

Habersham County Airport Commission

Work Session Minutes

June 5, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.
Habersham County Airport
1112 Airport Rd. Cornelia, GA 30531

The Habersham County Airport Commission held a work session on Monday, June 5, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. in the conference room in the Habersham County Airport, located at 1112 Airport Rd., Cornelia, GA 30531.

Members Present: Ken Schubring, D. Higgins, Andy Anderson, Chris Limbach

Members Absent: Justin Schapansky

Others Present: County Staff, Members of the Public and Media.

Call to Order: Ken Schubring called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Invocation and Pledge: D. Higgins gave the invocation and led the pledge of allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda: Motion by Andy Anderson, seconded by Chris Limbach, and voted unanimously to adopt the agenda as presented.

Topics of Discussion:

- **Review of proposed FY24 Airport Budget** – CFO Tim Sims attended the meeting to go over the proposed FY24 airport budget. Tim said that many of the questions submitted prior to this meeting were about items that were estimated during the transition of the county taking over the airport. Revenue was projected higher for FY23 due to the proposed hangar construction; since the county has not yet built the hangars, we did not receive that extra revenue. However, revenues for other items such as fuel, oil, fees, etc. have been higher than originally expected. The FY24 budget document provided includes FY23 YTD expenses through May as well as a “recommended” column. Capital projects have not yet been entered on the report: ROFA, grading improvement, runway overlay, terminal expansion, hangar site preparation, land acquisition phase 1 and obstruction removal phase 1 will be presented to the BOC this week for approval. D. Higgins wants the BOC to be aware that the FAA has certain requirements that we must adhere to, therefore these capital projects need to be covered. Tim explained that the ARPA cushion that was previously used to cover capital expenses to be reimbursed by FAA or GDOT has all be used; therefore, they will now have to be covered by the general fund while waiting for reimbursement. Will Regan told D. Higgins that he had emailed responses to most of D.’s questions at the end of last week. D. asked how Will could justify what he submitted for fuel sales? Will explained that it was projected based on a mid-year budget evaluation for FY23. He also explained that if fuel revenue does not come in as high as projected, neither would the expenditure for fuel, so those would balance out. D. Higgins asked if Tim could break fuel sales out by type – AvGas and Jet A, for both revenues and expenditures. The bid opening for the runway overlay project is in a couple of weeks and we will be able to get current estimates for that project then. D. Higgins said he was concerned that there is nothing currently in the capital projects column for improvements at the airport to make it better and more comfortable. Tim and Will explained that there was some money in non-vehicle parts, repair, and maintenance to do some minor things. Tim added that as the airport becomes more successful and continues to make money and increase their fund balance, more funds will be available for improvements.

- **Discussion of a public/private partnership for hangar construction** – Phil and Amanda with Lead Edge shared a document called Policies and Procedures for Private/Public Partnership, which they have used at other airports. Phil said the process starts with determining inventory, meaning available land areas where hangars can be built. That process was completed by Lead Edge last year. The document provides a structure for interested parties to move forward with the process. Once an interested party contacts the designated person, they have thirty days to sign a contract. There will still be FAA guidelines that apply. Ralph Taylor discussed the old ground leases that the county has had for many years and how there have been problems related to those leases. Phil Eberly explained that this document and set of procedures will help by having those and other issues settled up front. Phil also said that since we have already developed plans for the hangars, we could use the RFP process to have the interested party build that exact hangar. Ken agreed that the Airport Commission has spent a lot of time and money on developing plans and preparations for the hangars, so it makes more sense to use what we already have. Phil Eberly said this plan would be structured, but very flexible. He also explained that the process could look a little different for a maintenance hangar. Andy Anderson commented that from the commissioners' viewpoint based on prior issues with the ground leased hangars, it can be looked at it this way – If the county built the hangars, we would borrow the money and would have a long-term payment and would only receive the net return on rent. However, if we built the hangars using the private public partnership, the county would not have the debt to repay and could have rental revenue and would get the asset back after a specified time. The county would also be receiving ad valorem on the based planes as well as extra fuel sale revenue. Chris Limbach agreed that it would be a win-win. Andy Anderson stated that doing the private public partnership is the only form of guaranteed revenue the AC has discussed, related to the building of hangars, that is guaranteed income with little to no investment. Michelle Curcio asked to address the commission. She has requested previously to build a large hanger and would be interested in doing a ground lease to build a commercial hangar. She asked if ramp space, parking areas, etc. would be available. Phil explained that there would be enough space. However, Michelle or anyone else interested would be responsible for expanding their own ramp to the public ramp area. Ken Schubring recapped to say that the Airport Commission needs to work on a presentation for the BOC that they would be in favor of. We need to have a specific plan with the structure and lease available for the presentation. Will Regan said he will work on putting something together for the July meeting.
- **Boy Scouts of America Presentation – Aviation Explorer Post** – Stewart Swanson and two other representatives from the Boy Scouts of America attended the meeting to explain the Aviation Explorers program. The Northeast Georgia Council includes many counties, has 13,000 active scouts, and is in the top ten councils in the nation. The Explorers program provides career enablement for kids, and there are many other Explorer groups such as public safety, health care, fire services, etc. (The Habersham County Sheriff's office hosts a public safety post with the BSA.) Within the Aviation Explorer program, many aviation careers are studied, such as piloting, airport management, maintenance, etc. The program would be available for middle and high school kids (co-ed) ages 13-20. If approved, the Habersham County airport would be the first ever Aviation Explorer post in the region. The BSA has a very strong commitment to youth protection. All volunteers get mandatory training and there are many rules in place. The program would require 4 adult volunteers. Will Regan feels that there would be no problem getting twice that many volunteers to participate and help with the program. Meetings are typically twice per month, each covering a different topic. The Aviation program includes 82 potential meeting topics. The BSA covers the liability insurance for the program. D. Higgins asked what would be required of the Airport Commission to begin this program? Mr. Swanson replied that there is an MOU that would need approval by the Board of Commissioners. We would also be responsible for selecting and screening at least four adult volunteers,

including a committee chairman, two committee members, and an advisor. Explorer posts must also ensure that all participating adults complete their required youth protection training. The other requirements are general administrative tasks and providing the meeting space. The BSA has sent surveys to the high school, asking them to choose what career paths they are most interested in. Aviation was one of the top three. Those students would be invited to participate in the program. The Aviation Explorers is a stand-alone program and participants are not required to be scouts. Chris Limbach asked how many students would each class hold? Mr. Swanson replied that there would be 10-20 per class.

Adjournment:

The next meeting is Thursday, June 8, 2023 at 9am in the Executive Conference Room in the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA.

Motion by Andy Anderson, seconded by D. Higgins, and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m.



Ken Schubring, Chairman



Chris Limbach, Secretary