

TRIANGLE NORTH EXECUTIVE AIRPORT COMMISSION

Tuesday, August 12, 2014

Minutes

The Triangle North Executive Airport Commission was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairman John Allers on August 12, 2014 in the conference room of the Triangle North Executive Airport.

In attendance were Commissioners: John Allers, Guy Martin, David Bunn, Don Lancaster, Phillip Stover (arrived at 4:55 p.m.), Taylor Bartholomew and Herman Dickens. Also, in attendance were Steve Merritt (Airport Manager), Jason Elliott (Michael Baker Engineering), Greg Upper (Triangle Skydiving Center), Carey Johnson (Franklin Times), Todd Huvad (Aircraft Merchants), Ernesto Ibbott (LHZ Pilots Association), Bruce Allen (Concerned Citizen), Brett James (James Aeronautics), and Rick Pahnke (Plane Design).

The second agenda item was review and approval of minutes from the May 13, 2014 meeting. Tom Bregger was not in attendance at today's meeting, but he emailed Lori Duke on July 30th about the draft of the May 13th minutes. He said he felt that three comments were left out of Mr. Upper's public comments, which he felt were germane to the topic that was being discussed. Those comments are: (1.) The jumpers could land on the runway if they wanted, (2.) The problem is the airplanes, not the parachutes, (3.) FAR 105.23(c) only applies to jumpers passing through airspace above the airport. Ms. Duke contacted Mr. Upper to verify that he did make those comments and he confirmed that he did, but would like to put it into context. Mr. Upper said Mr. Bregger is pulling one line out of the FAR to make his point and he is 100% wrong in his interpretation of the FAR. The part he cites is specific to parachutes flying "over" the airport, but not landing on the airport. The rest of the FAR states that skydivers can land "on the airport" and Paragraph B gives us the right to land "on the airport". Nowhere in that paragraph does it state we have to land in a designated area. Mr. Upper said when he made the statement it was in response to Mr. Bregger and Mr. Hills pointing to the field next to the FBO and saying "One of your guys landed there one day". Mr. Upper's response was that "We can land on the runway if we want to". Mr. Upper said he'd also like to add that Steve Merritt and he work very closely to keep our operation safe and the guy who landed in the opposite field was one of his high performance canopy pilots who was training for an event, and Mr. Merritt gave Mr. Upper permission to allow him to land there to keep him out of the pattern of the rest of the skydiving traffic.

Chairman Allers asked if the Commission approved that these changes be added to the May 13th minutes. Commissioner Lancaster motioned that the minutes be approved with these changes. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The third item on the agenda was public comments. Mr. Bruce Allen, 992 Mays Crossroads Rd., Franklinton, said he has been a citizen of Franklin County since 1979. He recently was an employee at Triangle North Executive Airport and resigned of his own free will at the end of July. At the April 8, 2014 meeting of the Airport Commission, Mr. Allen said that Mr. Travis Janovich spoke via speakerphone at the meeting, and said that on March 22nd, he and Mr. Allen had a verbal confrontation, in which Mr. Janovich says that Mr. Allen "unloaded" on him, screaming and

hollering at him in front of his 2 ½ year old son. Mr. Allen stated that he disputes Mr. Janovich's comments. He was not yelling at Mr. Janovich and Mr. Allen was never closer than three feet to Mr. Janovich. Mr. Allen said that Mr. Janovich receives discounted rent in the amount of \$315.00 per month and he also gets free office space at the airport. Mr. Allen said that Mr. Merritt allows Ernesto Ibbott (President, LHZ Pilots Association) and Todd Huvad (Aircraft Merchants) free rent and/or free office space, also.

Todd Huvad (Aircraft Merchants) said he does not receive free rent and his business buys somewhere between \$30,000 to \$60,000 a year in fuel at the airport. Mr. Huvad said he doesn't feel that anything Mr. Allen said about his business is accurate. He said they are very happy with the management here, the direction the airport is headed, and the growth and stability of the airport. Mr. Allen's attitude was bad, he was not customer-oriented and this created problems at the airport.

Greg Upper (Triangle Skydiving Center) said that Mr. Allen spoke about the skydivers and it not being safe or a possible hazard for the airport. Mr. Upper says they are in their 6th year at this airport and have made roughly 90,000 jumps. Mr. Upper said that Mr. Allen had commented that some items (helmet, soft pack, cable, camera) have fallen to the ground during some of the jumps and jumpers have landed in areas that they shouldn't. Mr. Upper said the one item that may have caused any damage would have been a camera that fell off, which belonged to one of his experienced videographers. None of the students are allowed to have a camera whatsoever. The videographers' parachute deployed and there was slack in the line and it yanked the camera off his helmet, which is what it's supposed to do. If this hadn't have happened in this manner, then the jumper's neck would have probably been broken. Mr. Upper said we are not creating a hazard. Mr. Upper said it is his opinion that Mr. Allen is the one who created a hostile environment at the airport, and he feels that the County made a great decision when they hired Mr. Merritt to be the Airport Manager.

Ernesto Ibbott (LHZ Pilots Association) said he wears many hats at the airport, one of them being President of the LHZ Pilots Association. He said we've come up with a workable set of rules that address all these issues with the skydivers, so that's not anything we are tucking under the rug. Something we are all concerned with is safety. As for the incident between Mr. Janovich and Mr. Allen, he stands by what he said. Mr. Ibbott said he's seen numerous instances of Mr. Allen getting hostile with somebody and he's seen Mr. Merritt deal with these incidents in the best way that he can.

Rick Pahnke (Plane Design) said he's been at the airport since its beginning. In his opinion, there have never been so many customer conflicts until Mr. Allen came to work there. Mr. Allen did the job he was hired for, but he is not a customer oriented person. People don't have to come here and they can go elsewhere to spend their money. Mr. Pahnke said he's been in business for 20-25 years and he plans to continue to have his business at this airport because most of his customers are here and this is a good space for his business.

Brett James (James Aeronautics) said unlike Mr. Pahnke, his customers come from outside of this airport. He's worked on Malibus and Meridians for about 23 years and there is not a large community of those plane owners here. Mr. James said there was an incident back in May of last year, where he was out of the country and he had a customer who was flying up from Florida. Because that customer was being accosted (over the radio) by Mr. Allen about where to park at the airport, the customer turned around and flew back to Florida. Mr. James said because of this,

he ended up losing approximately \$13,000 on this job. Mr. James said he can't afford losses like this or people being yelled at or someone (Mr. Allen) coming in his hangar and telling him how stupid his customers are. Mr. James said Mr. Merritt is a great manager and he understands the business and what people want.

The fourth item on the agenda was the airport operations update by Steve Merritt. Mr. Merritt said since he's been at the airport, the aircraft population has increased from 82 to 119 aircraft. We have three major tenants, with business operations on the airport. These tenants rent space, purchase fuel and provide service to their customers and employment for their employees. They come here because the airport is welcoming to them. Mr. Merritt said all of the hangars are full and all of the tie down spaces are full. We have 12 aircraft owners on the waiting list and some customers have decided not to get on the waiting list due to the length of time they will have to wait for a hangar.

The fifth item on the agenda was the budget update by Steve Merritt. Mr. Merritt said fuel sales were good in the month of July and fuel prices are pretty stable. Mr. Merritt said with the addition of the Fayard's hangar, the appraised value of private airport property went from \$7,000,000 in 2010 to \$15,000,000 currently.

The sixth item on the agenda was the TIP annual update. Chairman Allers said we held a retreat in July 2008, where we came up with this vision statement: "To be the premier regional general aviation airport that promotes economic development for Franklin County and the Region, and is a portal for global markets". Chairman Allers said he and Mr. Merritt met with Jason Elliott a couple of weeks ago to talk about the TIP and what we would like submitted.

Mr. Elliott passed out the last project listing and the latest drawing showing these projects, which also shows Triangle North Franklin. The last drawing shows the project we are currently working on. Mr. Elliott said based on the discussion with Chairman Allers and Mr. Merritt, some of the items we had talked about were the FBO hangar acquisition reimbursement and corporate hangar site preparation. We also discussed possibly eliminating the perimeter fence project, which would be constructed around the former Anne Gordon property. Mr. Elliott said that at a recent meeting with the Division of Aviation, it was said that the runway justification scored really high on the list and they suggested not removing it.

Mr. Merritt said in reference to the industrial project, which would be developed on the former Anne Gordon property, he has a verbal commitment from some people to build these hangars. We don't need to do the whole thing, but just enough for these hangars. The ground lessee would build the hangar and we would do the site prep and build the ramp. Mr. Merritt said this would be like what the Fayards did, who are now the airport's 4th largest fuel customer. Mr. Merritt said the first item on the TIP is reimbursement for the maintenance hangar, but until we have settled the pending litigation, we can't do this yet. It should stay on the list though.

Mr. Elliott asked if the site preparation for the corporate hangar should come off the list. Mr. Merritt said we've got a little more left with the Fayard hangar – removing the fence and moving the septic tank – probably \$30k-\$40k. It's probably best to leave this item on the list until we get a grant open.

Chairman Allers said the terminal building renovations is where we start looking at this building and the possibility of adding to it and improving it. Since the justification for the runway extension scored pretty high with the NCDOA, it's probably best to leave that on the TIP.

After further discussion, Chairman Allers said he previously restated the vision statement and we've adjusted the TIP listing, so he would like Mr. Elliott to update this information and get back with Mr. Merritt with the updated listing and then move forward with submitting it to the NCDOA.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 pm.