



Bentonville Municipal Airport
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, March 7, 2024 @ 3:00 pm
City Hall – PC Chambers, 305 SW 4th Street
Bentonville, AR 72712
(& VIA ZOOM WEBINAR)

MINUTES

Call to Order, Welcome & Pledge of Allegiance – *Brian Baldwin, Chairman*

Brian Baldwin called the meeting to order via Zoom from California, as he was away on a family matter. Also via Zoom is Richard Ham and Robin Fields. Dennis Cherry was absent.

Those present for the meeting: Mark Slaughter, Debbie Griffin, Tyler Flagg, Rachel Hobert, Chris Maestri, Chad Cox, Kelly Leeds, and Beverly Shepherd and Sam Gruell. Austin Conner arrived late.

Mark Slaughter to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. Old Business:

- ❖ Approval of Minutes from February 1, 2024, meeting

Chairman Baldwin asked the board if there were any questions or comments regarding the minutes from our last meeting, and there were none.

Richard Ham made a motion to approve the minutes from our last meeting. Mark Slaughter gave a second. Motion passed.

- ❖ Geese Control Report – *Robin Fields and Maverick*

Robin Fields reported via Zoom today and gave his report, without Maverick this month. Robin said it seemed like the geese were about three or four weeks ahead of where they were last year, as far as their breeding. He saw geese pairing up about three weeks ago and has seen a lot of chasing each other, which leads him to believe that the breeding season is here. He is seeing several geese in the swamp area of the park just north of the airport, and this morning he ran off twenty geese from the airport lake. He will continue to be diligent about keeping the geese from nesting at the airport from this point forward. He said that they had some excitement this morning. As Maverick was out swimming after some geese, an eagle came out of a tree on the other side of the lake and buzzed Maverick a couple of times and buzzed Robin flying within about 20 feet of him. He got it on video. Robin said he has seen two eagles there at one time and has seen them there every winter. It seems a little bit late for the eagle to hang around, but he sees them there every year that he has been here. Robin has been trying to stay after the smaller birds, too, and he is not seeing as many of them right now in the grass area, nor coyotes in the last couple of

months. Game Composites has cleared off a wooded lot on the west side which will help keep the coyotes away and people from camping there. There were no concerns to be noted at this time.

II. New Business:

❖ Engineering and Construction Updates - *Chris Maestri – Garver Engineers*

Chris Maestri appeared before the committee to give his updates regarding projects on the airfield.

East Taxiway Extension – Ph. 1:

The new 1800' of taxiway that was built and finished last summer; we are in the final, final closeout stages of this project. They submitted the documentation to the FAA, and they received a few minor comments back from them that they will respond to, and then we will be able to make our final draw and completely close it out from a grant standpoint. It has already been closed out from a city standpoint as far as construction and engineering goes. They will get that back to Kathy at the FAA, and we will be good to go on this project.

Runway Widening:

This is on the west side of 18-36. They came to an agreement after providing a few options to Debbie Griffin, about funding and how they will use all the available grant money that we have from the FAA, and they are, with the option they chose, putting together an amendment request to the FAA to ask for more money on the original AIP grant received. He has already talked with Kathy at the FAA about that amendment request and his plan is to have a draft sent to Debbie Griffin tomorrow so that we can get it sent to Kathy next week. They did get some good news. There is a large project that has some AIP entitlement money that may be turning back upwards of a million dollars. So, Kathy said the quicker the better to get that amendment request in. So that is the #1 priority for him right now to get in Debbie Griffin's inbox. Chris said as a reminder that once they have that amendment request submitted and approved from the FAA, they will then submit an additional grant application to use a portion of the available bi-partisan infrastructure law AIG entitlements that we have. Right now, we have banked up three years' worth. We are not going to use all of that assuming the amendment gets fully approved, but they will be getting a second grant to cover Phase II of that project, even though we completed it as a single phase.

Hangar Development:

This project is funded by three (3) ADA grants currently. They had a final inspection with the City on Tuesday and everything went well. They have minor comments that they are coordinating with Sy-Con on to get picked up and also some minor comments on the As-Built documents that they submitted. They are working on the final pay estimates with Sy-Con, one for each grant, and they will have those to them for review, as well as a reconciliation change order that will get sent to Debbie for processing. That will let them move into the grant closeout phase for all three of the existing ADA grants.

Access Road:

Chris said that we did receive another 80/20 grant from the ADA for \$300,000.00 to cover a large portion of the cost of the access road project that will provide paved roadway access to those six (6) hangars locations. On that project right now, we are receiving comments from city review today. This is their deadline for the first round of comments, and we will get that package resubmitted next week. Assuming

there will be no more comments after the second period, we are still tracking for a mid-April time frame to get started on construction of the paved roadway on the west side.

East Taxiway – Phase II:

They are preparing their LSD package as well and will be submitting it to the city tomorrow for their review. It's already in the hands of the FAA and they have provided initial comments, but they are still waiting on further comments from their engineering specialist. They are targeting a bid opening in April, and then will move towards the normal FAA construction grant schedule, which is to submit an application in May and starting construction this fall. That's about 600' of taxiway extension on the south end.

Parking Apron:

Chris said that they are planning to design and construct an apron for the future Fuel Farm location, but in the immediate condition, an area to move some parking from the east apron. They have coordinated a couple of different budget options with Debbie Griffin, and they are negotiating on how much they want to design now versus design later and how they split up the construction costs and bid that strategically, so they are not overusing or spending too much. He will follow up with Debbie Griffin and they will determine how they want to move forward.

Brian Baldwin then mentioned that there was a gentleman in the audience, Mr. Craig Gourley. Brian said that he and Mr. Gourley have talked, and he is interested in helping us with parking, specifically aircraft parking, and how we strategize on that. He said that as we move forward, and as this gains a little more momentum, he told Chris that he will signal to the board that he believes we will want to put a sub-committee together. He said that we will have a smaller group to discuss between board meetings, what that might look like, what we need to do, what the future of parking around the airport could and should look like. That small group would bring recommendations back to the board for further discussion. I just wanted to note that Mr. Gourley has raised his hand to help us out with that.

With that, Chris said he was finished with his updates, and that if anyone had questions, he would be happy to answer them after the meeting.

❖ Updates from the Field – *Kelly Deeds*

Kelly Deeds appeared before the committee to give updates from the field. He said that he was virtual last month and has transitioned here now from Pittsburgh. This week is Women in Aviation week. They have a large event going on every day. Mr. Deeds said that one of the first things that happened to him when he got here in February was that the ladies approached me and said, "What are we doing"? He said, "What are we doing"? And they put together a great plan with an event on Saturday. They are touring high school kids through the facility and everything else today.

For those of you that don't know, the first week he was here, a plane broke a cable and went off the runway. Fortunately, Debbie Griffin was there, and they were able to be on site within minutes. The Fire Department did a great job on this. Everything has been cleaned up on site now, the plane is in storage, and is not moveable. It will be in storage probably for four or five months while they work through everything.

He said they had a meeting on Friday with a company called JSX Aviation out of Dallas. They approached ownership of the Fieldhouse last summer or fall. JSX used to be called JetSuite Aviation.

They are a Part 135 scheduled airline that the majors don't like very well because they come in and do a low-cost type of version. We had an initial meeting with them, and they are looking at Thaden Field as a possible point of contact to do shuttle service in and out of Dallas, and possibly the West Coast. They fly in and out of Monterrey and do things like that. They put a pin on a map and draw a 1000-mile circle and say this is where we can go from Bentonville. Mr. Deeds will try to keep us abreast of what is going on with that if they approach us again on that. He said they fly GRJ-145's. They convert them to a 30-seat configuration because that is the max they can go. It's all first-class seating, and high-speed wi-fi. In other words, you can Facetime on the airplane. They don't have all the requirements that the majors have on some things, and it is a lot more comfortable ride.

Another thing with the Women in Aviation week is that NPR was on site two days ago and interviewed a lot of the ladies that we have in the Fieldhouse, and that article went live today. If you want a link to that, he can provide that.

Fuel sales were up 62% in February over January and were about 30% over February of last year. That includes Jet A and 100 Low Lead both. I've added in aircraft rental. This gives you a good idea of the operations. We did 730 hours of aircraft rental last month. That's, on average, about 2100 operations that the Fieldhouse rental fleet has added to the operations of the field. That's continued to climb. We are on a trajectory this month for about 800 ops right now, depending on how the weather works out through the month. Instruction was also up about 25% for the month of February.

- ❖ City of Bentonville Updates – *Debbie Griffin, Airport Manager*
 - Update on West Side Hangars and Leases

Debbie Griffin said she will need some votes to move forward on the leases. She shared a PowerPoint presentation of visuals that were turned in yesterday to her. These are some of the conceptual drawings that were turned in and she wanted the board to see them as she is going to ask them to vote on this. There are five different hangars in this presentation. These are the Exhibit "B" that will go along with the hangar leases. There may be some minor modifications as they move through Large Scale Development (LSD) but Planning and Utilities will take care of any adjustments that are needed for that approval. Thank you to Sam Gruell for working to get all the hangar owners together to get these drawings together.

- Lease Approvals

The first vote that she needs is the lease approval for Samuel Gruell. Brian Baldwin asked if the board has any questions on these to please raise them as they are being presented and then he will ask for a motion to approve the lease as it is shared with them, a second to the motion, and then the vote. He asked for any questions on the first one for Samuel Gruell. There were none. ***Brian Baldwin made the motion to approve the first lease for Samuel Gruell for Debbie Griffin to take to City Council as shown. Mark Slaughter gave a second. All were in favor and the motion passed.***

The second one is going to be for Mark Marsiglio. We have previously approved his lease. This is the Exhibit "B" that we did not have when we approved his lease and she does need approval on that, so we can move forward with Planning, and she will also present this lease to City Council. ***There was a motion to approve by Richard Ham and a second by Rachel Hobert. All were in favor and the motion passed.***

The third one is for Adam Grosser. All that is required on this one is for the board to see the Exhibit "B", which Ms. Griffin showed to the board in the slides. The full packet will be presented when they start LSD and Planning will start any corrections that are needed at that time. The board previously approved

his lease. The board just needed the Exhibit "B" portion approved for Adam Grosser. ***Mark Slaughter made a motion to approve Exhibit "B" portion for Adam Grosser. Brian Baldwin gave a second to the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.***

No votes are needed on the other three leases, but Ms. Griffin gave updates which are as follows:

She has received Exhibit "B" from Tyler Flagg, but she has not received his signed lease yet. She has received Exhibit "B" from Matt Marrs, but she has not received his signed lease, but she has been in communication with him, but is delayed by probably just a few more days waiting on his LLC paperwork from the state. He should be able to bring those to the board at the first meeting for this board in April, and it would be the second meeting for the City Council in April to take that one. She has not had a response from Mark Rockwell, she is going to move on with the three that she has remaining items on. She would need approval from the board. She has discussed this with Legal. We have a March 30, 2024, deadline to receive all these materials or we will move on to the next person on lease list. Brian Baldwin confirmed that the opportunity to have a lease with the city on a hangar space has a deadline for submission of the items needed of March 30, 2024. If the items are not turned in by that date, they will move on to the next person on the lease list. She said yes. Brian Baldwin then said that we would perhaps need to revisit the list of people on the lease list or people that have a desire to enter into an agreement with the city and we would need to submit a recommendation to you sometime in the month of April. She said that was correct. She also applauded Sam Gruell. He is here and has started a LSD. It will reflect all six hangars, so it won't put us behind even if we must move to a different leasee. Brian Baldwin continued that with what we have just discussed, he confirmed with Debbie that she needed a vote from the board to okay the March 30, 2024, deadline date. She said again that she had talked with Legal about this and the deadline is fine. ***Richard Ham made a motion to institute the dates to make the next milestone of March 30, 2024, or we move on to the next leasee. Mark Slaughter gave a second. There were no questions. All were in favor and the motion passed.***

Chairman Baldwin then deviated from the agenda for Mayor Orman to speak before the board. Mayor Orman said that they do a State of the City and Volunteer recognition program at the Community Center on the first Thursday of April every year and this year it is on April 4th. She said that the board will be getting an invitation via email. There are no ticketed seats so there is not a charge as it is a public event. However, they send the invitations to our boards and commissions and all those that serve the city to try and get them seated first, because there are only so many seats for the presentation. They do some special awards and recognition, and some video and interview segments to give a good variety of information about things happening in the city. Mayor Orman said it is a much better presentation than if you just listen to the hour and a half read of all the accomplishments of every city department that she must officially give to the City Council. There is an email that you will be getting, and if you would just click in there and let us reserve a seat for you. Again, there is not a ticketed price to it, but it is important that they get your reservation for the seat, because they will be sending out other invites.

Brian Baldwin asked what time was this event happening? Mayor Orman responded that from 5:30 pm to 6:00 pm is networking and the program will begin right at 6:00 pm and the BHS Choir starts us off right at 6:00 pm. We try to do this in a timely manner.

- Update on State Grant

Chris Maestri mentioned the grant that we received from the State of Arkansas for the access road. I wanted to say thank you to Chad Cox for transportation to Little Rock. He has always been fantastic to take us back and forth to those meetings. She thinks that it is crucial that when we are receiving funding and grants from the state or the FAA, that we go and accept those in person and say thank you. Also, Ms. Griffin said that Chris Maestri did an excellent job at the meeting as well. Chris continues to represent

the City of Bentonville well at all the meetings that he has been a part of. Yesterday they had the opportunity to drive around the airport. There are just some little things that come up, but this is just the attention to detail that we get working with Chris Maestri. We are getting ready to start mowing at the airport in April and our Transportation Department had asked for a walk-around at the airport. Chris was gracious enough to come out and not only look at the mowing, but we also found some sandbags and some fencing and things that needed to be cleaned up and he is taking care of that as well. So, thank you for your continued work with us. He always represents us well.

- Update on SCCAAAE Conference

Brian Baldwin, Chris Maestri, and Debbie Griffin also had the opportunity to attend the SCCAAAE conference in Dallas. She asked Brian if he wanted to give any thoughts as an overview before I go into my report on that. Brian said it was fabulous, and he echoes Debbie's comments about Chris Maestri, Garver, and the representation that they have for us. They certainly keep us well connected with the other influencers that help us to move our business ahead at the airport. I would summarize for the board that we had a lot of good, quality time with those folks that I'm speaking of...those that influence financial decisions that can support our maintenance and our growth plan for the airport. From the FAA side, we had good meetings with two, three, and four of the top people, including the very highest level that has purview to what we are doing, and who has quite a bit of decision-making power. Also, our partners from the state were there and we had a lot of good times with them. He summarized by saying all of the entities that are surrounding us are very happy with where we are at, and they are very happy with how the airport is being run. If you can read into their eyes and their body language, they want us to continue to do great things. Our relationship with them is at a very strong point. One of the things that he places focus on is maintaining those relationships, but we are in really good shape. Debbie Griffin continued and said that it was a good conference. It is a lot of technical information, but the relationships, too, that you can make through that are incredible. She reminded them of Mayor Orman's invitation to the State of the City, and then she wanted to let the board know on the City Council agenda for Tuesday night will be the recommendation and approval of our Ex Officio seat for Beckie Seba. She said that when Mayor Orman considered this appointee, she looked at the City Council as a whole and several member of the City Council were willing to be part of the Airport Advisory Board, but we try to balance the number of boards and commissions that they are part of and two of the other ones that were interested were already serving on two additional boards, so we wanted to keep an even balance. Beckie Seba is looking forward to joining us and she should be in April for her first meeting. The items that we approved today, along with the state grant will be on the March 26th agenda for City Council. We will also have on that same agenda some grant funding that was remaining from the Runway Group and we are going to utilize those dollars to conduct an Economic Impact Study on Thaden Field, which will be tremendous for all of us to use. It will help with some justification of some grant opportunities that we have coming up, but she thinks it will also help tell our story to the city about the actual economic impact that Thaden and the municipal airport play for the city.

III. Other Business:

- ❖ Discussion regarding Projects and Priorities – Member Input – Brian Baldwin, Chairman

Brian Baldwin said we have a couple of things that are still floating out there. We are close to finalizing our Minimum Standards and Operational Procedures. That became really clear to him that we have got to get them finely detailed and then submitted for approval to the City Council because just about everyone he spoke to in Dallas said that we have got to get those in place. We are operating with some right now, but the way our airport has advanced, we have got to have a broader base of minimum standards. I think we are close to being there.

The other things talked about and had a sub-committee on was the Mission/Vision. He read what he had drafted for the vision. He said they would work on it, but he did try to capture all the thoughts from the sub-committee. This is what he wrote:

“The vision of Bentonville Airport is to be a gateway that will provide a safe and welcoming location for fly-in visitors and be an incredible home-base for local aviation users. Provide enjoyment for the broader community while delivering significant economic benefits and always reflecting a positive image for our city”.

He tried to craft it into one lengthy sentence, but in his heart, it captures what we are truly trying to do. Then he made a list of “How We will Accomplish Them”. I started with: Maintaining a safety mindset in everything we do, delivering a unique and positively memorable experience for visitors that utilize VBT as their point of entry into the city, etc. He didn’t go through all of them but would like the members to look at them and said he would appreciate any feedback on it. Number one to them was the necessity or need to educate people on the value that the airport brings. Also, city leaders as one of the targets. They are focused on a lot of things that go on in the city and he said that probably many of the city council members don’t dive deep into the day-to-day work of the airport or the operational benefit or the economic benefit is of the airport, so he feels like that we need to do a much better job of educating them. He also mentioned that we need to be good neighbors. We need to let them know what the airport means to the city and to the community, community involvement and engagement and the best utilization of the real estate that we do have on the property. Also, he put down designing specific metrics to measure progress against our vision. He just wanted to share that with all the board members. He asked the board members to go through it, redline it, send it back and hopefully, we will have a final version for us to review next month. Then, at some point, he would like to make a formal presentation to the City Council about how their airport is doing, where we are headed, where we are going, and basically the foundation for every decision that we make and propose to the city.

The other thing that is on Chairman Baldwin’s agenda is FAA hot topics. One of the things that popped into his mind was runway incursions. This one came up in more than one meeting that he was in, but runway incursions, vehicle, and pedestrian. He asks that from an operational and pilot perspective that we are all very diligent; that we don’t become guilty of one of those violations that could put anybody in harms way. Accidents happen, but I wanted to make you aware of what I was made aware of in terms of an FAA significant focus area.

The final item he had to share with the board is that he heard Springdale and Fayetteville reached national status in terms of airport classification. Debbie Griffin said she heard the same thing. Chairman Baldwin said that will continue to be our goal this year. We have line of sight to a few of the metrics that we are not meeting that we can and will meet. There are a couple of them that have a few barriers for us, possible international flights and/or flight plan operations. We are only in March right now; we’ve got plenty of time between now and November. Debbie said that last year we were close. She said we’ve gotten our aircraft count up and we are one jet away from meeting that goal. There are two categories we need to improve our numbers in order to reach that status. It might be worth having another sub-committee meeting on that, and bring in Craig Gourley and some others that can advise on how we can get those two categories up. Mr. Baldwin like that idea and said the basic funding that we receive from the FAA goes up at least 2.5 times, if he recalls that correctly. Mr. Maestri said that was correct. Over the last couple of years it would have taken us from the 290 range to the 868.50 range.

Mr. Baldwin now asked if there were any questions about what he said and/or is there anything that the board wants to bring up. Mark Slaughter said that Dennis Cherry, Rachel Hobert and himself went to a planned Bentonville meeting on the 26th of February. It was a session that was supposed to talk about

finding a better way to change building codes. They opened it up to the room, and it was full of builders, developers, etc., and Dennis led it and did a great job. We wanted to get across that our airport is here and we try to be friendly with everyone, but you all need to understand, too. We had a great discussion about how to make people more aware of the airport and what good it does do. It was an interesting meeting and everyone else started talking after Dennis broke the ice.

Richard Ham said, JSX, he just so happened to do some consulting that had to do with that area, and if you haven't seen what JSX did in Dallas, that kind of opportunity would be quite a boon. In fact, they have made such an impact at Love Field that both Southwest and American have filed a protest against them. They were operating under a very narrow interpretation both in the security requirements and the FAA requirements for scheduled carries, as a 135 carrier. His point is they have very competitive pricing, very highly rated, and very good experience for customers. And they go to ten or twelve places from Dallas now, including one international location. It would be quite a boon if Bentonville was able to get something like that. The second thing was that he asked Debbie if anyone from Swarm Arrow contacted anyone from the city? The reason he asks is that they could just be doing manufacturing, but these +55 sizes, large platform UAS. Some of them require runways, so maybe they are going to build and truck them out or build somewhere else. I just wondered if they had contacted the city? Ms. Griffin said they did contact the city. They also worked through the Chamber. When they contacted the city, it was an undisclosed manufacturer or company and the requirements that they were needing, we could not meet them. That was the acreage, and access to our runway. We did not have the space. Also, they talked to private entities as well, and they did not have the space that surrounds our airport to support that manufacturing company as well. She wishes we could have. She says that she thinks that will be located in Northwest Arkansas, but it just won't be in Bentonville. Brian Baldwin and others had read that it could be Rogers.

Chairman Baldwin asked if there were others in our audience that might have questions that the board might answer. Ms. Griffin said that Sam Gruell was going to offer some comments. Mr. Gruell just wanted to thank the board for the support of the hangar project. He said they are out there doing core drilling for Geotech and said it's nice to see actual equipment on site and getting ready to build hangars. He said that they submitted everything for LSD today, so it will be going to Pre-App meeting next Wednesday. One issue that has come up is where the gates should go? He just wanted us to put it on our radar, but this development is kind of unique because the driveways do not directly connect to any of the taxiways. The location gate has been discussed in different areas. One is between the taxiway where it meets the road in a T-shape there so that hangar owners could potentially get to the backside of their hangars if they need to park there inside the hangar, or blocking off the road where the access road leaves the parking lot. He has been in communication with a lot of the lease holders and there seems to be a strong majority is that everyone wants to see if there is some way to put that at the end of that taxiway to avoid cars getting on the taxiway. If we block up that whole area, it will keep people from being able to access the general area versus the taxiway. If the gate is going to go there, we need to show a driveway connecting to that taxiway. Brian Baldwin asked Debbie Griffin if this is something that can be discussed and covered at the meeting next week. Ms. Griffin said that is something that Garver will work out. It should not be part of his LSD meeting, but we will make sure we take that into consideration when we put the fence and the gate in, which will be the last thing that is installed after all the hangars have been built. She said they will make sure they listen to them and get it where it needs to be. The purpose of the gate is to make sure that you have security to your areas and your planes, but also so people can't go down that taxiway and get on the runway. Mr. Gruell finished up that the exciting thing to him is that all six hangar owners have agreed to work together, at least verbally. He said that they are still working out the contractual parts of all that, but he thinks that is a huge benefit and it's nice to see it moving forward.

IV. Closing:

❖ Schedule AAB Meeting for

Proposed Meeting Date and Time: Thursday, April 4, 2024 @ 3:00 pm

Location: Thaden Fieldhouse – 2205 SW “I” Street, Bentonville, AR

Brian asked the members that were still there if they would be able to attend on this date. Richard Ham, Marc Slaughter, Brian Baldwin, and Debbie Griffin all said the date was fine.

❖ Motion to Adjourn:

Mark Slaughter made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Richard Ham gave a second. All were in favor. Motion passed.

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Project Task	East Taxiway Extension (South) (FAA Grant)						
	Runway 18-36 Widening (FAA Grant)						
	VBT Hangar Development (ADA Grants)						
	VBT E. Taxiway Ext. (Phase 2) (FAA Grant)						
	VBT Hangar Access Road (ADA Grant)						
	VBT Parking Apron (Fuel Farm) (ADA Grants)						
Site Investigations							4/1/2024
Conceptual Meeting w/ City							4/3/2024
Preliminary Design							4/1/2024
Preliminary Design Review							5/31/2024
Final Design					3/11/2024		6/15/2024
Final Design Review				3/31/2024	2/19/2024		7/15/2024
Bidding				4/18/2024			8/15/2024
Grant Award				7/15/2024			
Construction Contract				8/1/2024	4/1/2024		9/15/2024
Preconstruction				8/15/2024	4/9/2024		10/1/2024
Construction Start				9/1/2024	4/15/2024		10/15/2024
Construction Complete			3/5/2024	11/30/2024	5/31/2024		12/15/2024
Grant Closeout	1/26/2024	4/30/2024	4/15/2024	12/31/2024	7/31/2024		1/31/2025

