

Habersham County Airport Commission –

Work Session Minutes

October 12, 2023 9:00 a.m.

Habersham County Administration Building, Executive Conference Room

130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, Georgia 30523

The Habersham County Airport Commission held a work session on October 12, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in the Executive Conference Room of the Habersham County Administrative Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Present were Chairman Ken Schubring, Vice Chairman D. Higgins, Christopher Limbach, Justin Schapansky, Andy Anderson, Attorney Ralph Taylor, Airport Consultants Phil Eberly and Amanda Rostin, County Clerk Brandalin Carnes, members of staff, media and the public.

Vice Chairman Higgins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Chairman Schubring led the pledge.

Vice Chairman Higgins lead the invocation.

Adoption of Agenda

Motion by Vice Chairman Higgins, seconded Christopher Limbach and voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the agenda as presented.

Discussion of a public/private partnership for hangar construction

Attorney Ralph Taylor addressed the Airport Commission. At this time, the county funding construction of new hangars at the airport is not a viable option. The question now is how to move forward. The Airport Commission has discussed the possibility of providing a ground lease for private individuals to construct the needed hangars. Ralph has spoken with County Attorney Donnie Hunt, Airport Consultant Phil Eberly and Chief Financial Officer Tim Sims and they have determined doing this would necessitate issuing an RFP since government owned property is involved. Whoever enters these ground leases with the county would need to pay the fair market value of the ground lease and the term of the lease would be based on the financial investment that is incurred in the construction of the hangars. Drafting an RFP would require the Airport Commission to determine what parts of the airport they wish to be available for this purpose and the specifications of what they wish to see built. Discussion was had among the Airport Commissioners regarding what work has already been completed with previous failed RFP's that were put out for airport hangar construction and what still needs to be done.

Airport Consultant Phil Eberly provided the members of the Airport Commission with a Geometric Control Plan for the hangar site preparation and paving as well as a plan showing the proposed improvements to the airport. Referencing the Geometric Control Plan, he informed the Commission that they can do one of two things - either issue an RFP for the hangars to be built as shown on the plan, or issue an RFP for the area of the existing pavement that they wish to lease for the construction of the hangars and let respondents propose their own ideas of what they wish to build there. Mr. Eberly stated that he can put together a preliminary RFP for review by the Airport Commission at their November meeting. If they approve the RFP for release in December, they will want to give a little longer than the 30 days for proposal submissions in consideration of the holidays. He suggests six weeks. This

would put the timing for scoring the proposals as occurring around January. Lead Edge can score the proposals independently and then bring them to the Airport Commission for final review.

Mr. Higgins had several questions regarding the need for an RFP and the process in issuing one. Mr. Eberly informed the Commission that, in addition to being required by the FAA, the reason why an RFP is needed is so there will be set metrics used consistently with all interested individuals to determine who should get the opportunity to build. Ms. Rostin stated that respondents would be scored on factors such as how much the respondent is willing to pay for the ground lease, the value of the hangar that is built (as they revert back to the county), the amount of ad valorem tax the county could potentially receive from the planes in the hangars, etc. This gives them well defined metrics that are easy to score so they can justify why they chose one respondent over another and prevent a report of discrimination to the FAA. Mr. Sims informed the Airport Commission that, though the RFP's are only open for a set amount of time, the vendors/investors/contractors that submit proposals will be in a pool of qualified applicant that have been given a ranking based on how they scored. They would then be offered the pads when they come available in the order of their ranking. Mr. Eberly stated that chopping up the area into a greater number of smaller lots would result in limiting what could be put in said lots and thus limit the proposals that are submitted by respondents for the Airport Commissions consideration. It is better to put out the RFP for the four (4) 60x60 areas he suggests.

Mr. Limbach expressed that, though the county has an understandable desire to grow the airport through the construction of t-hangars, he feels that there is a greater need for box hangars on these ground leases. He knows for a fact that there would be interest in building box hangars on these lots, and that both he as well as Mr. Anderson would be putting in bids to do so. Discussion was had amongst the Airport Commission regarding the number and size of hangars that could logistically fit in the proposed area. Ms. Rostin wanted to remind the Airport Commissioners that Habersham County ranks #20 in the state for based aircraft. The current number of based aircraft at Habersham County is seventy-four (74). Adding two 10-unit t-hangars would put them at ninety-four (94) based aircraft, meaning they would be only six (6) planes away from being in the top 10 in Georgia. Mr. Eberly expounded on how the airport can be used as a metric for economic development in a community. A county's population ranking should roughly equate to it's based aircraft ranking. Based on this, the Habersham County airport is outperforming where it should be.

Mr. Limbach asked what kind of action would need to be taken on this item at the regular meeting? Mr. Eberly informed him that they need to request that Lead Edge put together a preliminary package with Attorney Taylor to present at the next Airport Commission meeting in November for review. This preliminary package would be based on four 60x60 areas to be offered for a ground lease.

- **Review/Discussion of Air Methods Revised Lease Agreement**

Mr. Higgins reminded everyone that Air Methods came to the Airport Commission asking for rights of first refusal to the hangar space in question, and that is when he noticed that the lease they are using for the hangar was basically the lease from the previous FBO, Blue Sky. Originally, Blue Sky was responsible for renting the hangar out. During the transition from the FBO to a County Airport Manager, the lease and terms within were continued with Air Methods the same as if Blue Sky had still been renting it to them. He felt that Air Methods needed to be using the same county lease agreement as everyone else. Other items of concern for Mr. Higgins were the amount Air Methods is paying for the lease, and the lack of compensation for a Connex they have sitting outside. Mr. Schubring asked if Air Methods paid for the buildout of the old FBO office? Mr. Sims was unsure, as that construction was done before his time as Chief Financial Officer for the county. Mr. Higgins stated it was his understanding that the work was done in-house by the county's Facilities Maintenance Department. Mr. Schubring felt that whether Air Methods had any financial stake involved in the buildout should be a factor in their decision

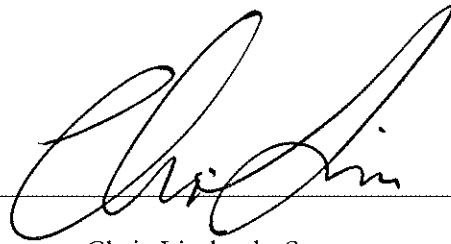
making. Attorney Taylor advised that they could switch Air Methods over to the new county hangar lease that everyone else is using. Mr. Higgins stated that while he has no objections to giving Air Methods the right of first refusal for the hangar, he feels that the county should be compensated for the fair market rate of value of the lease as well as the space that Air Methods uses outside for their maintenance shed. Questions were raised regarding whether Air Methods pays for the electricity that is being used by the hangar. Mr. Hall and Mr. Sims did not have that information readily available, though Mr. Hall stated that it does say in the lease agreement that Air Methods is supposed to pay for their share of utilities. Mr. Higgins would like for this to be verified, as there are three different meters on the building and the county side of the building has little that would need electricity. Mr. Hall measured Air Methods hangar space as being 2100 square feet. Based on research by Lead Edge, this would put the fair market rent as being between \$640-\$650 per month. Currently, they are paying around \$400 per month. The county generates revenue from its half of the building by charging the forest service for a place to store their vehicles. This generates about \$3,000 for six months of use. They also get \$100/night for the storage of a helicopter used by the forest service's fire suppression contractor. If they pay about \$800/month (he can't remember the exact figure) they get full access to unlimited storage of the helicopter for the month. Private individuals can also pay \$100/month to store vehicles as well. Mr. Schubring stated that he feels the item should be tabled, as there are several questions left to be answered.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Limbach, and voted unanimously (5-0) to adjourn the work session at 9:56 a.m.



D. Higgins Vice
~~Ken Schubring~~ Chairman



Chris Limbach, Secretary