

VERO BEACH AIRPORT COMMISSION MINUTES
Friday, January 19, 2024 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida

PRESENT: Chairman, Louis (Buck) Vocelle; Vice Chairman, Arthur Hodge; Members: Carlos Halcomb, Carole Jean Jordan, Alternate Member, Philip Canal, and Alternate Member, Dr. Stephen Kopley **Also Present:** Airport Director Todd Scher; City Attorney, John Turner and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

Unexcused Absence: Joseph “Danny” Markford

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called today’s meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) April 21, 2023 – Regular

Mr. Canal stated that on page 4 in the second paragraph where it refers to “Part 31”, it should be “Part 139”.

Mr. Halcomb made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2023, regular Airport Commission meeting as corrected. Mrs. Jordan seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B) October 20, 2023 – Regular Meeting and Joint Airport Planning Advisory Committee (APAC) Meeting

Mr. Canal said on page 7 in the fourth paragraph where it mentions “Alternate Aircraft Association”, it should be “Experimental Aircraft Association” and further down in the seventh paragraph, “FFA” should be “FAA”.

Mr. Halcomb made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2023, regular Airport Commission meeting and Joint Airport Planning Advisory Committee Meeting with the two (2) corrections made. Mrs. Jordan seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, explained that he will conduct the election of Chairman and then he will turn the meeting over to the elected Chairman to conduct the election of Vice-Chairman.

A) Chairman

Mr. Turner opened the floor for nominations for Chairman of the Airport Commission.

Mr. Hodge nominated Mr. Louis (Buck) Vocelle for Chairman of the Airport Commission.

Mr. Vocelle nominated Mr. Carlos Halcomb for Chairman of the Airport Commission.

Mrs. Jordan asked since Mr. Vocelle nominated Mr. Halcomb does that mean he does not want to serve as Chairman.

Mr. Vocelle stated that he has held the Chairman position for many years and he feels that it is time for someone else to take over.

Mr. Hodge said he would like to withdraw his nomination for Mr. Vocelle.

Mr. Turner announced that the nomination for Mr. Vocelle had been withdrawn.

With no other nominations, the motion was seconded and Mr. Carlos Halcomb was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Airport Commission.

B) Vice-Chairman

Mr. Halcomb opened the floor for nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Vocelle nominated Mr. Arthur Hodge for Vice-Chairman of the Airport Commission. Mrs. Jordan seconded the nomination.

With no other nominations, Mr. Arthur Hodge was unanimously elected as Vice-Chairman of the Airport Commission.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Halcomb opened and closed public comment with no one wishing to be heard.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Approve Joint Meeting of Airport Commission and Airport Planning Advisory Committee (APAC) – March 18th

Mr. Halcomb stated that they were asked to discuss and approve a joint meeting between the Airport Commission and the APAC scheduled for March 18, 2024. He asked the Commission members if they had any comments regarding this meeting.

With no objections, Mrs. Jordan made a motion to approve the date of March 18, 2024, for a joint meeting with the APAC. Mr. Vocelle seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

6. OLD BUSINESS

None

7. AIRPORT DIRECTOR'S MATTERS

A) Airport Director's Report & Project Key

Mr. Todd Scher, Airport Director, stated that the Airport is working on the Master Plan, and the joint meeting with the Airport Commission and APAC will be on March 18, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in the City Hall, Council Chambers. There will also be a public outreach meeting at the Community Center with the consultants and Airport staff to answer questions later that same afternoon. He stated that the Master Plan working papers 1 through 5 have been completed and they are available on the website at *Vrbmasterplan.com*. He said they are also working on the Master Stormwater Drainage Plan. Surveys are being done to identify the outflow areas and the various structures associated with the drainage. The Taxiway B Rehabilitation Project has been designed and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) funding is in place. They are expecting to receive the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) funding in the next few months so they can get construction underway this summer. He explained that they have a Resolution to accept the FDOT funding for the Environmental Assessment and Design for the Taxiway B Extension Project. The FAA will not participate in this portion of the project so it will all be FDOT. He said another project is to replace the emergency generator for the Terminal Building. It will run on natural gas and will power the entire building. They are waiting for the hardware to be delivered and the generator unit should be delivered in March. He said the new wayfinding signage will be going up around the Airport very soon. The signs will either be replaced, refreshed, or added at 13 locations around the Airport. They also asked the FAA to consider funding a Fiber Optic Communications Project to connect all of their security elements to the central server, but the FAA determined that it did not fit into their funding. They will contact FDOT to see if they would fund this project.

B) Update on Airport Leasing Team Activities

Mr. Scher stated that the Airport leasing team is working on 14 or 15 leasing and property management issues, which include new building leases, new property leases for development, lease assignments, license agreements, and access agreements. They are also doing lease compliance inspections with their established tenants to make sure they are maintaining the buildings according to their leases. They have done several so far and the tenants have been very responsive.

Mr. Vocelle asked if that included their insurance requirements on the lease.

Mr. Scher replied yes. He said the insurance is a huge issue right now. They are working on potential solutions and they have talked with a lot of other Airports to see if they are experiencing the same things. He said they are about ready to make a recommendation on the best solution and then they will have a workshop with City Council to get their approval. Hopefully, they can make some changes to their leasing policy that will help the tenants with their insurance.

C) Update on Breeze Airways

Mr. Scher reported that over 30,000 passengers flew on Breeze Airways in November and December. Overall everything went well, but occasionally there was some traffic congestion as passengers were being picked up and dropped off.

Mr. Halcomb commented that you can see it in the parking lots and the overflow parking.

Mr. Scher said the overflow parking southeast of the tower had over 180 cars in it at the peak of the holiday season and the paved parking areas remain at a high capacity. The project to construct a baggage claim area and exit lane is taking a lot longer than he anticipated, but he is still hopeful they will have ground shuttles by late March or early April.

Mrs. Jordan asked if CJ Cannon's restaurant was okay with the parking.

Mr. Scher replied yes, they are okay. He explained that a lot of the short-term parking spaces are for CJ Cannon's, but it is still a common-use parking area. However, an occasional complaint is that people are parked in handicapped spaces for long periods of time. He said per Florida Statutes, the handicapped spaces do not have any time limits on them. Another project they will be looking at is expanding the parking and they might be able to add a few more handicap spaces. He explained that they are going to be installing some dedicated doors into the former CJ Cannon's banquet rooms, which will help alleviate the number of people going through CJ Cannon's lobby.

Mr. Scher reported that in 2023 Breeze Airways carried 85,728 people in 11 months. They are curious to see if there will be a change in the number of passengers if they are conducting the same amount of flights from January through April. He said on May 1st Breeze Airways is scheduled to reduce their flights to about 35 per month. The Islip, New York seasonal flight will expire in May, but due to its popularity, they might consider keeping it year-round. The Providence, Rhode Island flights are year-round just like White Plains, New York, and Hartford, Connecticut.

Mr. Scher said staff is reviewing parking lot improvements because they believe they are going to need an employee parking lot and a cell phone lot. He said next week they will be meeting with the consultant and the architect on the Airport's Terminal Area Improvement Project for the banquet rooms to discuss how they will be fund it because part of it will be by the FAA and part by FDOT.

Mr. Vocelle asked if they have looked into partnering with any other community development organizations, tourism groups, or the County for grants.

Mr. Scher replied not specifically but he can ask the Finance Department to see if anything is available. They already interact with Mrs. Helene Casteltine, Economic Development Director, because she is very knowledgeable on grants and opportunities, but they might be limited by the City's rules and regulations.

Mr. Halcomb asked if they have reached the point where passenger fees might be implemented as well.

Mr. Scher replied that they are working on the implementation of Passenger Facility Charges (PFCs). This is a learning experience because PFCs can only be used for specific projects.

Mr. Vocelle asked if they have looked into a more substantial boarding ramp that might be covered or enclosed.

Mr. Scher explained that when Breeze Airways came here they asked him if the Airport wanted to do the ground handling, provide customer service, provide ramp handling, etc. He told Breeze Airways that they just wanted to be the Airport and that Breeze Airways needed to hire a third party to provide all those services. That was a great decision he made because there is more than \$400,000 worth of equipment that the Airport would have had to purchase along with managing several more employees.

Mr. Scher reported that in 2023, 207,912 flights were recorded while the tower was open and additional flights after the tower was closed, but it was not a significant amount. In 2022 there were just over 148,000 flights so they are up from that figure, but not to their highest point in 1990 when they had over 270,000 operations.

Mrs. Jordan asked if the figures from 1990 were higher because the flight schools were much larger then.

Mr. Scher replied yes. He said most of that was flight training activity.

Mr. Canal asked if there had been any problems with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) handling the increased volume from Breeze Airways.

Mr. Scher replied that they staffed it adequately but they had some public input that the TSA does not open soon enough. There have been very few issues even with two (2) planes on the ground and they are screening two (2) different sets of passengers. The TSA would probably like to have another screening lane and checkpoint, so if they ever do a terminal expansion that would probably be included.

Mr. Scher stated that the Safety Management System (SMS) for Part 139 Airports is now an FAA requirement. He said that Mr. Brandon Dambeck, Airport Operations Manager, is working on the SMS and they are doing most of it in-house. They have submitted the handbook for SMS to their consultant, Hanson Professional Services, for their review. The next step is the implementation of the plan and the deadline for submitting the plan is in August. However, they will be submitting their plan in January or February.

Mr. Canal asked since Skyborne and probably even Piper Aircraft have their own SMS will the Airport's SMS integrate them or will it be over the top of them.

Mr. Scher said that he would find out how that would work and get back to them.

Mr. Scher reported that the Customs Border Patrol Facility at Corporate Air is under construction. He said the Airport staff is coordinating another 5k run on the Airport runway for the Chamber of Commerce. Also, the 2024 Vero Beach Airshow is about 90 days out and the Airshow Committee is meeting every Tuesday. City Council approved the License Agreement and they sent information out to the Airport users and tenants so they know what the plans are and where there will be closures.

Mr. Canal asked if they were expecting any issues with Breeze Airways during the Airshow.

Mr. Scher replied that they have been communicating with Breeze Airways about the Airshow since November. The Airshow and the Airport are obligated to handle air carrier operations within the closures associated with an airshow. There is one (1) exception, when the Blue Angles are flying they do not stand down for anyone and he assumes it is the same for the Thunderbirds. He said the Airport can handle the aircraft with no problem, but they have no control over the traffic on the ground. He explained that Breeze Airways has a flight mid-day on that Friday, no flights on Saturday, and then they have a mid-morning and a late afternoon flight on Sunday. They have been working with Breeze Airways on their afternoon flight because the Blue Angles have the airfield until 4:30 p.m.

8. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Halcomb thanked the Commission members for their confidence in selecting him as Chairman. He said it is exciting that the Vero Beach Airport and the community are such a valued asset and taxpayers are not burdened by this facility. They appreciate the Airport and they have a well-managed team.

9. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mr. Hodge asked if there had been any changes with Elite Airlines.

Mr. Turner replied that they have not had any further dealings with them. They would be treated as any other public carrier who would request access to the Vero Beach Airport if they choose to come back here. He said they could land here, but using the facilities is different.

Mr. Hodge asked if there was any new information on Aviation Boulevard.

Mr. Scher said he is not familiar with what the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is doing but he knows they have had conversations with the City's Planning Director and the Public Works Director. As far as a timeline for improvements he does not know.

Mr. Turner stated they have made progress on the design for the intersection of Aviation Boulevard and US Highway 1. They understand that the MPO is going to recommend making an at-grade intersection with improvements, but it will not include an overpass.

Mr. Halcomb stated that there are plans for a 46-acre walking park, which will draw even more traffic to the area around the Airport. Hopefully, they will keep that concept in mind when they are considering the traffic flow.

Mr. Vocelle thanked the Commission members for allowing him to serve as the Chairman for the past several years. He considers it an honor and privilege.

10. CITY ATTORNEY MATTERS

Mr. Turner reported that an urgent matter came up and they had to go directly to City Council to obtain approval and direction for litigation against an organization. The organization is operating a business as a flight training organization at the Airport without approval or consent. They are gathering information on Top Wing Training Facility, but they don't know what type of company it is or who owns or runs it.

Mr. Vocelle asked where are they operating from.

Mr. Turner replied that they are at the Airport but he understands they are operating two (2) aircrafts and signing up students online. They have not communicated with City staff and their efforts to gather more information to get them to comply with the rules, regulations, and minimum standards.

Mrs. Jordan asked do they have a local business license.

Mr. Turner replied no, they do not. He said he would keep them up to date on this situation.

Mr. Canal reported that the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), Chapter 99, in Vero Beach conducts Young Eagle orientation flights for individuals ages 8 - 17. In December they flew 41 young people. It was a great turn out and the kids and parents loved it, so they will do it again in February.

Mr. Scher stated that it is a great initiative and it gives a lot of young people their first experience on and around a plane as well as flying a simulator.

Mrs. Jordan asked how can people sign up for it.

Mr. Canal explained that people can go to the EAA website and search for the Vero Beach, Florida registration, but they should sign up early.

Mr. Canal explained that he does not know anything about the Delta Propel program and he had the opportunity to talk with the gentleman who manages the program in Vero Beach along with Skyborne. He said this gentleman is willing to come to an Airport Commission meeting and give them a brief overview of how they are doing.

Mr. Halcomb said that would be great.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The Commission members reviewed the dates, times, and locations of their upcoming meetings.

The next meeting is a joint meeting with the APAC is scheduled for March 18, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in the City Hall, Council Chambers.

Mr. Hodge said there is another nonprofit event in the planning stages using Airport property on April 6, 2024. He was not sure if the Airport Commission had to review it, so it might be discussed at the March 18th meeting.

Mr. Scher said it would be up to the Chairman if he wanted to have it on the agenda.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

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