

**Airport Advisory Board Minutes  
April 17, 2013, 5:30pm  
Airport Administration Building  
8807 Airport Boulevard  
Leesburg, Florida**

Attendance: Alun Jones  
Jake Kertz  
David Lewis  
Jon VanderLey  
Charlie Weller

**Call to Order**

Chairman David Lewis called the meeting to order at 5:36pm.

Chairman Lewis gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Minutes from March 20, 2013 Meeting**

Chairman Lewis asked if all members had read the minutes from the March 20, 2013 meeting. Charlie Weller made a motion to accept the meeting minutes. Jake Kertz seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**Introduction of New Airport Operations Manager**

Chairman Lewis announced that Leo Treggi has been hired as the new Airport Operation Manager. He asked Mr. Treggi to introduce himself.

Airport Operations Manager (AOM) Treggi said he is originally from Brazil. He served in the Navy for a number of years including as an Airfield Manager at Middleton Field Airport near Pensacola. He holds a Master of Business Administration in Aviation and a Master of Aeronautical Science. He is also a second year law student. He holds a Commercial Pilot's license from the FAA. AOM Treggi said he believes the airport has the potential to be a great asset to the community. He is here to work with everyone on the field and asked those in attendance to let him know if they need anything.

**Project Update**

Michael Moon of Hanson Professional Services provided the following information on projects.

Lighting – The design/build for this project has been completed and turned over to the City. Deputy City Manager (DCM) Drymon said the City's Purchasing Department is working towards preparing the RFP. Charlie Weller said it is very important for this project to be completed before the summer lightning storms begin. It should be the main priority. Lightning can cause a lot of damage to the old wiring that will be replaced under this project. In the past the lighting system on entire

runways has gone out due to lightning hits. Chairman Lewis said the Board has had to shift some of the priorities over the past few months. Charlie Weller made a motion to change the lighting project to the number one priority. The motion died for lack of a second.

Security Fencing Project – This project is underway. Jim Wikstrom from FDOT has approved the change order to allow aluminum swing gates on Airport Boulevard. This change order will add thirty days to the contract length. As a result a grant extension request will have to be filed with FDOT. DCM Drymon noted the extension paperwork has been filed.

Airfield Signage – This project has been delayed one year to allow the Airport Layout Plan Update to be moved forward.

Rotating Beacon Analysis – The analysis by the structural engineer was completed March 29<sup>th</sup>. They are in the process of obtaining specifications for the existing beacon to determine if everything will match up and it can be physically placed on the tower. When this is done they will provide a report to the Board.

Taxiway Project – FDOT has requested that this project be broken down into three Task Orders – Taxiway A re-alignment, Taxiway extension to the property line and the Extension for the seaplane base. They are in the process of preparing those documents

ALPU – The *Notice to Proceed* from the City was received today. They will make a site visit on Monday to begin the data collection process and will meet with City staff to finalize the schedule. They will also be setting up the schedule for public meetings. The project will be completed in 120 days, which began as of today. Michael Moon will be the point of contact for this project. The process will be as follows:

Task 1. Narrative

- 1.1 Collect historical data and information on any new facilities  
Within 2-3 weeks, a meeting will be scheduled with staff and the Airport Advisory Board (AAB). Deliverables will be provided (text and drawings) prior to the meetings so they can be reviewed.
- 1.2 Develop forecast based on data and develop criteria for facilities. A meeting will be held when this is done.
- 1.3 Submit FAA form 7480 for establishing a seaplane landing area. This is a technical form. There is no need for input from this Board.
- 1.4 Complete the narrative report.

At least two meetings will be held with the AAB during the Task 1 process. The draft narrative should be ready in about 75 days

Task 2. Airport Layout Plans – This will update various drawings to reflect completed projects and planned future projects, with an emphasis on the next five years. The draft should be ready in 90 days. The plans will be reviewed with the AAB.

A presentation of the final document will be made to the City Commission in approximately 105 days, depending on their meeting schedule. The final documents will be submitted to the FAA and FDOT in 120 days.

Charlie Weller asked if a total cost has been determined for the seaplane ramp. Michael Moon said the estimated cost is \$1.7 million for the entire project including mitigation, permitting and construction. Charlie Weller asked if there is a cost/benefit ratio for the project. Chairman Lewis said there is no cost/benefit ratio because this project is required in order to keep Wipaire on the airport. Charlie Weller said Wipaire should be willing to pay part of the cost for the project. Chairman Lewis said it is not up to the AAB to make that determination. Michael Moon noted the project is being completed in three phases: 1 – Taxiway A re-alignment which is funded by FAA; 2 – Taxiway A extension to the property line which is funded by FDOT; and 3 – Extension for the seaplane ramp from the property line to the water which is funded by a FDOT economic development grant.

DCM Drymon noted that the number of jobs Wipaire is proposing to create is their contribution to the project. Without the jobs, the project would not have qualified for the economic development funding. Chairman Lewis said it is his understanding that both the current and former city managers analyzed this and concluded that the seaplane ramp was needed to retain Wipaire. They felt the loss of Wipaire was more costly than the investment in the ramp. Charlie Weller asked what will happen if they do not create all of the jobs. DCM Drymon said this is not a CDBG grant. It is an economic development grant so the job creation issue is not the same as the situation the City was in with the Skybolt project. He is confident they will create 60 jobs or more. Also, there is a good possibility some smaller companies will follow them here to the airport, bringing even more jobs in a ripple effect. Chairman Lewis said that Wipaire is already giving business to several existing tenants even though they are working out of a temporary facility.

Charlie Weller said it seems like a lot of money to spend when there is a ramp in Tavares. Probably only about 10% of seaplanes are not amphibious. Most can land on a hard surface. He asked to be on record as being opposed to the ramp. He believes there are better ways to use the City and taxpayers' money. He thinks the actual cost will be much higher than the estimate given due to the cost of mitigating the wetlands. He hopes the City Commission has the foresight to review this whole project. The cost benefit ratio is not in favor of it.

Chairman Lewis noted that Mr. Weller has not been at the last several meetings where this was discussed in depth. The purpose of the ramp is for seaplanes to come to this airport for maintenance. Wipaire is committing \$4.5 million to the airport. They will bring 60 or more jobs and will have a tremendous economic impact on the community. The repayment should be in the 5 to 10 year period.

## **Update from the Airport Manager**

DCM Drymon noted that he has been serving as the Interim Airport Manager for some time. He has learned a lot about airport operations and airport businesses. He hopes everyone makes AOM Treggi feel welcome. AOM Treggi will handle the day to day operations. He is enthusiastic about growing the airport and has many ideas. He speaks Portuguese and Spanish which is a great asset in making connections to companies in South America and specifically Brazilian companies.

DCM Drymon said the City is starting the budget process now for next year. It is hoped the Commission will approve taking the manager's position back to full-time in October. AOM Treggi has assured staff he is interested in staying on if the position is changed to full-time. DCM Drymon said that his involvement with the airport will now shift primarily to projects. He noted that in the future AOM Treggi will be giving the update reports.

There is nothing new to report on the air traffic control tower closing issue. A great deal of time has been spent working with legislators regarding the importance of keeping the towers open. Legislation has been introduced this week to prohibit the FAA from closing contract towers. He is keeping watch on the situation to see what develops. Charlie Weller asked who has been contacted about this matter. DCM Drymon said he has contacted several legislators including Daniel Webster, Marco Rubio and Bill Nelson. Charlie Weller asked if John Mica has been contacted. DCM Drymon said he has not contacted him. Charlie Weller said John Mica is on the oversight committee for transportation. It would be appropriate to contact him. DCM Drymon said Mr. Weller is welcome to contact him. Charlie Weller said that he has already contacted Mr. Mica. He noted that Kissimmee got Alan Grayson involved and their tower was not on the closure list. He said it is very important for the tower to stay open. It is a real safety concern here. The issue needs to be worked from all angles. Everyone needs to write their legislators. Once the tower closes it will probably be closed for a long time unless the City agrees to pay the cost. Alun Jones asked for a show of hands from those pilots in attendance that prefer to keep the tower open. The majority present wanted the tower to remain open. Alun Jones said he has never seen traffic counts for the airport. Pam Hester said the tower operators report that information every month. She will provide that information to him. Alun Jones noted that traffic counts are not available from the time before the tower opened. Charles Bondar said many people do not know how to fly in uncontrolled air space. Flying into this airport at night when the tower is closed can be challenging. That shows the value of the tower. Alun Jones said he has never had a problem here without the tower. Pilots must call out their intentions and listen to other pilots. Jake Kertz noted that about ten years ago there was a mid-air collision due to pilots using the wrong Unicom frequency.

Alun Jones said that with regards to the seaplane ramp, there are several benefits for Leesburg. Fueling will be easier here and Tavares does not sell jet fuel so float planes may come here for that reason. Pilots will be able to get their radios repaired here. There are many other maintenance services available here that are not offered in Tavares. We need to bring more commerce to the airport. He believes businesses will come here and support the airport once they find out the ramp is here. DCM Drymon said Tavares is trying to get pilots to come and visit their downtown. Our purpose is to bring pilots in that will purchase fuel and use the

services of other businesses at the airport. This is another way to keep businesses viable and keep people employed at the airport. Alan Riesman of Brainerd Helicopters said they just finished a photo shoot with their float plane that will be published in the magazine *Pilot Getaways*. They support the ramp project. Charlie Weller asked DCM Drymon to find out the number of seaplane operations out of Tavares. He also asked DCM Drymon to find out how many seaplanes only have floats – i.e. amphibious vs. non-amphibious. He does not believe there are a large number of pure seaplanes in Florida and adjoining states. He also can't see why a pilot would land on water if there is a runway available. Chuck Brainerd said he prefers to land his float plane on water. It is just more enjoyable. Alun Jones noted that if a seaplane does not have wheels, it can be placed on a dolly and towed to a shop for service.

Chairman Lewis noted that Tavares came to us and encouraged and requested that we get a ramp at this airport. After hours of discussion and at the recommendation of the AAB we are committed to the ramp and committed to Wipaire. He does not believe there should be any question of us having a ramp.

Charles Bondar asked if the seaplane ramp can be used for boats. They could tie up and go to a restaurant if one is built. Chairman Lewis said they would not be allowed in the ramp itself. Boats would be limited to a space outside of the ramp area. Jake Kertz noted that the Sheriff might be able to station a rescue boat here.

### **New Business**

Chairman Lewis asked the Board members and public in attendance if anyone had new business for discussion. There was no new business.

### **Adjournment**

Charlie Weller made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alun Jones seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:28pm.

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Chairman

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Secretary