

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **AIRPORT**

DATE: OCTOBER 2, 2007

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Tessier
Stec
O'Connor
Haskell
Mason
Girard
Sokol

Others Present:

Marshall Stevens, Airport Manager
William Lamy, DPW Superintendent
Kim Lussier, Empire East Aviation
William H. Thomas, Chairman
Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative &
Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board
Leonard Fosbrook, President, Economic
Development Corporation
Patrica Tatich, Director, Planning & Community
Development
Supervisor VanNess
Supervisor Geraghty
Supervisor F. Thomas
Supervisor Kenny
Supervisor Merlino
Maury Thompson, *The Post Star*
Debra L. Schreiber, Legislative Office Specialist

Mr. Tessier called the Airport Committee meeting to order at 11:23 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell, seconded by Mr. Mason, and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the August 21, 2007 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Marshall Stevens, Airport Manager, who distributed copies of his agenda to the Committee members, and *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Stevens briefly apprised the Committee on the Adirondack Balloon Festival, noting that the Saturday night launch was canceled due to high winds. He commended the efforts of the Department of Public Works (DPW) and Airport crews, who contributed to the success of the activities held at the Airport. As his first in-depth exposure to the Adirondack Balloon Festival, Mr. Lamy added that he would like to extend his deepest appreciation to Marshall Stevens and the entire DPW for making this a well coordinated event.

Messrs. Payne, VanNess, Fosbrook, W. Thomas, Geraghty and F. Thomas entered the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

Continuing on with Item 2, Mr. Lamy advised the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) required that brush be cleared on Airport property for navigational purposes. He noted the piece of equipment that had been previously utilized became inoperable and sold at auction. However, upon preparing the upcoming 2008 Budget, he said, this piece of equipment was identified as a potential savings because it did not have multiple uses. He stated that he and Mr. Stevens recently

attended a demonstration on a comparable piece of equipment that cost approximately \$160,000. At the conclusion of his meeting with the Budget Officer, Mr. Lamy asked the Airport Manager to evaluate other options for maintaining the brush at the Airport, as well as being in compliance with the FAA mandates. After an extensive investigation, he said, they were seeking Committee direction to either 1) enter into contracts to have the work performed; or 2) make the necessary sacrifices to procure a piece of equipment specifically designed for this type of work.

Mr. VanNess exited the meeting at 11:23 a.m.

Upon a review of an aerial photo, Mr. Stevens said he calculated the total area to be cleared every two years was approximately 110 acres. Therefore, if they utilized this particular piece of equipment that cleared approximately one-quarter acre per hour, he said, he estimated it would take three months to complete the entire job.

Messrs. Kenny and VanNess entered the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

Mr. Stevens apprised that option 2 required leasing a similar but smaller piece of equipment, which decreased the operation rate fifty percent; extended the completion date three months; and incurred a \$7,500 rental fee per month. Mr. Stevens stated option 3 necessitated entering into agreements for contract cutting, and in his discussions with Asplund Tree Service, he said, they estimated a cost of approximately \$500 per acre.

Mr. Stevens further explained the various cost analyses comparing the three options he presented by utilizing a seven year cost neutral. Based upon the demonstration viewed by he and Mr. Lamy, he said, they estimated the life expectancy to be approximately 15 years, and with the proper in-house maintenance, it would be the least expensive option but required a bigger up front investment.

In response to inquiries by Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Stevens said the Airport employees would utilize this equipment to maintain the Airport property. Mr. Haskell queried whether a herbicide application could be applied or grass planted subsequent to the land being cleared and Mr. Stevens replied a majority of this area consisted of wetlands. Mr. Lamy asked for Committee direction, whether he should pursue securing this piece of equipment or increase the Airport Budget for contract services. At this particular time, Mr. Stevens commented there were no contract funds within the Airport Budget.

Mr. Merlino entered the meeting 11:35 a.m.

Mr. Girard asked whether a lease with the option to purchase had been considered; thereby eliminating the large up front payment and perhaps appear more favorable to the Budget Officer. Mr. Lamy said he presented to the DPW Committee a ten-year plan of \$1.4 million for 2008, followed by successive \$1 million appropriations in an attempt to bring their equipment up-to-date. He said it was his understanding the Budget Officer had concluded a payment plan for equipment would face extreme opposition. Mr. Tessier said he disagreed with the theory of the Budget Officer and suggested a BAN (Bond Anticipate Note) be obtained for all trucks and equipment purchased under State contract.

In order to achieve relative success in the bonding/borrowing scenario, Mr. Girard stated the

equipment must be paid in full prior to the expiration of its life expectancy. He suggested that if there was a group of equipment that had a projected life span, perhaps it could be broken down rather than expending large initial sums of money. Mr. Lamy informed the Committee this recommendation was presented at their 2008 Budget meeting; however, he said, he was not given any direction. If the \$1.4 million were banned over its life expectancy, Mr. Tessier indicated the payments would be significantly less than what they were requesting in a budget for one year.

A general discussion ensued.

Mr. Haskell noted that it was apparent that the Budget Officer anticipated making some proposed cuts in the DPW Budget; therefore, he queried what other sacrifices his Department was willing to consider. Mr. Lamy apprised that to date no equipment had been eliminated in the 2008 Budget negotiations; however, he said, he would review other areas within his Department that did not have long-term implications.

Motion was made by Mr. Stec and seconded by Mr. Sokol authorizing the request that funds be appropriated in the 2008 Airport Budget for the purchase of this piece of equipment.

If it was the intention of Warren County to have an Airport, Mr. Stec stated, they were required by FAA mandates to clear the brush. Furthermore, Mr. Tessier expounded that the County would lose approximately \$1 million in FAA funding if they did not satisfy their guidelines. In order to comply with the FAA regulations, Mr. Geraghty suggested contracting for these services in 2007 and purchasing the equipment in 2008. However, Mr. Tessier responded the County would spend approximately one-third the cost of the equipment if an outside entity were hired to perform this work. Upon receipt of a letter from the FAA relative to the issue of brush cutting, Mr. Stevens apprised that he had informed them (FAA) the County was currently in Budget negotiations and considering various options relative to this issue.

A discussion ensued.

Kim Lussier, Empire East Aviation, commented the habitat (birds, coyotes) surrounding the Airport had increased due to the growth of brush that had formed in these areas and it was a concern of the pilots.

After discussion, Mr. Tessier called the question and the motion was carried unanimously approving the request as previously outlined.

Mr. Stevens apprised that Item 3 on the agenda was for purposes of "discussion only." He stated the agreement with the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) would expire in December 2008 with no renewal provisions. Due to the time constraints involved with this process (lease negotiations, public hearing, advertising, et cetera), he recommended finalizing the RFP (request for proposal) within the next couple months. While the previous agreement appeared fairly simple, he said, the numerous upgrades that had transpired at the Airport over the last ten years should be considered when negotiating a new lease. He asked the Committee to consider the length of the agreement, the amount of revenue they anticipated; and the type of services they expected to see at the Airport. Mr. Tessier suggested the Airport Manager draft a proposed agreement for the Committee to review. In addition, Mr. Girard suggested the FBO offer the Committee his input as well.

Continuing on with Item 4, Mr. Stevens indicated he had received some informal requests relative to some additional public/private development at the Airport. He related that Mr. Schermerhorn expressed the desire to construct some office space on the east side of the Airport; however, according to their Master Plan, he said, this area must be utilized for aeronautical purposes. He indicated another gentleman approached him about building a set of hangars for his own personal/business use. Mr. Stevens expounded that the northwest corner of the Airport property had been identified as industrial related development and it was his understanding that the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) was researching some potential uses.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Leonard Fosbrook, President, Economic Development Corporation, who apprised the Committee of the partnership their Department had established with the Airport many years ago with the anticipation of constructing additional maintenance hangars and runway extensions, as well as developing this particular parcel as an aviation industrial park. He indicated there was the possibility of some technical assistance funds available through the Economic Development Agency (EDA) that required a match of up to \$35,000. With Committee permission, Mr. Fosbrook said, the EDC would pursue those funds (with the match at their expense) for the purpose of having a feasibility study performed to determine whether the property could be developed into an aviation industrial park. Mr. Fosbrook stated this was a municipal-sponsored grant; therefore, he indicated the HRLDC (Hudson River Local Development Corporation) would partner with the County to apply for those funds. Due to the increased growth in that area with the QIP (Queensbury Industrial Park), IDA (Industrial Development Agency), and LDC (Local Development Corporation), he suggested having a traffic study performed as well. The general consensus of the Committee was that EDC should proceed with the application through the EDA for the feasibility study as noted above.

Referring to Item 5 of the agenda, Mr. Stevens apprised that the easement over the Chartrand parcel was being reviewed by the County Attorney and he anticipated commencing action within the next 30 to 60 days.

Continuing on with Item 6, Mr. Stevens advised that he expected the bid opening for RFP's on the rental of the old maintenance hangar to occur around the middle of October and he expected to present the information he received at the next Committee Meeting so a determination could be made.

Messrs. Geraghty, Fosbrook, and Ms. Tatitch exited the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

At a previous meeting, Mr. Stevens indicated the Committee considered working with Carl Schroeder, County Engineer, to develop alternatives to their Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) as it related to aircraft washing. Mr. Stevens said he had been advised by the NYS DEC (New York State Department of Environmental Conservation) that the short-term solution they had been considering was not permissible; therefore, he said, he asked Jeff Tennyson, Department of Public Works Engineer, to seek alternative options. He added that he anticipated having a long-term solution adopted by the Spring of 2008.

Relative to Item 9, Mr. Lamy indicated this Committee approved his request to backfill the position of Airport Maintenance Worker due to resignation. When his request was denied at the subsequent Personnel Committee Meeting, he said he was asked to evaluate other options to filling this vacancy while still providing the same service. After a meeting with Mr. Stevens and Brian

Humphrey, Deputy Superintendent of Public Works, he said, they concluded their Department had some flexibility in providing staff assistance during storm events and/or emergencies.

Subsequent to the Personnel Committee Meeting, Mr. Lamy said he had been apprised by the Airport Manager that this particular position was paid a stipend for being a volunteer fireman at the Airport. Mr. Lamy said he was uncertain whether the Personnel Committee was looking for a cut at the Airport altogether or just through attrition.

Mr. Tessier said the County expended an enormous amount of money to construct a firehouse and purchase the necessary equipment for the Airport and he did not believe the services should be contracted out to a fire department. He further stated that the Airport only had five employees who maintained the entire Airport property and by eliminating one position, twenty percent of their workforce was compromised. Furthermore, in order for the County to continue to receive funding assistance from the FAA to train employees, he indicated the position must remain in the 2008 Budget.

Less than two miles away, Mr. Stec stated there was an extremely qualified, under utilized fire company that welcomed more involvement with the Airport. In addition, he said, he felt more comfortable reducing the Budget through attrition rather than laying off employees. Mr. Tessier said it was his opinion that an Airport staff comprising of five employees was not unreasonable especially considering the increase in air traffic over the last few years. In response to an inquiry by Mr. Lamy, Mr. Stec replied the Town of Queensbury provided free fire protection to the Warren County Airport. Mr. Lamy asked if the Town of Queensbury would enter into a contract with the Warren County Department of Public Works to provide fire service to the Airport at no cost to the County. Mr. Stec reiterated the Town of Queensbury already provided this service at no cost to the County.

Mr. VanNess added that he felt the volunteer firefighters responded to calls in a quick and efficient manner. Furthermore, he said, a mutual aid system was established by the South Queensbury Fire Company that included the Airport. Mr. VanNess stated that a majority of the pilots that were experiencing some kind of difficulty had already requested that Mutual Aid be dispatched prior to them landing at the Airport. In addition, he said, he had personal knowledge that the South Queensbury Fire Department met all the FAA requirements to fight fires at the Airport and if additional training was needed, he was certain that they would be agreeable to that.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Girard relative to the number of Airport personnel and their hours of employment, Mr. Stevens apprised there were four employees (previously five) who performed maintenance and operation duties of the airfield, such as cutting the grass, daily inspections, and airfield electrical work. In addition, he said, the second shift (12 p.m. to 8 p.m.) worked Tuesday through Saturday and had primarily custodial responsibilities. Mr. Stevens indicated there were approximately 1,000 acres of Airport property to maintain.

By not filling this vacant position, Mr. Girard stated the Committee may have to discontinue its expansion efforts, as well as ceasing the pursuit of property adjacent to the Airport. He further reminded his fellow Committee members that considerable interest had been expressed by private enterprise relative to constructing additional T-hangars and rehabilitating other areas of the Airport property. When the Airport hosts important events such as the Adirondack Balloon Festival, he said, Warren County was sending a message to the public that it was encouraging growth and

expansion. However, he indicated the elimination or reduction of the Airport staff appeared to be a change in direction in his short tenure on the Committee. If the County was attempting to cut expenses by attrition, Mr. Tessier stated the Airport position was not where they should begin.

Mr. Stec commented the Personnel Committee denied similar requests made by the Sheriff and Parks, Recreation & Railroad Committees and the simplest way to decrease expenses was through attrition. While Mr. Haskell concurred with Mr. Stec, he said, he also anticipated having to trim the services currently offered by the County due to insufficient manpower.

If it was the desire of the Committee to reduce the Airport Budget, Mr. Lamy indicated he understood; however, if they were eliminating the position, he said, he was willing to review the entire DPW Budget seeking alternative options. While he would not guarantee the salaries would equal the same dollar value, he noted, there was some flexibility within his Department that would not affect the special services of a self-contained operation. Historically speaking, Mr. Stec said the thought that just because a position became vacant meant it must be filled must end. He stated he did not believe that every vacant position must be replaced nor could the County afford to replace every vacant position.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell, seconded by Mr. Sokol and carried unanimously approving the request to Fill the Vacant Position of the Airport Maintenance Worker; and to keep the position in the 2008 County Budget; and to refer the matter to the Personnel Committee for consideration. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Lussier added that their friends from the American Yankee Association would host their fall foliage tour on Saturday, October 13, 2007.

Mr. Lamy reported the millings were removed from Meadowbrook Road and placed along the access road at the Airport.

Mr. Stevens reminded the Committee the New York Aviation Management Association Conference would be in Warren County over the next three days and invited the supervisors to attend.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion by Mr. Haskell and seconded by Mr. Stec, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra L. Schreiber
Legislative Office Specialist