

WICOMICO COUNTY AIRPORT COMMISSION

November 12, 2019

Present: Calvin Peacock, Chairman; John Cannon; Nola Arnold; Gerard DiCairano

Not Present: Matthew Creamer, Vice Chairman; April Jackson; Bud Church

Staff: Dawn Veatch, Airport Manager; Tony Rudy, Assistant Airport Manager

Others: Patrick Nelms, owner of Bay Land Aviation; George Peters, Jessicah Peters, and Michael Conklin of Airport Storage. (George Peters is also a former T-hangar tenant.)

Minutes

The October 14, 2019, minutes were approved.

Manager's Report

1. **Airport Master Plan.** Airport Manager Dawn Veatch reported that Assistant Manager Tony Rudy and County Administrator Wayne Strausburg would meet with FAA representatives at the Airport District Office at Dulles Airport on November 20th. Their expectation is that the FAA will provide its final review of the Airport's Master Plan, leading finally to the agency's approval of same.

2. **Proposed Worcester County Bed and Casino Tax.** Mrs. Veatch wishes to meet with Worcester County Councilman (and Airport Commission member) Bud Church to further recommend the implementation of a bed and casino tax which would benefit Salisbury Airport. She added that a study conducted at SBY indicated that satellite-based air-traffic surveillance provided by SBY's proposed Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast system (ADS-B) could extend coverage to airspace over Ocean City Municipal Airport. Mrs. Veatch would like to provide coverage to Ocean City Municipal if Worcester County would provide financial support to the SBY Regional Airport 3. **Fiscal Year 2021 Capital Improvement Projects (CIP).** At a budget meeting held earlier today, Mrs. Veatch stated that she will prioritize funding tied to the \$35 million in capital-improvement funding that she expects to receive over the next three to five years. Projects supported by the funds are exclusively associated with the extension of Runway 14/32. She expects that the county will provide about \$11 million toward the total cost of our planned runway extension.

Meanwhile, the Maryland Aviation Administration has announced that it will no longer fund any "soft costs" associated with capital projects. Soft costs would include any charges not related to actual construction. Examples: costs incurred in formulating proposals or in designing projects. As an aside, Mrs. Veatch noted that Martin State Airport, which is owned by the state of Maryland, will receive state funds to build a new snow-removal building, even though the airport already has one. In contrast, SBY, which has no snow-removal building and which desires to have one, will receive no state support for such a project.

Mrs. Veatch stated that she is hopeful that the FAA will provide SBY with roughly \$5 million per annum in discretionary funding in addition to the \$1 million which we receive from entitlement funding. She noted that she does not expect to receive any other project grants from the FAA or MAA (other than construction cost for the runway extension in the next five to seven years. Therefore, she will request that the

county pay for our deferred infrastructure projects through the general fund. She will prioritize those projects and submit her requests to the County Executive and the County Council.

Mrs. Veatch noted that the Maryland Dept. of Commerce, which prefers to grant money for revenue-generating projects, has granted SBY \$100 thousand for our forthcoming drone hangar; however, the airport will not receive the grant until it has actually spent \$750 thousand toward the hangar.

Mrs. Veatch said that she is also looking at requesting grants from the U.S. Commerce Dept. "It's a lot more competitive," she said, "but you can get bigger money." Two of the projects that she will include in her grant request will be the FEMA cargo-hangar project and the FBO-hangar-construction project. She will argue in her requests that certain infrastructure projects indirectly support revenue generation since revenue generation cannot take place without proper infrastructure.

Mr. Cannon suggested that Bill Reddish of Congressman Andy Harris's office might be able to help the airport with its Commerce Dept. grant requests. Mrs. Veatch clarified that she is already working with a D.C. staffer connected to the U.S. Senate. She also explained that her task will be to provide data; other individuals, she said, will actually write the grant proposal.

4. Request for Proposal: FBO (Fixed-Base Operator). Since no companies bid on the previously released RFP for an FBO, Mrs. Veatch has scheduled a meeting with developer Gillis-Gilkerson and with a potential FBO. Parties will be signing non-disclosure agreements soon. Discussions will include our desire for a 38,000-square-foot FBO hangar.

5. Water Main/Sewer.

Following an Oct. 30th meeting in Annapolis, the state approved additional required funding for the water and sewer project. Some residual funding will come from the county's Public Works Department, not from the airport's budget. Mrs. Veatch noted that about \$1.3 million will be required in three to four years in order to extend the existing sewer line, which presently does not cover the entire industrial area.

6. Bay Land Court Hearing. The hearing has been postponed until March of 2020.

7. Revised Minimum Standards. Mrs. Veatch delayed releasing her planned revisions to the documents so that she could include charges related to the new fuel concession and to the concession facility charges which will apply to the car-rental companies. She intends to release the revised documents around December 1, and she expects that the County Council will vote on the new charges at its first daytime meeting in December.

8. Construction Update.

A. Temporary Fuel Farm. The Maryland Department of the Environment has verbally given a waiver allowing construction of the temporary fuel farm without a concrete containment basin; however, the department still needs to review one issue related to design. Titan will install the tanks, and fuel distribution from the tanks should begin by the end of December. A permanent fuel farm will follow only after an environmental assessment has been conducted and approved.

B. Taxiway Alpha and Airline Apron Rehabilitation. Both projects have been rescheduled for the spring of 2020. The Maryland Aviation Administration grant was not received in time to begin construction this fall. The result: a delayed construction start-date, which would pushed the project into the winter months.

C. Drone (Unmanned Aircraft System) Hangar. Assistant Manager Tony Rudy recently attended a pre-construction meeting. He reported that a silt fence should appear this week and that construction should begin shortly thereafter. The airport will hold a ground-breaking ceremony.

D. Site Preparation for New FBO Area. Contracts have been awarded, and removal of the old Civil Air Patrol trailer and the concrete pads and steel door-rails (associated with the T-hangars that were previously removed from that area) will begin shortly. Contractors have been addressing issues related to sediment control.

Mrs. Veatch reaffirmed to Mr. Cannon that she has a valid letter of intent (obtained last spring) from a company wishing to occupy the area as an FBO. She noted, however, that once the cement pads and rails are removed, the airport will need to correct long-existing drainage problems in the area. Moreover, before crews can solve the drainage problems, the airport will need to move the temporary AARF hangar and box hangar five from the area. Those buildings will move to the other side of the airport.

9. **FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) and MEMA (Maryland Emergency Management Administration) Assessment.** Mrs. Veatch was extremely pleased to learn that FEMA contractor's which assessed SBY for a designated Staging area and requested Mission recommendations was positive. - The recommendation from IEM to FEMA recommends FEMA designate SBY as a staging area support all four mission sets. A formal recommendation will appear in two or three months after the contractor completes required paperwork. Mrs. Veatch added that the contractor made its welcome recommendation after thoroughly investigating many factors which would affect emergency operations. Examples: The contractor conducted interviews on and off the airport, noted the availability of emergency equipment, and studied probable traffic flow along our highways and roads.

Finally, Mrs. Veatch explained that once FEMA receives and accepts the contractor's forthcoming formal recommendation, the agency will designate SBY as a staging area. That designation will allow Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia to request a budget from FEMA (funding for infrastructure). However, Mrs. Veatch will try to build the projects using both public and private funds, thereby speeding construction. She has already discussed the project with one area builder/developer who seemed very interested.

Chairman's Report

The Commission's New Initiatives: Education and Marketing. Chairman Calvin Peacock stated that, over the past few months, the commissioners have been discussing projects which they might undertake to serve the airport in a meaningful way. He and the commissioners decided to focus on two areas: first, introducing an aviation STEM program (science, technology, engineering, and math) in area public schools; second, helping to market the airport.

Mr. Peacock reported that he and Mr. DiCairano last week met with two people at Georgetown Airport who successfully introduced a STEM program in Delaware. (The program is an initiative of the Delaware Aviation Museum Foundation, which owns *Panchito* and other historic airplanes.) The purpose of the meeting was to learn how we might institute a similar program. Some questions asked: How did the foundation's team members proceed? What were their successes and missteps? What advice could they provide to us? What might our first steps be?

Mr. DiCairano summarized the meeting with a short report. He noted that he and Mr. Peacock had met with Linda Price, Community Outreach Director for the museum, and Retired Air Force Colonel Ron Covais, who is Director of the museum. Mr. DiCairano characterized Price and Covais as "remarkable people," first, for their commitment to advancing their STEM program and, second, for their depth of knowledge on the subject.

The meeting, Mr. DiCairano said, produced the following important information:

- Schools are interested in creating “pathways” to certain professions. SBY’s program could focus on careers related to aircraft maintenance, air-traffic control, drone operations, military aviation, NASA, piloting, and aeronautical and aerospace engineering.
- Programs generally target eighth, ninth, and tenth graders.
- One approach is to create an event (such as the one SBY hosted last spring with the Commemorative Air Force) and to invite representatives of various aviation fields. Following this introduction to aviation, students pursue STEM lessons in their schools, either during school time or during an after-school program.
- The Delaware program uses materials provided by Gleim, a company which publishes books used in aviation education. We will consider Gleim’s STEM program and other programs, including one created by Boeing.
- Our steps forward: 1) Meet with school districts and ask them how we can help. 2) Meet with legislators and find out what grants are available. 3) Meet with industry and ask for money.

Mrs. Veatch suggested that we start by meeting with Dr. Donna Hanlin, Superintendent of the Wicomico County Schools. Mrs. Veatch has met with her before and reported that Dr. Hanlin is very interested in aviation-related education. Mrs. Veatch also recommended that we speak with Mr. Mike Borfitz, who presently works with Kilroy Aviation at SBY and who earlier worked for Boeing and implemented a STEM program in Seattle. That program has already received approval of the U.S. Dept. of Education. Finally, Mrs. Veatch noted that our drone program will create opportunities for STEM-related internships and apprenticeships.

Mr. Peacock then recommended that the commissioners begin to recruit friends who would be interested in helping with our STEM program. He noted also that he had asked people who had volunteered for Wings and Wheels last spring if they would be interested in helping with other projects. He collected seven names and is currently contacting those people. Mr. DiCairano commented that museums typically recruit a large stable of volunteers, some of whom work regularly and frequently while others serve perhaps only once a month. He said, “If museums do that, it makes sense that we could do it for an airport.”

Transmitting Live Flight-Line Video to a Screen in the Restaurant. When Mr. Peacock suggested that commissioners take up a project to set up a few video cameras atop the control tower so that restaurant patrons could watch activity on our runways and taxiways, Mrs. Veatch interjected that she had already begun to work on such a project. Holding up camera installation is her need to receive permission from American Airlines to set up cameras. American, she said, needs assurances that the cameras would not capture images of any airline passengers. (She’s been waiting for more than two years to receive American’s approval.) She also mentioned that both WBOC-TV and WMDT-TV have asked to put broadcast cameras atop the tower so that they can show the airport during their weather segments. The airport may need to pay part of the costs to install the broadcast cameras, and Mr. Peacock suggested that the commissioners could help raise the necessary funds.

American Legion / VFW. Mrs. Arnold mentioned that these two organizations could be willing sources of volunteers for some of our projects. Mr. Peacock agreed.

Public Comments

Patrick Nelms asked if the latest changes to the airport's minimum-standards documents had been published on the airport's website. Mrs. Veatch answered that they hadn't been; that she was still awaiting approval from the County Executive. Delays occurred when certain hangar-rent figures needed to be corrected and when the County Council somehow received a CFC-related document that differed from Mrs. Veatch's latest draft. Mrs. Veatch said that her administrative assistant would send an email notice to tenants once the posting had occurred.

Ms. Jessicah Peters, whose family owns Airport Self-Storage on Mt. Hermon Rd., near Walston Switch Road, and a home located on an access drive that intersects Walston Switch, asked when a portion of Walston Switch would be permanently closed (to satisfy an FAA requirements to mitigate the risk associated with the road being too close to the approach end of Runway 14, thereby 1) violating the runway protection zone; and 2) creating a secondary problem that violates the runway's object-free zone.) Mrs. Veatch estimated that the closure would happen before summer of 2020, probably during May. She also reminded us that the FAA will not provide funding for our projects until the airport has corrected these and certain other non-standard conditions which the agency has identified.

Mr. George Peters wondered why the FAA would have jurisdiction over Walston Switch Road since the county owns the airport and the road cuts through airport property. Mrs. Veatch explained that since Wicomico County accepted FAA dollars to purchase the property on which the road lies, the FAA has jurisdiction over that property.

When Mr. Peters then asked how partial closure would resolve the FAA's problems, Mrs. Veatch drew a map of Walston Switch, illustrating the following: An existing stop sign causes cars to momentarily become "stationary objects" near the approach end of the runway—a condition which the FAA will not allow. Meanwhile, portions of the airport's nearby security fencing encroach upon the runway's "protection zone," and one particular fence post offends the runway's "object-free zone." Mrs. Veatch said that once a portion of the road is closed, she can move the latter post from the "object-free zone." Moreover, the other fence posts, she said, would become non-offending once she displaces the runway threshold by two hundred feet. When Ms. Peters then asked if she could have a copy of the airport plan, Mrs. Veatch told her that it was available on the airport's website.

Public Comments

Mrs. Arnold asked Mr. Cannon if the county needs to approve any minutes posted by a county department. Mr. Cannon replied, "The only thing we have to approve and post are the council's actual minutes of their meetings."

Mrs. Arnold then asked if the airport commission had undergone a name and responsibility change. Mr. Cannon said that the name had not changed. Mr. Peacock then explained that the commission's responsibilities had changed as follows: "We went from a control position to advisory. We're purely advisory."

Mr. DiCairano asked the following of Pat Nelms. "Last month, we had a discussion about the repercussions of a leak in one of your tanks, and we were speculating about if there would be a loss of fuel availability and how long it would take to get fuel available."

As to the consequences of a leak, Mr. Nelms responded as follows:

- It would depend on the nature of the leak (whether from the equipment or the tank itself).
- First priority would be stopping any environmental damage.

- In the event that his company lost total capacity of one of the tanks, AvFuel (his supplier) would bring in a large-volume refueler to provide fuel while repairs and corrections were made. Repairs and corrections, he said, “would be up to the airport and the county—any of those corrections, but [the tanks] just went through the Maryland MDE inspection last week, and no problems. And I’ve got scheduled for their interior inspections coming up also.”

Mr. DiCairano then asked how long it would take for AvFuel to arrive with its big tanker if Mr. Nelms found it necessary to drain his tanks. Mr. Nelms said that it would probably take three days. He added that his two jet-fuel trucks are always kept full and, on average, would have enough capacity to supply fuel during the three-day interim period.

Mr. Peacock followed up, asking, “If a tank did leak, what is the contingency plan for pumping it out?” Mr. Nelms responded that he could pump it into AG Atlantic’s tanks or into some of his other tank trucks. He added that he wouldn’t have any problem getting the fuel out of the ground if he needed to do so.”

Adjournment

Vice Chairman Creamer adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday, December 9, 2019.

Calvin Peacock, Chairman