

Habersham County Airport Commission

Meeting Minutes

June 10, 2025 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, June 10, 2025, 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, Lawrence Bridges, Andy Anderson, Spencer Carr

Members Absent: Justin Schapansky

Others Present: Tim Sims, Kiani Holden, Patti McLarty, Bill Harden, Lead Edge Design Group, Stewart Swanson, Media

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

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

Adoption of Agenda: Motion by Spencer Carr, seconded by Andy Anderson, and voted 4-0 to amend the agenda by moving Approval of Financials to the end of the meeting, and to adopt the agenda as amended.

Public Comment: Stewart Swanson thanked the commission for their support of the Aviation Explorers program for the past two years. They have had two years of the program and a total of 45 kids. Mr. Swanson then shared that about a year and a half ago, he hired Peter Madruga to create a video on the history of the Habersham County Airport. The video is largely finished, with just a couple of interviews left. He gave kudos to the Airport Commission and staff for all the improvements to the airport over the past few years, as well as the upcoming lighting project and said it was "world class." Mr. Swanson said that all of us in the county are watching the arguments about growth. Everyone has their opinion. His father, Dean Swanson, faced some of the same challenges 46 years ago, with people wondering how fast we should grow, and how much we should grow. He shared an article from the Gainesville Times dated May 23, 1979, where his father was interviewed. He knows there is a lot of long-term strategic planning involved in making those decisions. Cornelia tried to get an airport in 1927. The mail service needed a route of airports from Atlanta to Washington, DC, to New York. Cornelia was the first hop from Atlanta. The plan failed at that time. In the 1960's, Dean Swanson and John Foster decided it was time for Habersham County to have an airport. The two of them went out on a cold January morning with a 100-foot piece of rope, and measured off 2500 feet, and they realized they could put a runway there. Mr. Swanson shared a resolution dated August 1, 2005, which named the airport field the Swanson Field and named the terminal building the James H. Tatum terminal building. There is a metal placard on the old terminal building that says James H. Tatum Terminal, but the sign on the new terminal building just says "Habersham County Airport." Unless there was a resolution passed between 2005 and 2019, the names of the field and terminal should match the 2005 resolution. He shared an article from the Dalton Daily News dated 15-20 years ago. He called it one of the most encouraging articles that the commissioners should consider a "north star." The article was about a couple from Dalton who was flying in our area when they began to have trouble with the aircraft. They landed their plane at the Habersham Airport and went in and met James and Marvene Tatum. They gave them their car to use and offered for the couple to stay at their home for the night. The couple were so overwhelmed by the hospitality and care they were shown that they wrote the article. We want to be different from other local airports and always provide that

kind of care and customer service. Mr. Swanson is asking that the Swanson Field sign be moved to the new terminal building, and that the sign at the new terminal building be changed to the James H. Tatum Terminal and possibly added to the front lettering of the building under "Habersham County Airport." He was very concerned last year when one of our commissioners called our airport "a playground for the rich". He said that hurt as well as concerned him. The Governor and legislature put together plans for an aviation system so that anyone in the state would be 30-45 minutes away from a municipal airport. There are now 107 airports in the state of Georgia, 9 of which are commercial, and 98, including ours, are general aviation airports. The Federal government did the first heavy lift in paying for the airports. The State of Georgia obligated themselves to finance many of these projects. The burden on having an airport doesn't fall on the citizens. From his father's perspective, he comes in peace. He is not wishing to stir things up, but he wanted to bring the issue to everyone's attention, since there are a lot of new people that may not be aware of it. He said his dad turned 93 a few weeks ago and is doing well.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Andy Anderson, seconded by Lawrence Bridges, and voted 4-0 to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2025 regular meeting.

Reports:

Fuel Sales and Airport Revenues: In the month of May 2025, the airport sold 5,595.3 gallons of Low Lead fuel and 8,727 gallons of Jet Fuel. Additional revenues for the month of May were \$1,350 in facility fees, \$145 in overnight fees, \$350 in call out fees, and \$495 in tie down fees, totaling \$2,340 in fees. \$14.99 worth of oil was sold. Current self-serve fuel prices for low lead are \$5.35 per gallon and full-serve Low Lead is \$5.62 per gallon. Full-Serve Jet A is \$4.56 per gallon for full-serve.

Airport Manager Update: Airport Manager Bill Harden gave the update. The upper gate is still having issues. Chris (the vendor) worked on it after last weekend's storm, but it is still not working. He will take it apart and hook it back up with a new box and new wires. If that does not work, Bill will call the company who made the gate to see about getting a new board (the "brain"), and the box. Lawrence told Bill to ask Chris for an evaluation of doing it "the right way. In every conversation we've had, the gate was inadequate to start with. We need something that is commercially adequate." Tim said we are also looking at going back to the company that installed the gate last December to see if there is a warranty or a way to get some money back. Chris said it isn't a bad unit, but that we may need a commercial gate for our needs. We ordered a new load of Jet A. Sprayed another round of weeds at tie downs and fences. Just mowed and weed-eated the airport and it will probably need another mowing by next week. Over half of the tie-down ropes have been installed. The other half will be completed once we get more rope. Bill spoke with the owner of the company making the new signs. The two people who began building the signs have left, and the company has been bought out by another company, so that's the reason for the delay and hopefully they will have them installed soon. Bill has been looking at purchasing a utility vehicle for the airport. Bill has gotten pricing on a Kubota UTV that is a two-seater with a dump bed on the back. The filter changes are set for July. Someone is coming out to calibrate the fuel meters this week. Lawrence asked Bill to tell the board more about the UTV. It comes with a gas or diesel option. Bill is looking at getting the diesel one. The retail cost is about \$22k, but we can get it for around \$16-18k. Bill said they need it so they don't have to use their nice SUVs to carry gas and chemical sprayers. Lawrence said they need a pickup truck. Bill said it's a little much, and that an UTV would be fine. Lawrence asked Tim Sims if the county had an old truck the airport could use. Tim said we just received some new trucks for the road department, and one of the old trucks might work even though they're beat up. Tim also said the county's new Fleet policy will be effective on July 1st, which will eliminate some take-home vehicles, and that might free up some Ford Rangers. He will check into it. Lawrence asked Bill for what purpose does he and Josh have a take-home vehicle? Bill said it was included in the job contract. Tim added that when the county took over the airport, Alicia had added take home vehicles for the airport manager and operations manager, because they are on call 24/7. Lawrence stated he did not know that operations manager was Josh's job title. Tim said Josh had been operations manager since we took over the airport.

Airport Update: Lead Edge Design Group – Amanda Rostin gave an update on the lighting project: We are in the grant writing process and once the state has that completed, they will send it to the county for execution, which will confirm that the grant has been placed. Lead Edge will then manage the contract between the county and the contractor. In the meantime, they are working with the contractor to get submittals for their materials. The contractor is not allowed to order the materials until the grant is in place. Lead time on materials may vary, but she is expecting the project to begin in the fall. It will be a 30-day contract time, of which 15 days the runway will be closed. We will get a 30-day lead time on the closing. The 15-day closure will be a 24-hour closure. The project will include new LED runway lights, new LED taxiway lights, vault, vault equipment, beacon light, new PAPIs, and new signs. Amanda introduced Aaron, a new employee with Lead Edge.

Old Business: None

New Business:

- **Approve/recommend new hangar lease agreement for Greg Wyatt for hangar B-3** – Mr. Wyatt was the next name on the hangar wait list and he immediately told Bill he wanted it. Spencer Carr asked if a plane and a tail number were identified in the lease and Bill said Mr. Wyatt told him he was looking for a plane. The lease agreement allows the lessee six months to acquire a plane. Motion by Spencer Carr, seconded by Andy Anderson, and voted 4-0 to approve recommendation of Greg Wyatt's new lease agreement for hangar B-3 to the Board of Commissioners.

Financials: Habersham County Airport Financials dated May 31, 2025, were presented by Kiani Holden. Year to date represents 92% of the fiscal year. Therefore, expenditures should be less than or equal to 92% and revenue should be at 92% minimum. The actual revenues that were collected were 74% of what was budgeted, and the actual expenses were 111% of what was budgeted. The bank account balance was \$158,881 as of 5/31/25. Today's current balance is \$183,007. Kiani reminded the board that the bank balance is just a snapshot of a particular day's balance and will change due to revenues and expenditures. We made the last payment on the ROFA project in the amount of \$423,521, which is why expenditures are so high. There was also a payment toward the lighting project in May. Not considering the capital outlay, the operating budget is in line. D asked if the final payment has been made on the overlay project. Kiani said she would check.

Approval of Financials: Motion by Lawrence Bridges, seconded by Spencer Carr, and voted 4-0 to approve the financials as presented.

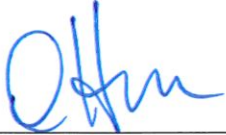
Other Reports: D presented a small token of the Airport Commission's appreciation to attorney Ralph Taylor, who will no longer be our attorney after June 30th. Ralph has been around longer than anyone currently on the Airport Commission, and he also served the Airport Authority when it was still active. Ralph said it has been a pleasure. He reminisced about his time with the Airport Authority, which didn't work out too well. "The meetings were ruckus, there had to be security involved, and we ended up defending the county in a week-long trial for open meeting violations." He assisted the county through the transition from the Tatums to Blue Sky Aviation, to the county taking it back over, and it has been an upward trajectory from there. Ralph said he has told the Commission (BOC) that he doesn't believe the Airport Commission necessarily needs an attorney present any more, since the meetings are now run so well. He said it has been a pleasure working with Phil and Amanda with Lead Edge. Ralph said he has learned a lot about airports. He appreciates that the Airport Commission members have a wealth of knowledge to bring to the table. He encouraged the members to not get frustrated since they are an advisory board, because they advise the BOC on important airport matters. He thanked county staff as well.

Next Meeting:

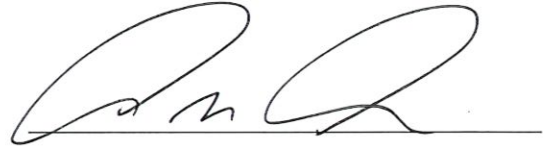
The next meeting is Tuesday, July 8, 2025, at 9 a.m. in the Executive Conference Room at the Habersham County Administration Building located at 130 Jacob's Way, Clarkesville, GA 30523.

Adjournment:

Motion by Spencer Carr, seconded by Andy Anderson, and voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Higgins', written over a horizontal line.

Chairman – D. Higgins

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Anderson', written over a horizontal line.

Secretary – Andy Anderson