcia's interest in starting a charter business at the airport. The Fuel Flowage Rate will be included in the Rates and Charges and not included in individual leases. It was agreed that staff will send questions to the Board members regarding the various changes and would expect a responses.

The Rates and Charges Handbook will be updated and a copy provided to the Board members prior to the next meeting

Board Members:

John Burton said he met with Mr. Garcia and he would like Airport staff to respond to Mr. Garcia in writing if it had not already been done. He would like acknowledgement of the correspondence at the very least.

Mr. Burton said that better communication is needed with the tenants and meeting notices should be sent to all the tenants of the upcoming Board meetings.

Mr. DuBose explained that the website is in process of being updated. A new property management system will be going live within the next couple of months. He agrees that better communication is needed and we are working towards making it better with the newsletter and website changes, one being that meeting notices will be posted on the website.

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Mr. Kincart said that emails and the website will be a great help.

Mr. Burton said there should be regularly scheduled Tenant meetings, maybe twice a year. Early March (at least a month prior to Sun 'n Fun) and early September.

New Business:

Airport Staff:

No comments.

Board Members:

John Burton will follow up with John DuBose regarding the comments made at the meeting. The Board will give their recommendation to Airport staff. The website should contain the Airport Advisory Board such as names, contact info, agendas and minutes. It was requested a new directory be provided to the Board. Mr. Burton asked staff to be proactive in getting info out to tenants and to respond to emails.

Sun 'n Fun Event:

John Burton said this years Sun 'n Fun was the safest and smoothest yet. Revenue was down overall ten percent from past years. There were less than a dozen comments regarding the parking fee. Mr. DuBose gave accolades for a great event.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting:

There were none discussed at this time.

Time and Place for Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held on August 25, 2009 at 3:30 PM in the Airport Conference Room A.

Other:

None

Adjournment:

There being no further comments and/or items for discussion, Bob Knight made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Tom Dunn seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 5:32 PM.

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Respectively Submitted,

Samantha Blaschke
Airport Administrative Assistant

John Burton
Acting Chairman of the Airport Advisory Board