

# TRIANGLE NORTH EXECUTIVE AIRPORT COMMISSION

**Tuesday, September 13, 2011**

## Minutes

The Triangle North Executive Airport Commission was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman Allers on September 13, 2011 in the conference room of the Triangle North Executive Airport.

In attendance were Commissioners: John Allers, Phillip Stover, Don Lancaster, Taylor Bartholomew, Herman Dickens and Shane Mitchell. Also, in attendance were Steve Merritt (Airport Manager), Jim Farthing (The LPA Group), Brigid Williams (The LPA Group), David Guin (Batton & Guin), Ronnie Goswick (Franklin County EDC), Angela Harris (County Manager), William Mitchell (Franklin County Sheriff's Dept.), Todd Huvad (AircraftMerchants, LLC), Greg Upper (Triangle Skydiving Center), Debbie Lane (Triangle Skydiving Center), Charles Lane (Triangle Skydiving Center), Sophie Warton (Triangle Skydiving Center), Mike Colclough (Southern Pride Services), Mike Crowley (Crowley & Associates), Fred Stahl (Certified Flight Instructor), Robert Almon (Total Flight Solutions), Phil Greene (Total Flight Solutions), John Armstrong (Five Star Marketing) and Carey Johnson (The Franklin Times). Absent from the meeting was Commissioner Guy Martin.

The second item on the agenda was review and approval of the minutes from the August 9, 2011 meeting. Commissioner Lancaster motioned that the minutes be approved as read, with Commissioner Mitchell seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

The third item on the agenda was public comments. Chairman Allers called for comments from the public.

Greg Upper, Dropzone Owner at Triangle Skydiving Center, said it has come to his attention that Steve Merritt's time and record keeping have been questioned, and he questions the motive(s) of the person who was keeping track of Mr. Merritt's comings and goings. Mr. Upper says he is here 6-7 days a week and he can attest to the fact that Steve is here more time than he actually accounts for on his timesheet. Mr. Upper said Steve is customer service oriented, and he feels that this Airport Commission hired him to run this airport, which was a great decision. Mr. Upper said he feels that Steve is being wrongfully accused and he hopes the Airport Commission will look at Steve's job performance as a whole and not based on these accusations.

Todd Huvad, President of AircraftMerchants, LLC, said he just moved his business to the airport, induced in no small part by the fact that the Airport Manager is clearly making positive changes at the airport. Mr. Huvad said the airport has suffered a negative image from various difficulties in leadership of the past for a long time, and he feels that Steve's presence is what keeps the negative image of the airport at bay. Mr. Huvad said he is personally aware of Steve being available at hours well past normal, on weekends and nights, when no other airport help is around. He feels that Steve is an immensely popular and effective leader for the airport, and no one should be employed at the airport that does not share this vision or who is incapable of understanding it. (Mr. Huvad's entire letter is attached.)

Mike Crowley, President of Crowley & Associates, said he has been coming to the airport for a very long time – when John Boney was managing the airport. Mr. Crowley said after Mr. Boney left, the airport suffered through “First in Flight Aviation” and then it became a ghost town. Then, Leigh Osborn was manager, and although she did recruit airplanes to the airport, other things happened and we started avoiding coming here. Mr. Crowley said Steve is an upstanding man, with Christian and moral values. The airport is not just a parking lot – it is a community. We have an active pilots association now and the airport is a nice place to be. Mr. Crowley said he doesn’t know what the accusations are against Steve and he’s only heard rumors, but there is always more than one side to a story. This place works and he hopes the Commission will take all of this into consideration.

John Armstrong, CEO and President of Five Star Marketing, said his company is based in Raleigh, and he is also Chairman of “Bahamas Habitat”, which is a US-based Christian nonprofit organization supporting housing & disaster relief work in the Bahamas and most recently in Haiti. Mr. Armstrong said he has known Steve Merritt since 2002. Although he primarily does business in Raleigh, he has seen from afar what is going on at the airport and he’s excited about it, which is one of the reasons he chose to bring his J-3 Cub here to be worked on. Mr. Armstrong said “Bahamas Habitat” bases its organization at the airport and has maintenance performed on its plane at the airport, also. He feels the Airport Commission has made some good decisions and he commends them for that, and he hopes they’ll keep up the good work.

Phil Greene, one of the owners of “Total Flight Solutions”, said he is only here on the weekends and he can’t think of a weekend in which he was here that he didn’t see Steve Merritt at the airport. Mr. Greene said he’s been in aviation for 27 years and had dealings with numerous airports, and he can’t see a better representative for this airport than Steve. He is a people person and he is a joy to work with.

Robert Almon, Operations Manager of “Total Flight Solutions”, said he is at the airport a great deal and has found that since Steve Merritt was hired as Airport Manager, the airport has grown and is a more positive environment. Mr. Almon said Steve’s ideas have improved the bottom line of his business and his business has grown, as well. Also, he feels that without Steve’s leadership, experience and knowledge, his business would not be a thriving customer at the airport.

Fred Stahl, certified flight instructor at the airport for past 10 years, said he has seen the airport under a number of different management schemes, but the last year and a half has been by far the most professional kind of environment since he’s been at the airport. Mr. Stahl said that Steve Merritt is professional and always lends a listening ear when Mr. Stahl needs to discuss anything or has a question.

The fourth item on the agenda was an update on airport operations by Steve Merritt. Mr. Merritt gave the Commission a fuel sales comparison based on the last three (3) years. We were -1,644 gallons sold for Avgas for August 2010 versus August 2011, and Jet A sold was slightly more for that same period of time. Our profit margin for August 2011 was 25.8%. Mr. Merritt said we’ve had some positive response from the FAA concerning the GCO (Ground Communications Outlet), so we hope to have that taken care of soon. The rotating beacon is not rotating because the drive shaft is broken, and we are working on getting that fixed. Mr. Merritt said we have three (3) t-hangars available for rent and all the large t-hangars are full. We have nine (9) new planes in the big hangar, which all came from AircraftMerchants, LLC.

The fifth item on the agenda was the budget update by Steve Merritt. Mr. Merritt said this is the actual versus budget as of August 31<sup>st</sup>. They make deposits daily and give the receipts to the Finance Department, so this is on a cash basis and not an accrual. For the first two (2) months, our net operating results was \$15,155, and this is very positive. However, our insurance company has a deductible of \$10,000, so the damage to the t-hangars, which happened because of the tornadoes in April, had to come out of the building and grounds maintenance account. Commissioner Lancaster said the County really needs to look into what other insurance companies have to offer.

Commissioner Mitchell asked if there were any delinquent accounts. Mr. Merritt said there were none, and he sends the receivables to Chuck Murray each month, so if anybody is over 45 days, they are cut off. There are no delinquent rent accounts, also.

The sixth item on the agenda was an update on the fuel farm spill containment project by Steve Merritt. Mr. Merritt said the fuel farm containment is 99% complete and we are essentially in compliance. It works and it holds water, which is what we definitely wanted it to do.

The seventh item on the agenda was application for discretionary grant for land acquisition by Steve Merritt. Mr. Merritt said we are making progress on negotiating with the landowner for the purchase of the property in question.

The eighth item on the agenda was work authorizations for the fuel farm and land acquisition by Jim Farthing. Mr. Farthing said both work authorizations are not to exceed \$3,000 for each, and both are eligible for reimbursement through the discretionary grant. Commissioner Stover motioned that the Commission accept the work authorizations, with Commissioner Lancaster seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

The ninth item on the agenda was an update on "High Flight" by Steve Merritt. Mr. Merritt said we are very excited about this event, which is scheduled for this coming Saturday. Mike Colclough almost single-handedly put this event together last year, and we have all found out that there is much work that goes into getting this event organized. We will have the "Spirit of North Carolina" from Wilmington here and the forestry service's helicopter will be here, also. We'll have food vendors, face painters, the Young Eagles program, and vintage tractors. Mr. Merritt said we will also have about six (6) "tuner cars" on display. These are Japanese vehicles, in which the automobile has been modified to improve its performance, handling and appearance. Mr. Merritt said the parking fee will be \$5, and all attendees will ride on the tram to the airport.

The tenth item on the agenda was closed session.

- A. The Commission will consider entering into a closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged.
- B. The Commission will consider entering into a closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(5) to establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a

contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease.

- C. The Commission will consider entering into a closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6) in order for the commission to discuss a personnel matter.

Commissioner Mitchell made the motion to enter into closed session, which was seconded by Commissioner Dickens. The motion passed unanimously.

Following the closed session, Commissioner Lancaster made the motion to enter back into open session, which was seconded by Commissioner Dickens. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Allers announced that no action was taken during closed session.

Commissioner Lancaster motioned that this meeting be recessed until the next regularly scheduled meeting, which is October 11, 2011, or unless a special called meeting is deemed necessary. Commissioner Dickens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.