

**Airport Advisory Board Minutes
May 11, 2023 5:30pm
Airport Administration Building
8807 Airport Boulevard
Leesburg, Florida**

Attendance: Darel Craine
Joel Hargis
Marvin King
Byron Oldham
Bo Wroten

Call to Order

Chairman Bo Wroten called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Joel Hargis gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes from April 13, 2023

Joel Hargis asked for a correction to the minutes. On page 3 paragraphs eight and nine there are references to runway 1/3 and 3/1. He would like those descriptions corrected to read 13 and 31. That is how pilots know and refer to these areas.

Joel Hargis made a motion to accept the minutes with the corrections noted. Marvin King seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Byron Oldham arrived at 5:33pm

Project Update

FY 2022 Hangar Design: Dan Nickols from GAI said this project is with the City's DRC (Development Review Committee). Chairman Wroten asked for the timeline. Airport Manager (AM) Dean said the DRC group is primarily a review by the City utility departments. She noted that they met in advance with the various utility directors to help determine the best plan for the utilities in the project area since this phase covers the stormwater modification, utility relocation, site work and asphalt. This official review by DRC is more of a formality since the plan design was based on their input. The official timeline allows 30 days for DRC review but she has asked them to fast track it. Once it is OK'd by DRC it will go to Procurement and then go out to bid. It will be advertised for bid for 45 days. Dan Nickols said he would estimate that it will take six weeks to go through DRC and Procurement and then it will be out to bid for 45 days so it will probably be about 12 weeks for the total process.

AM Dean said she does have some good news on this project. As the Board is aware this project was designated as the highest priority so the design was done using 100%

airport cash. It is now entering the construction phase and she has been advised by FDOT that the airport has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant, which is based on the construction cost estimate. She will take that grant to the City Commission for approval at the May 22nd meeting. Once the bids are received and a contractor is selected, they will be able to move forward. She can go back to FDOT and request additional funding if needed based on the bid.

Wildlife Hazard Assessment: Dan Nickols from GAI said they are nine months into the twelve-month study. At the end of the year-long observation period they will put together a Wildlife Management Plan for submission to the FAA. Chairman Wroten asked if we need to keep this project on the agenda for review every month if everything is basically the same. AM Dean said she thinks it should be left on the agenda with the understanding that we will only discuss it if there are changes or additional information the Board needs to be aware of.

Fuel Farm: Dan Nickols from GAI said they are close to wrapping up the schematic design. Once the design is complete, they will review it with AM Design and move forward from there.

Taxiways Alpha & Delta Rehab Design: Dan Nickols said the grant was approved and they have received the Notice to Proceed from the City. The surveyors have been on site this week and finished up today. The geo tech is scheduled for the end of the month. They have started working on the schematic drawings.

Chairman Wroten asked if there is a timeframe for when they may break ground. AM Dean said she had a Zoom meeting with the FAA on this issue. The FAA had the construction phase of this project in 2025. They have agreed to move it forward so it can start in 24.

Veterans Road Infrastructure Design/Construction: Dan Nickols from GAI said they met with AM Dean a couple weeks ago to review the 50% design. There were no major changes. They are currently working with St. Johns on permits and working with the FAA on their requirements as they work towards the final design. Once the design is done it will go to the City's DRC for review and then to Procurement to be sent out to bid. Chairman Wroten asked for an estimate of when it may go to bid. Dan Nickols said he would estimate about 90 days or so.

Chairman Wroten asked AM Dean if she has heard from Chris Curry on his lease. AM Dean said she has not, but she continues to reach out him.

Airport Manager Update

- City Commission – Airport Impacts/Issues

AM Dean said she has no City Commission updates other than the hangar project grant that she has on the May 22nd agenda that was discussed previously.

Proposed Environmental Assessment Follow-Up

AM Dean said at the last meeting the Board discussed having an Environmental Assessment (EA) done for the quadrant south of the fire station. The Board had requested more information on the process. She provided members with a copy of the assessment that was done for the Seaplane Ramp project to give everyone an idea of what an EA entails.

Chairman Wroten said it looks like some of the area we are talking about doing now was covered by this EA. AM Dean said if it was, the study would be too old to use now and would have to be redone. Darel Craine noted the information could be useful to whoever does the new study.

Chairman Wroten asked if they need to make a motion and also asked if the cost is still estimated to be between \$150,000 and \$180,000. AM Dean said Jack Thompson from GAI provided that as a ballpark estimate and she believes it is good.

Darel Craine said without the land in question there is nowhere else to build. He thinks it is somewhat of a no brainer to move forward with this. Chairman Wroten said he agrees. Joel Hargis this is a necessary first step so we can find out what it will cost to develop the area.

Chairman Wroten said the EA for the Seaplane Ramp shows the mitigation cost was \$500,000. He's wondering if this area will be the same or possibly less since it is further from the lake. AM Dean said if the airport had strictly mitigated the damage by buying wetland credits it would have cost about \$500,000. However, we were able to provide 75 acres of wetlands from property the City had in Okahumpka in exchange for developing the three acres on the airport instead of paying the cost of wetland credits.

Joel Hargis asked if the entire area is considered wetland. AM Dean said yes. There are different types of wetlands and the study will determine which classifications are in this particular area. Some are more expensive to mitigate than others.

Chairman Wroten asked for public comment. Alan Reisman said it makes sense to develop this area next.

Byron Oldham said it seems to make sense to target this area. Marvin King said if there is a blue print for this to help make these decisions, he would be amenable to seeing that. Chairman Wroten said the Seaplane Ramp EA is about the closest thing you will find to that.

Darel Craine made a motion to move forward with an Environment Study on the 60 ± acres. Bryon Oldham seconded the motion.

Alan Reisman asked if this item will come back to the Board when the actual cost is determined. AM Dean said this will not go to bid. The engineers we currently have

under a continuing services contract can handle this so the price will be a set amount. Chairman Wroten said he can add that to the motion. If the price is too high, they may want to reconsider doing it.

Chairman Wroten amended the motion to add that the cost of the study shall not exceed \$180,000. Joel Hargis moved to approve the amended motion and Byron Oldham seconded it. The amended motion was approved unanimously. The original motion was voted on and approved unanimously.

FDOT Vertiport Report Follow-Up

AM Dean said at the last meeting there was a discussion regarding vertiports. In relation to that discussion, she provided the Board members with a copy of the FDOT "Advanced Air Mobility Planning Report". This is the study she mentioned at the last meeting that our airport was included in as a volunteer participant. She noted that page 13 shows all the areas where vertiport development is "discouraged". This actually means these areas would be discouraged for use by a *non-airport sponsor*. Since we are an airport-sponsor, we could lease land to someone for a vertiport operation.

AM Dean said Jack Thompson from GAI has advised that based on conferences he has attended recently where this topic has been discussed, the technology for this is not that far along. Dan Nickols from GAI said he is not aware of any actual vertiport operations. There is a company at the Dunnellon airport that is working on a prototype.

Joel Hargis asked what the advantage is for the Leesburg Airport to support a vertiport. Byron Oldham said one of the main reasons would be jobs. Every large aviation company in the world is working on building a VTO aircraft along with mobility companies and auto makers. It is an extremely burgeoning space and he believes this is the future of air traffic. It might be 10 or 20 years away but we have an opportunity to get in on this. He would compare this to the opportunity Leesburg had to get the Regal boat company here several years ago. We lost that to Orlando and it has created a tremendous number of jobs there. If we look into this, we could possibly attract some blue-chip companies here to work on this technology.

Joel Hargis asked if there is a cost for this. AM Dean said the first item to consider is that they would need space to lease and we are out of that until we look into the new areas that have already been discussed. Joel Hargis asked how much space they would need. Dan Nickols said that would depend on the company. The Dunnellon tenant he mentioned is currently working out of 60x60 hangar.

Darel Craine asked if you take out the area that we are looking at to do the EA on, how many other acres of land are available on the airport. AM Dean said the estimate is there are about 17 acres on the south side by runway 13 that are dry. The rest of that section is wet. She would guess that the total area is about 120 acres. She noted that there is no infrastructure on that side and that St. John's has a perpetual easement that allows them to flood that entire side of the airport.

Byron Oldham said we do not necessarily need to bear the burden of the expense to install a vertiport. We just need to make it known that we are open to bringing in a contender. We have space available and we are right next to a large lake for test flights to fly over. He thinks we should explore it – not shoulder the cost to make it happen.

Darel Craine asked Byron Oldham if he had an estimate of how much acreage a company would need. Byron Oldham said probably not much to start with – just some space for engineers to work on test models. For a company to come to do testing it may only need five acres or so. The area on the east side that we are considering for the wetland study might work.

Joel Hargis asked what is needed from the Board now. Chairman Wroten said it is just a discussion item. Byron Oldham said we need to keep our finger on the pulse of this technology. AM Dean said she can inquire with FDOT to find out what the next step is in their process and see if that could help this effort. Darel Craine asked who at the City works on new business development now. Byron Oldham mentioned the LEAD economic group that the City has partnered with. He also said there is a Vertical Flight Society that he would be happy to reach out to on the airport's behalf. Chairman Wroten noted the Veterans Road property site will have lots available. Joel Hargis agreed that this is the future, he is just not sure when. It will happen. It could be 10 or even 30 years. Byron Oldham said a lot of technology companies are moving to Florida now because of our tax structure and land is a lot cheaper here than it is Miami or some of the other big cities.

There was no further discussion.

New Business

1st Lieutenant Craig McCullough introduced himself. He is the new commander of the Civil Air Patrol 's Leesburg Squadron. He took over about two months ago. He wants the squadron to be more active at airport. He plans to attend these meetings so he has a better idea of what is happening. One of his goals it to be more involved and build relationships with others at the airport.

Adjournment

Darel Craine made a motion to adjourn.

Byron Oldham seconded the motion to adjourn and the meeting adjourned at 6:10pm.

Byron Oldham
Chairman Vice-Chairman

P. Hester
Recorder