

Habersham County Airport Commission

Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

Executive Conference Room

Habersham County Administration Building

130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523

The Habersham County Airport Commission held a regular meeting on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in the Executive conference room in the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA, 30523.

Members Present: D. Higgins, Andy Anderson, Lawrence Bridges, Chris Limbach

Members Absent: Justin Schapansky

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

Call to Order: D. Higgins called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

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

Adoption of Agenda: Motion by Andy Anderson, seconded by Lawrence Bridges, and voted 4-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

Public Comment: Doug McDonald addressed the commission. He began by saying that we need to encourage planes to come to our airport for fuel. "One of the things that are occurring across America is that airports are charging landing fees. That discourages major corporations from landing who take on huge amounts of fuel. And I guarantee you, their corporate staff checks what landing fees are. One of the things we have is our location, which is a tremendous advantage to going to Gainesville or Atlanta for fuel. So, I'd like to get you to reconsider landing fees. And you have disparity... you allow flight schools not to pay, you allow us local pilots not to pay, and I suppose if the FAA knew about it, they wouldn't appreciate it. ALPA discourages landing fees across the country. Mr. McDonald also asked where do we pay our \$300 a month on January 1st for the hangar? Patti McLarty informed him that letters with that information were sent out last week but explained to Mr. McDonald that payment can be made at the airport, at the Administration building, can be prepaid for several months, or a credit card can be kept on file and billed monthly. Mr. McDonald continued, "There are some questions as to what the pilots who have the 5-year extension on a 20-year contract are obligated to pay. Has that been determined? Patti informed him that the monthly rent on all the reverting hangars will be \$300 per month. Mr. McDonald replied that the old contract required a \$60 per year payment plus a \$1 per year payment. "I'm anxious not to violate the terms of that old contract, so I'd like some direction on how much to pay." Mr. McDonald also asked about the power bill. The owners of his hanger building have been paying Pat Noggle \$100 annually for their portion of the power bill. Mr. McDonald wants clarification on whether he needs to continue paying that. D Higgins informed Mr. McDonald that the county will begin paying the power bills. Mr. McDonald then said the new contracts require a pilot to have liability insurance on their airplane. "The government does not require that, either state or Federal. And I don't know if this commission intended for that to occur or not. I wonder how much real thought was given to it. The old contracts provide that the county will pay for liability insurance on the hangars. Therefore, there's no reason for a pilot to have insurance if they don't want it (those on the 25-year deal). I'd like some clarification on it. The county has approved the extensions on those 20-year contracts, but we have not yet received a signed copy." Patti told Mr. McDonald that a copy had been mailed with the payment letter, and that if he doesn't receive it within the week, she will be happy to e-mail it to him. Mr. McDonald asked if Patti would go ahead and email that to him and

she said she would. "The 31st is coming, so if we don't raise some of these issues before and know what to do, then we could easily be in violation, and we don't want to be." Bill Harden asked Mr. McDonald if he has never paid insurance on his airplane or hangar and Mr. McDonald replied "That's a personal issue, I don't care to answer. Honestly, I think any pilot who has an airplane ought to have liability insurance, let me say that, but I can't mandate that, nor do I think this commission should mandate it. A lot of pilots out there that don't want insurance, that have a small airplane, who don't fly very much, who really don't expose themselves to a lot of liability issues, is one of the freedoms we have in America, not to be regulated by the government on mandatory liability insurance. I cannot recall ever of my many years there at the airport, there ever being an issue over that, not that there isn't, but I've never known of a claim being filed against the county or a pilot or anything of that sort. We've had some crashes." Bill Harden said that at Williston, where he previously worked, they had a plane burn up in a hangar, which caused smoke damage to three other aircraft. Mr. McDonald said he agrees that there is exposure. "But you see, our extended 5-year deals do not require us to furnish proof of liability insurance to the airport manager or to the county. The new contracts do. I don't want there to be a disparity issue that causes a loss if these issues arise. I think this issue needs to be carefully addressed. Another issue, and I spoke to this before. There is a provision within these new lease contracts that allows the airport manager to cut locks off doors without notice and go into hangars. I think that is absolutely a due process denial issue. No government should be allowed to do that to private property. You say well, it says it does, and if you sign a lease agreement agreeing to it, they can, that may be true. But it needs to be addressed that the county cannot go into a hangar. There was only one time, when Phil Sutton was county manager and first got here. He wanted to look inside every hangar. That's been 11, 12, 15 years ago. It was met with lots of resistance. I don't know what the county's intentions are. The airport manager can talk about that, if he wants to, I don't know what his intentions are after the first of the year, and I hope there aren't any. Those are my comments, thank you very much. I don't know if this commission is going to provide a year-end report to the county commissioners like a lot of the departments do. I don't recall this commission has ever done that. I don't see it as necessary, but that may be something that is coming up. So, thank you all very much and Merry Christmas to you. Thank you for letting me speak."

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Chris Limbach, seconded by Andy Anderson, and voted 4-0 to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2024 regular meeting.

Financials: Habersham County Airport Financials dated November 30, 2024, were presented by CFO Tim Sims. Year to date represents 41.67% of the fiscal year, therefore expenditures should be less than or equal to 41.67% and revenue should be at 41.67% minimum. The actual revenues that were collected were 54.4% of what was budgeted, and the actual expenses were 45.4% of what was budgeted. The bank account balance is \$53,794. Doug McDonald asked why our bank account balance is so low. Tim explained that we paid Pittman Construction at the end of November, and we are waiting for grant reimbursement from GDOT. Tim also reminded Mr. McDonald that we have had \$5.7 million in improvements at the airport in the last year and a half, and we had a percentage that we had to match. We had \$600,000 earmarked from ARPA funds to cover our portion, but we still needed \$265,000 to pay the total match. Mr. McDonald asked where is the \$265,000 coming from if we don't have it? Tim explained it was loaned from the General Fund to cover the grant match. Mr. McDonald replied, "so absent the county loaning money from the general fund, the airport is broke." Tim said not on the operational side, only on the capital side. Tim also explained that the projects were expected to be spread out over 2 ½ years, but then they were all done within a year and a half. Mr. McDonald argued that no matter what side it's on, the county is still having to supplement, and that's not sustainable. Tim replied that the airport is self-sustaining and is actually making money. He reminded Mr. McDonald that in the past, projects at the airport were being funded by SPLOST, and that isn't the case anymore. Mr. McDonald said the airport had \$280 something thousand dollars when this current administration three years ago took over. Today, it's got somewhere around \$20,000 in it. Tim said, "you didn't take into account that we had to hire that FBO there for a while, that was caused by the FBO resigning". Mr. McDonald said "no, that was caused by the current administration." Mr. McDonald said "my question is answered. CPA's like you can go around in many, many different ways and say many, many different things, and I'm still not

understanding really what you're saying, except I do know that according to this report, we've got \$20,000 in the bank and need more money. Attorney Ralph Taylor said "We're criticizing landing fees, but the airport's 'out of money.' These are capital improvements, not part of the operational budget of the airport. These discussions are meaningless."

Approval of Financials: Motion by Andy Anderson, seconded by Justin Schapansky, and voted 4-0 to approve the financials as presented.

Reports:

Fuel Sales and Airport Revenues: In the month of November 2024, the airport sold 4,841 gallons of Low Lead fuel and 4,621 gallons of Jet Fuel. Additional revenues for the month of November were \$41.97 for oil sales, \$650 in facility fees, \$290 in overnight fees, \$150 in tie down fees, and \$75 in call-out fees, totaling \$1,265 in fees. Current full-serve fuel prices are \$4.84 per gallon for Jet A and \$5.35 for Low Lead. Self-serve Low Lead is \$5.62 per gallon.

Airport Manager Update: Airport Manager Bill Harden gave the update. The upper gate is installed and there have been no issues until this morning, possibly due to the rain. Bill has called the gate company to come out and look at it. Both fuel trucks are working great after being repaired. Four lights that were broken during the runway project were replaced as part of the punch list. The sides of the runway edging were also leveled off. FBO Drive (car rental) is doing very well, and Bill has heard no complaints. The tug came in and is a blessing so far. The charging station has been installed out of the weather where the trucks are kept. Mr. Fraser has installed the helicopter memorabilia display case and Bill told the board members they should come to see it once Mr. Fraser has completed it. It was put in the conference room on the back wall where it can be seen because Mr. Fraser didn't want the display in the main lobby of the airport. A new order of avgas has just been received. The price remained the same. Bill said it has been slow at the airport recently due to the weather. They had two jets come in this morning and Bill said you could barely see them due to the fog. D asked if the USFS fuel truck is bringing in their own gas or buying fuel from the airport. Bill said they will be buying fuel from the airport. Lawrence asked if the gate is the same one that has been giving us trouble. Bill explained the gate is brand new. Mr. McDonald asked if the new flag was up yet. Bill said since the flagpole was at the old FBO building, which is leased by Air Methods, he wasn't sure who was responsible for replacing the flag. Bill said he was asked to see if Air Methods would pay for the flags. D said that in his opinion, it is our responsibility to pay for the flags. Bill mentioned that there is also a windsock that he can put back up. Many pilots look for the flags when landing at the airport because the windsock can be hard to see because of the trees. D also asked about the airport signs, saying that Baldwin keeps asking about them. Bill said he had called two companies that came out to look at them, but he never heard back from either of them. Ty Akins with All Service is the only one who has actually given Bill a price for the signs. Bill said he was trying to get two more quotes before deciding on a vendor. Bill will follow up. There was a question about who is responsible for the fence around the airport. Someone crashed through the fence and the bushes and almost hit a hangar. Bill called the police and made a report in case we need to file an insurance claim. The people responsible were not identified. Bill also talked to Mike about repairing the fence.

Airport Update: Lead Edge Design Group – Amanda Rostin gave the update. The punch list items were done last month and the runway was closed for two days. They did shoulder work and replaced some lights that were broken during the project. The project will be closed out once the grass is established. The next update will be the RFP package, which will be discussed during New Business. Bill passed along to Lead Edge someone who may be interested in building a hangar but did not respond to the RFP. They are reviewing the previous RFP package and if they are interested, we will put the RFP back out for bid. Lead Edge has provided photos and information on all the projects that have been completed at the airport to include in the State of the County presentation at the end of the year and Amanda said we should be very proud. Amanda mentioned at the last meeting that we were up for an award with ACEC for the engineering excellence award for our ROFA and terminal expansion project. Amanda

said we will be receiving the Honor award at the banquet in March. We were competing against any project in the state with a budget of under \$2.5 million, including roads and any other type of project, not just airports. The lighting project is now in the design phase. It should go to bid by March 1st. The old wiring will be abandoned, and the new wiring will be offset from the old system.

Old Business: None

New Business:

- Review Box Hangar RFP Submissions – D Higgins recused himself for this discussion and vote. Amanda passed out the scoring sheet for Higgins Construction, which was the only submission received. The same scoring was used as in the previous RFP. The overall score was 70 points. The one that was previously awarded was scored 76 points. Motion by Chris Limbach, seconded by Lawrence Bridges, and voted 3-0 to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to award the bid to Higgins Construction.

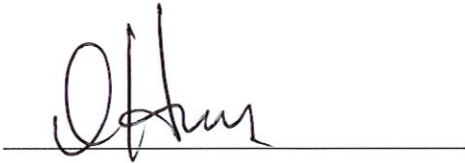
Other Reports: None

Next Meeting:

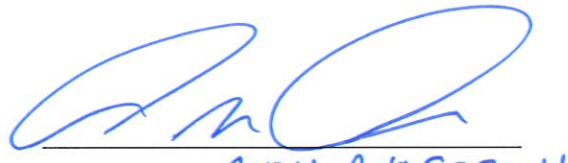
The next meeting is Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at 9 a.m. in the Executive Conference Room at the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Adjournment:

Motion by Lawrence Bridges, seconded by Chris Limbach, and voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 9:51 a.m.



Chairman – D. Higgins



ANDY ANDERSON

Secretary – ~~Lawrence Bridges~~