

Saint Johns County Airport Authority

Board Workshop
Northeast Florida Regional Airport (UST/KSGJ)

Airport Conference Center, Monday, February 26, 2024, 4:00 pm

Authority Board Members:

Board Chair: Reba Ludlow, Members: Michelle Cash-Chapman; Dennis Clarke; Jennifer Liotta; Robert Olson

Agency staff and Legal Counsel:

Jaime Topp, Courtney Pittman, Roxanne Buonsanto, Jeremiah Blocker, Chad Roberts

Members of the Public, including:

Andrew Passero, Matt Liotta, Jack Gorman, Sacha Martin, Jose Riera, Gary Courtland, Vinny Byers

Ms. Ludlow called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Ms. Ludlow noted that members of the public were invited to ask questions and offer comments throughout the workshop.

Mr. Blocker confirmed that the public's participation was welcomed at the discretion of the Board Chair. Also, since this is a "workshop" no board decisions will be made. However, deliberations made at this meeting are likely to result in specific items being placed on future regular meeting agendas.

Representative Event at Airport. Mr. Topp reviewed the plan to host a public event to showcase the Authority's long-range plans for the development and build-out of the airport. The event will be held for the edification of local, state, and federal elected officials, external stakeholders, and the public. A summary of the "Who, What, Where, Why, and How" of the Authority's vision would be provided.

Members of the Board, and staff, weighed in with considerable comments and productive suggestions. Mr. Roberts noted that the plan is the culmination of a board consensus reached at a previous meeting that the Authority should "swing for the fence" in terms of building out the airport infrastructure, which has lagged considerably behind the public's demand for access to

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the National Airspace System. Mr. Roberts also suggested that campaigning for the plan with the FAA, the Florida Department of Transportation, other state and federal agencies and legislators should begin as soon as possible.

Mr. Clarke offered the analogy that the package provided to the elected officials and the public would be equivalent to a “prospectus” offered by a private company issuing stock for the first time. The plan narrative, supported by financial projections, analysis of economic benefits, graphical and animated illustrations, and other features, is nothing less than a sales brochure for the Authority’s long-term vision.

Ms. Liotta agreed that the message needs to be broadcast soon. She also summarized a recent meeting she participated in with Saint Johns County officials, and that the county representatives pledged their full support and cooperation, particularly from the Office of Economic Development and the Office of Public Affairs.

Mr. Topp reported that he has a meeting scheduled with Ms. Joy Andrews, the County Administrator, to discuss the ways in which the Airport Authority and the County can collaborate for their mutual benefit.

Mr. Olson opined that perhaps the Representative Event can be co-hosted with the County, a suggestion that was enthusiastically endorsed by the participants.

Mr. Blocker suggested that, with the Board’s consent, which was granted, he collaborate with the County’s legal counsel to draft an Interlocal Agreement and place the item on the Authority’s March 11 board meeting agenda. The agreement will also be placed before the Board of County Commissioners for their approval.

A short discussion ensued about legislative lobbying strategies. Mr. Topp noted that the Florida Aviation Council acts in a lobbying capacity among other services. Mr. Blocker said that Ms. Ludlow, in her capacity as Board Chair, may appoint a board member to act as a liaison to the

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Board of County Commissioners. Ms. Ludlow agreed to initially assume that responsibility, like the role Commissioner Dean plays with respect to the Airport Authority.

Compass Point Open Items. Mr. Topp noted that the Authority had received proposals from two consultants to perform an appraisal of the parcel. Mr. Olson will be assisting Mr. Topp select the successful firm.

Historic Building Plan Progress. There was a consensus among the board members that the Authority would be happy to donate the buildings to the Hastings Historical Society, provided they assume the responsibility, and the cost, of removal and relocation. The board agreed to set a time limit for the removal of the buildings due to the imminent construction of the Compass Point hotel project. Mr. Holesko noted that the buildings need to be removed within six months, which would be about September 1, 2024.

Bid Schedule for T Hangars. Mr. Topp reported that the project was progressing on time, and the Advertisement for T-Hangars Improvements was attached for informational purposes.

Continuing work on HR Policy and Procedures. Mr. Blocker reported that the Authority has contacted the County's Human Resources Department for assistance in a particular personnel matter. Mr. Topp reported that he and Mr. Pittman recently visited Naples Airport for several reasons. Among other benefits from their visit, Naples management provided the Airport's HR policy and procedures as a benchmark for our Authority. Mr. Topp noted that Naples has about 140 employees. Mr. Topp also noted that the Authority would seek the services of an HR consultant to avoid adding to the current employee census.

Search for a permanent Executive Director. Ms. Cash-Chapman and Ms. Liotta were concerned that the topic of the Executive Director search was not included among the matters to be discussed at the Workshop. Back and forth discussion centered on whether the Authority should conduct the search in-house, versus hiring an executive recruiter, or a hybrid

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arrangement. The board members could not reach a consensus on that issue. Mr. Olson offered to share the credentials of four search firms that had previously been considered by the Authority.

Mr. Pittman pointed out that the Authority's Strategic Business Plan calls for the activation of a succession plan. Ms. Ludlow, and Mr. Clarke offered their opinions that, although Mr. Pittman is "Director of Operations" his advancement to Assistant Executive Director, and possibly Executive Director, would be a natural progression of his career and preclude the Authority from incurring the expense and effort to hire someone from outside of the current staff.

Mr. Courtland, an airport tenant, offered his opinion that the administrative organizational structure ought to be established before we recruit a permanent Executive Director from the outside.

Mr. Liotta, an airport tenant, suggested that the size of the Authority's staff warrants fewer, rather than more, management layers.

The Board's consensus was that updated job descriptions for the Executive Director and the Assistant Executive Director need to be updated and approved. The matter will appear on a future regular meeting agenda.

Tenant Surveys. Ms. Ludlow inquired as to the status of the recently conducted tenant surveys. Mr. Pittman noted that the surveys had been completed and were under review. Mr. Pittman plans to meet with as many tenants as possible to discuss their concerns.

Non-Aeronautical Use of Hangars. Ms. Liotta inquired as to what is being done to enforce tenants' non-compliance with the required aeronautical use of hangars. Mr. Topp noted that Mr. Clarke recently completed an analysis of T-Hangars, primarily to support the eventual standardization of T-Hangar leases and the application of the Consumer Price Index rent adjustment. Coincident to Mr. Clarke's findings was a physical inspection of each T-Hangar for the presence of automobiles, boats, and other non-aircraft. Only two hangars were found to be out of compliance and Mr. Topp reported that he would address the matter.

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Adjournment. There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Ludlow adjourned the meeting at 5:45 pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Dennis M Clarke, Secretary/Treasurer