

**CURRITUCK COUNTY
AIRPORT ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF
May 12, 2009**

A special meeting of the CCAAB was held on May 12, 2009, at the Terminal Building Conference Room. Members present: Chairman Jim Winebarger, Gary Bryan, Marion Gilbert, Denise Hall, Ed Ish, Dave Messina, and John Snowden. Also present: Commissioner John Rorer. Guests: Ike McRee, County Attorney, Eric Weatherly, County Engineer, and Peter Bishop, Economic Development Director.

1. **Call to Order** – Chairman Winebarger called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. **Agenda** – Chairman Winebarger noted that, since this was a special meeting to hear a report from the County Attorney and to discuss and possibly take action on that report, there would be no comments from the floor. Members were instructed to request to be recognized and the plan was to go around the table and give every member an opportunity to comment.
3. **Presentation – Attorney McRee** – The Chairman recognized Mr. McRee who in turn introduced Mr. Weatherly and Mr. Bishop. He requested that, with the Chair's permission, Mr. Weatherly would bring the Board up to date on arrangements that had been put in place following the resignation of the Airport Manager.

Mr. McRee first corrected some misinformation being circulated as a result of news articles. Regarding unleased spaces in the new hangar building C, that building was not available for lease until after February 20, 2009, when the certificate of occupancy was received. The possibility of three other hangars which may have been available for lease had been investigated, and some rental income had been derived.

Mr. McRee related the history which precipitated the April 9 visit to the airport by himself and his paralegal. He reviewed the time line from November 5, 2008, to April 9, 2009, regarding the Board of Commissioners' approval of revised hangar leases and new hangar rental fees, and related his findings as a result of his on-site visit. New leases, with the exception of a couple, had been mailed and some had been executed and returned. Accompanying cover letters related any delinquent fees owed according to records provided to him and those of the Finance Office. Those letters offered the recipients the opportunity to present records showing any discrepancies, and, as a result, adjustments had been made and some fees collected. There has been a cooperative effort to get the airport back on a sound business footing so operations may continue. He felt positive about the progress being made. He offered the reminder that the airport is public property and, as such, must to be treated differently than private property. Leases and agreements must be adhered to.

Mr. Weatherly related the fuel reports would be generated from Public Works. Fuel prices were being set utilizing averages retrieved from AIRNAV and with the recommendation of the County Manager. The fuel truck price was 30 cents higher than Jet A but was not breaking even with the \$1,000/mo lease fee. He had met with the three linemen and was planning to put into effect several suggestions and requests from them. He reported that the March 2005 fuel leak issue had been

corrected, and recent notification from the State indicated no further action was necessary. There were plans to re-key Hangar Buildings A & B so one master key will work in all three hangar buildings. One master will be retained at the Airport and one at Public Works. Arrangements would be made to furnish new keys to each hangar tenant. The terminal building would also be re-keyed. All gates would be repaired and/or modified for increased security. Grants were still being pursued for additional funding for the parallel taxiway. Grant funding had been approved but it was unclear when it would be forthcoming due to the economy.

Mr. Snowden asked about aircraft occupying hangars without a lease as well as the authority of the Airport Manager to approve same. Mr. McRee related those situations were being addressed and management was not authorized to modify rules and regulations. Mr. Snowden questioned whether any of the actions would be considered criminal. Mr. McRee did not perceive that any of the individuals had any criminal intent.

Mr. Ish stressed the importance of implementing a procedure for regular surprise inspections of hangars to avoid irregularities from a safety and legal standpoint. Mr. McRee stated that the inspections were important from the County viewpoint of compliance to assure that the buildings were in good repair. He mentioned that the issue of providing electrical outlets to hangars was under discussion on the staff level.

Mr. Rorer expressed to Mr. Weatherly the need for technology upgrades for the convenience of pilots in order for them to be able to access the internet through their personal laptops.

Ms. Gilbert requested assurance that the County felt it had a handle on airport operations and finances. Mr. McRee was pleased with the progress of the past few weeks and was confident that no public funds had been mismanaged or misused. Ms. Gilbert requested a tour of the facilities which was scheduled for the next meeting. She also requested the hangar waiting list policy which was to be furnished. Mr. McRee stated that he is working on organizing the waiting list. For the time being, the County Attorney's office would be handling the leases.

Mr. Bryan asked how airport management was to be handled. Mr. Rorer stated that, although no decision had been made, several ideas had been mentioned: replace Airport Manager, contract with an FBO, or combine departments under Economic Development. Mr. McRee noted that, in the meantime, staff was capably performing the various duties.

Ms. Hall noted that the issues now being addressed (revised waiting list policy, monthly inspections, posted waiting list, etc.) were items that had been discussed and recommended years ago. Mr. Winebarger agreed.

Mr. Messina was critical of remarks denigrating the former Airport Manager's job performance. He also felt that the negative issues should not have been sensationalized in the media, especially since the positive issues were never mentioned.

Mr. Rorer also regretted that Mr. Leary had been pressured into resigning from his position. Although various recommendations had been forwarded to the Board of

Commissioners, apparently no action was ever taken. He, too, had been encouraging the resolution of the issues since coming to the Board.

Mr. Winebarger stated that the issues which had been brought forth were internal issues, and county staff should have been allowed to resolve the issues without publication and the resulting circus which put all concerned under negative scrutiny. Mr. McRee related that staff was moving forward with leases and other issues.

Ms. Gilbert asked for a recommendation from the Chairman as a result of the report which had been furnished by the County Attorney.

Chairman asked members to take a minute to review the report to see if there were any questions or concerns. He questioned whether there was a recommended revised waiting list policy. Mr. Ish and Ms. Hall affirmed that the Advisory Board had revised the policy and recommended approval by the Board of Commissioners, although the BOC had not taken action on it to date.

Mr. Snowden recommended an audit of the hangar leases and fuel sales from 2006 to date or overall Airport operations. Mr. McRee noted that Airport operations were included with the County audit; however, a report could be generated on hangar lease records from 2006 to date.

Ms. Hall moved to recommend to the Board of Commissioners that recommendations by the County Attorney be accepted, including an audit of hangar rentals and fuel sales. Mr. Snowden seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Chairman encouraged communication among the members. He mentioned that he would like to see the committees revived to identify issues for discussion. He would place this on the following regular meeting agenda and would request that Mr. Weatherly and County Manager Scanlon attend to discuss airport operations. Although he agreed the Airport should be run as a business, he looked forward to it being a friendly, welcoming Airport with the Advisory Board working as a team for the good of the Airport.

Mr. Messina requested that a chain of command be identified to ensure that recommendations are taken to the BOC. Mr. McRee suggested a document be sent from the Advisory Board Chairman to the BOC Chairman, with copy to the County Manager. As an Ex-officio member, Commissioner Rorer could advocate for the recommendations and assist with placing the items on the BOC agenda for action. This communication between Boards was to be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Ish requested that any information related to one member be relayed to all members.

Ms. Gilbert thanked Mr. Snowden for calling the special meeting. Mr. Ish thanked Mr. McRee for his investigation and report. Mr. McRee commended his paralegal, Eileen Wirth, for her efforts.

4. Adjourn

There being no further business, Ms. Hall moved to adjourn. Mr. Snowden seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.