

**Airport Advisory Board Minutes  
March 14, 2012, 5:30pm  
Airport Administration Building  
8807 Airport Boulevard  
Leesburg, Florida**

Attendance: Lester Coggins  
Allen Dunlap  
Alun Jones  
Dave Lewis  
Clive Ure

**Call to Order**

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

**Approval of Minutes from September 14, 2011 Meeting**

Chairman Lewis asked if all members had read the minutes from the September 14, 2011 meeting. Lester Coggins made a motion to approve the minutes from September 14<sup>th</sup>. Clive Ure seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

**Introduction of Board Members**

Chairman Lewis asked each board member to stand up and introduce themselves.

**Open Discussion – All Areas of Concern**

Chairman Lewis stated the purpose of this meeting is to address the concerns of the tenants. The Board members want to hear their issues and will work to resolve any problems and develop ideas that are presented. He turned the discussion over to Board member Clive Ure.

Clive Ure said that Chuck Brainerd has put together a PowerPoint presentation highlighting various concerns and ideas related to the development of the airport. He noted that that agenda includes a long list of items under General Discussion. There are far too many things to cover in one meeting. They want people to attend the meetings and they want their input. After the PowerPoint is finished, he will open the floor to discussion by topic. He would like to limit it to five minutes per item. It may be necessary to hold special meetings on some of the topics. They want to try and cover all of the items on the agenda in the next couple of months so that recommendations can be developed and formally passed on to the City Commission.

Chuck Brainerd said that he participated in an economic development meeting about a month ago at the airport. It was a very good meeting and afterwards he began thinking of ways to improve the airport. He noted that this past Saturday he flew out of Leesburg to the Zephyr Hills airport. The Leesburg airport had nothing going on and the Zephyr Hills airport was very active. There was a big contrast between the two facilities.

The PowerPoint presentation was made using aerial pictures from Google Earth. The

slides show some of his ideas to utilize more of the airport property and bring in businesses. They include the following:

- Adding an exit lane from 441 to turn to onto Wilco.
- Removing the gates at the taxiways that cross Airport Boulevard and changing the boundary fencing so that it crosses Airport Boulevard with a small one-lane gate on the east and west ends. This will allow the area north of Airport Boulevard by the city-owned t-hangars and corporate block hangars to be included in the active airside. He has spoken to FDOT and said they like this idea. He also spoke to FedEx and UPS and they verified they have a procedure in place for their drivers who encounter airport security gates.
- Building additional t-hangars or corporate hangars by those on the north side of Airport Boulevard. He understands there is a waiting list for t-hangars and this is an additional revenue source for the airport.
- Build an A&P school in the area northeast of the City-owned t-hangars. A partnership could be developed with local schools. There is a huge need for A&P mechanics. This was discussed at the economic development meeting.
- Build a seaplane ramp near the end of RW 31. There are many seaplanes utilizing the facilities in Tavares but they do not have maintenance services available there. This is an opportunity for Leesburg and our airport is a perfect location for that.
- Find an airport restaurant. A perfect location is on the corner of Wilco and 441. This area is elevated and will provide a good view of the airport. Ramp space could be built south of the restaurant for people who fly in to eat. It would also provide additional ramp space for the FBO. The restaurant at the Lakeland airport is always packed and 90% of their patrons are from outside the airport.
- Build helicopter pads. There is a need for two landing pads and a small training pad. They could be built in the area south of 13/31 between the runway and the trees.
- Take out the trees along the lake to provide a better view. Perhaps a controlled burn. The area could be cleaned up and sodded.
- Build a wash rack for aircraft. This will require special equipment including a water separator and purifier. It needs a system similar to a car wash. There could be a charge to use it. Perhaps a car wash owner would want to build and operate it.
- Build a City park with BBQ pits and picnic tables along 441 by the end of runway 13. The area behind the Airport Administration Building could also be cleaned out. It can remain a wetland, but amenities such as benches and picnic tables could be added.
- The area of land south of the ARFF station can be used for future expansion as needed.
- Hold events such as air shows to develop the interest of the entire community in the airport. Brainerd has been invited to participate in a show at Tavares to demonstrate aerial firefighting.

Clive Ure thanked Chuck Brainerd for the presentation. He summarized the items and added the following comments:

- ◆ Restaurant and parking ramp area are fundamentally important to the airport.
- ◆ Helicopter pads are very important. Brainerd is an important tenant and his commitment to the airport should be recognized. It will also offer opportunities for training uses for other pilots.

- ◆ Airport parks could include things such as gazebos and drinking fountains. It would offer opportunities for families to come to the airport for picnics.
- ◆ Along with an air show, events could include things such as an airport open day every month or two. People have already volunteered to bring their airplanes in for an event of that type.

Clive Ure said he is on the airport seven days a week. He has had an opportunity for the last three years to speak to a lot of people. Everyone who is a tenant seems unhappy with their lease for various reasons. Some want to invest money into their buildings but won't do it on a business level because of the time limits on their lease. They would invest if the City would renegotiate the lease terms. There are also people who want a lease but need help, such as the EAA. He believes a special meeting should be held just to discuss leases.

We need to develop an airport that is friendly and open; not one that is behind a prison fence. He believes the current direction is killing the airport. He opened the discussion to the floor.

John Clark asked that the terms *tenant* and *lessee* be differentiated. They are not the same thing. Alun Jones and Chuck Brainerd are lessees. He is a tenant of Dale Freeman.

Jake Kertz said the airport already has a restaurant with the Cracker Barrel. It should be inexpensive to build a ramp by it. An overflow ramp was planned there at one time. Clive Ure read from a newspaper article written in May 2002 when the Cracker Barrel was built that says, "Gentry Richardson, assistant to City Manager Ron Stock said the City and Cracker Barrel Old Country store have verbally agreed to extend taxilane K up behind the restaurant where a parking apron for planes will be built." He said a paved ramp is not necessary. They just need a grass area for pilots to park and a coded gate. There is no need to spend tens of thousands of dollars. The majority of people who come will be in light, single engine aircraft.

Commissioner Lewis Puckett said this meeting should be dealing with people who lease property, not rent property. The time should have been kept at 4:00pm so it would not run so late. Chairman Lewis said many people requested the time change so they could come after their work day was over. He said the purpose of the meeting, whether you are a tenant or lessee, is to determine the direction of the airport. The success and future of the airport is important to both tenants and lessees.

Chuck Brainerd noted that this is the first meeting held since September 2011. The meeting is important to the future on the airport. He will stay as long as necessary.

Chuck Bondar said he has been a tenant here for eight years. The first impression he had of the airport was that it was a very unfriendly place. He thinks it still is. There are very few places where he can find people to talk to. He suggested the following:

- Put a wash rack near the restaurant. The cost of a wash could be added to the restaurant bill.
- The airport is over-gated and over-fenced. The gates do not work right. He asked why the tower does not have a button to operate the gates.
- There is a need for a traffic light on 441. He said Leesburg told him the criterion for a light is three deaths.
- The possibility of commercial flights has never been investigated. With all the people coming to communities in this area such as the Villages, flights coming in

from places such as New York and going out to Miami or the Keys might work.

- An Instrument Landing System is needed.
- Things at this airport do not change. There is a group of people who want to run things the same as always. That is backwards thinking. This is a centrally located airport that could serve a lot of purposes that have not even been considered.

Chairman Lewis said he has worked in the industry since 1966 and is a retired commercial airline captain. Commercial service will not happen in Leesburg. It is too close to Sanford and Orlando. It would be too expensive for them to operate from here. He also said that the security fencing is a result of the airport looking to being an air carrier airport with Part 139 certification. That is no longer the goal. They want this to develop into a premier general aviation airport in the State. Everyone needs to stay involved. The security fencing needs to be re-addressed and all projects related to making this a Part 139 airport need to be terminated.

Rock Rockcastle said he is a safety program volunteer with the FAA, an AOPA representative for the Leesburg airport and he also works for SimCon in Orlando. They are using this facility more and more with their PC12's and King Airs because their pilots are finding this to be a very friendly airport. He sees a lot of airports and this is a friendly airport. He noted that an air carrier service airport would require even more security that what Leesburg has now.

Clive Ure said the lease issue is paramount and needs to be at the top of the list. Chairman Lewis said they will set up a special meeting in about two weeks. He has an idea that will probably be considered very radical. He believes that all tenants in good standing should be offered a new twenty-year lease effective June 1, 2012 with an automatic ten-year renewal option. It will require some analysis to make sure it is financially feasible. One problem is that the lease income is the only income being generated at the airport. That is the wrong way to approach it. Increased activity will increase income from the airport by doing things such as attracting new tenants. New tenants will also bring added tax revenue and have an economic impact. He has proposed conducting a survey to determine the total number of employees on the airport and the annual income. The economic impact of the airport can then be determined. This will show that the airport is important to the whole community.

Bart Brainerd said he was asked to put together some figures for their business. They have been a tenant at the airport for twenty-two years. They have almost \$2 million invested in their facilities that will revert back to the City at the end of the lease. They want to expand their business, but will need more room. They currently have fifteen full-time employees and eight contract employees. They plan to hire four employees in the next few months and ten more in the next three to four years. The legislation that was just passed exempting some aircraft services from sales tax should help stimulate businesses. They are considering starting a shop to do external maintenance on Blackhawks. The military is beginning to outsource a lot of this work. If they do this, they will need new buildings. They have started to explore their options with this regard, including possibly having to leave Leesburg.

Clive Ure said the airport does not want to see Brainerd leave. He heard the paint shop is closing because they can no longer afford the rent. Jobs at the airport are very important.

Penny Wilson, owner of Triangle Aviation Services, said her hangar is for sale. She has

had two potential buyers. However, as soon as they found out about the reversion clause in the lease with the City, they backed out. One of them was a supply house that would have brought several new jobs to the airport.

Clive Ure said he owns two condo hangars. In the last three years the tax assessments on his hangars have go down. He has never seen a tax authority do that. Each year the value of his hangar has decreased on the official roll.

Chairman Lewis said he was told about a company called NS&S Aircraft Interiors that is now operating in Pembroke Pines. They left Leesburg due to rent increases. He also heard about a tenant named Harrison who moved because his rent was increased several times. If that is accurate, it cannot continue. The City needs to keep the tenants and lessees happy. Rent amounts should be adjusted down due to the current economy.

Clive Ure said he would like to propose that Board members be allowed to attend these meetings virtually, such as through Skype, or be allowed to have a proxy. There needs to be a consistent five member panel at these meetings. CM Evans said legal counsel will need to be consulted before a decision is made on that proposal.

David Silsa asked if the Board members' names and the meeting dates are available on the website. Chairman Lewis will ask that this information be posted. Clive Ure said he noticed the airport site is somewhat spotty. They will work on getting more information there.

John Clark requested that the monument in front of the Airport Administration Building be turned so that the inscription faces the road instead of the building.

John Vizslay said he likes the proposals being made today. He asked if there is funding in place for any of these projects. Chairman Lewis said he has met with CM Jay Evans about this. Funding is limited due to the economy, but CM Evans said they will try to work with the Board to try to make some of these things happen. Mr. Vizslay said the proposed projects need to be prioritized.

Chairman Lewis said the ideas need to be put into a report. They should be ranked by cost. The least expensive project should be first.

Mr. Vislane said it seems that the primary need, and probably one of the most costly, is changing the fences. Chairman Lewis said it is not necessarily expensive. They just need to move some of the fences that are already here but not needed, such as the ones by the condo hangars. There is more than enough fencing on the facility that can simply be moved. Clive Ure noted that you don't always have to go with the most expensive option. There are usually alternatives. He thinks the seaplane ramp will be the most expensive project because of the engineering, permitting, etc.. Bart Brainerd said the City of Tavares said they would partner on that project. Chuck Brainerd said there may also be FAA and FDOT funds available.

Joel Hargis said he is a local pilot. His airplane is at the condo hangars. Some of the things he has heard today are disturbing. He believes the airport is friendly. He and ten pilots are flying Young Eagles on Saturday morning. That's the first time that has happened in a long time. He would love to see the camaraderie at the airport get even better. This seems to be a multi-headed monster and there should be a segmented approach. He believes an air show is a good idea. Events are an easy way to bring the public in and can make a big

impact. He has only been flying for three years but is impressed with the quality of the people he has met on our field.

Chairman Lewis said part of the tense atmosphere at the airport has nothing to do with aviation; it is the economy. When people are under stress from something like that, it can carry over to other areas. He believes there can be a positive outcome.

Clive Ure said the ideas from these meetings must be passed on to the City Commission. In his opinion, there needs to be a fundamental rethinking by airport management.

Joel Hargis said the community needs to get involved in the airport. The community needs to know the airport is more than a bunch of rich guys flying airplanes.

Chuck Bondar said that nobody in management in Leesburg understands airports or airplanes or the people here. They are difficult to talk to. The City should do things like subsidize fuel costs. In the costs involved in owning an airplane the fuel is miniscule part, but it is something that is seen immediately by pilots. The restaurant is a good idea. Bringing in light manufacturing such as engine rebuilding or re-plating should be considered because it is a money maker. He asked if a *Free Trade Area* has been considered. Allen Dunlap said a *Free Trade Area* has been discussed by this Board in the past.

Chairman Lewis said part of the frustration with the people on the airport has been that this Board has not been utilized. The break down in the system makes people feel like they have no voice.

John Vizsly noted that Airport Manager (AM) Charlie Weller had received an award for *Airport Manager of the Year* and asked what he did to receive it. CM Evans said he has been with the City since 2004 and has been City Manager since 2007. His job today is to listen to everything that is said. He knows there are some valid concerns about the customer service provided by AM Weller. However, AM Weller received the award because he has proven that he can grow an airport and he handles projects almost flawlessly. Some of the largest projects ever done in the City of Leesburg have been at this airport and he has never had to worry about them. AM Weller has done an outstanding job with the projects. That is the side of AM Weller that the FAA and FDOT see and that is why he received the award from the FAA.

Chuck Brainerd said this Board should have a vote. They work hard and are unpaid. It is important for people to talk about the airport issues and work together.

Commissioner Puckett said everyone should keep in mind that this is a very small airport with a limited amount of land. He thinks the only corporate hangar space is by the ARFF station. This would make a nice executive airport.

Sandy Bondar asked that the meeting minutes be on the airport webpage. Chairman Lewis said they are there now.

Jon Clark asked if a representative from SunAir Aviation was at the meeting. He expressed a concern about the high cost of fuel. He has heard they are very rigid on the price of fuel. Brian Sapp from SunAir Aviation said they offer friendly service and competitive fuel prices. They have good equipment and keep their facilities up nicely. Chairman Lewis noted that the price the FBO charges for fuel is a business decision that has to be based on his cost.

He must be able to make a profit in order to stay in business.

John Balow said he owns a condo hangar. AM Weller has treated him well. He finds the airport to be friendly except for the gates. It seems the AM Weller and this group each want to go in different directions. He asked how it will be possible to get everyone on the same page. Chairman Lewis said the situation with AM Weller has evolved to the point that everybody is unhappy. Some people have even suggested abolishing the manager position, hiring a secretary to sit in the office and then letting the Board and Commission run the airport. CM Evans said AM Weller works for the city manager. If he is not able to get the response that he needs, then he takes care of it. It does not go to the Airport Advisory Board or the City Commission. All employees work for him and that is his responsibility. Making sure the issues from this meeting are addressed falls on his shoulders. He has an expectation that there will be a change in the customer service provided on the airport.

Commissioner Puckett noted that this five member board is appointed by the City Commission. When you talk to them, it is like speaking to the Commission.

Allen Dunlap said he is sure that the Board members will be receiving many phone calls and e-mails from people with concerns about the airport. He asked everyone to remember that all e-mails sent to city representatives are public records and encouraged people to think before they type.

### **Project Update**

Chairman Lewis stated that Airport Manager Weller is the best person to provide this information. Since he is not in attendance, they will table this item until the next meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Lewis called to adjourn the meeting. Clive Ure seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.

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Chairman

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Secretary