

The City of Lake Wales
Airport Authority Regular Meeting
City Administration Building
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 7, 2016 5:30pm

3/7/2016 - Minutes

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Katherine Rogers, Eric Farewell, Dale Marks, Charles Keniston, Charles Loomis

Guests: Wilbur Mathurin- Hoyle, Tanner & Associates; Doug Norman - Hoyle, Tanner & Associates;

Staff: Jennifer Nanek, Assistant to the City Manager; Teresa Allen, Public/Support Services Assistant Director

2. Approval Of Minutes

Eric Farewell made a motion to approve the minutes of February 1, 2016. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

3. COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

4. UPDATE BY CITY STAFF

4.I. Old Business

4.I.i. Environmental Assessment - Hoyle Tanner

Wilbur Mathurin, Hoyle Tanner Associates, distributed updates on the current project at the Airport. The project includes the Runway 6-24 Extension and Rehabilitation. The projects are funded with combined funds from FAA, FDOT, and the City. The design portion is 75% complete and is being funded by the FDOT portion of the grant funds. A grant application will be submitted to FAA by June 1. Construction estimated to begin in the fall and will take 9-12 months to complete. Dale Marks asked about SWFWMD approval. Mr. Mathurin said the permit still needs to be approved which will be submitted in 2 weeks. Eric Farewell asked if credits will be needed for SWFWMD approval. Mr. Mathurin confirmed that we do have credits if needed. Mr. Farewell asked about LED lighting. Mr. Mathurin said all the lighting will be LED and they will keep that up. Charles Keniston shared an older map and asked where the extension will go. Mr. Mathurin showed him where the runway will go. Mr. Mathurin said he will be back to share the more complete plans with the Authority.

4.I.ii. Airport Manager Update

Teresa Allen reviewed the process of hiring an Airport Manager. She reported that they received several applications and interviewed four of the candidates. They got advice from Gene Conrad, Airport Manager in Lakeland and Leo Treggi, Manager of the Winter Haven Airport who sat in on the interviews. They will get together next week to decide who would be the best fit and what the salary should be. All 4 applicants had a really good background as far as operations but they also need managerial experience. Once a manager is selected a transition plan will be determined. She is unsure how long this will take. Eric Farewell asked how many applications were reviewed. Ms Allen said that the total applications were 8 or 9 and 4 were interviewed. Mr. Farewell suggested reaching out to Gene Conrad again for additional input. Ms. Allen said Mr. Conrad was a part of the process and helped select the 4 individuals for interviews.

4.II. New Business

5. FBO REPORT

Betty Hill reviewed the FBO report for February which is attached to these minutes. The skydiving will be busy for the next several months. The new AWOS system is in and is working nicely. There are concerns about safety between flying and paramotoring.

Ms. Hill reported that some standard safety procedures need to be established as there are problems between her pilots and the paramotorists. Some of the pilots have come to share some of their concerns.

Teresa Allen said that the new Airport Manager will have a hand in establishing safety procedures. In the meantime everyone needs to follow FAA guidelines for safety. Ms. Hill says that everyone needs to take responsibility for their actions. The skydiving has designated areas for landing that they try to abide by. There were some procedures that were established that they were going by but they have changed. She asked if Eric Farewell was working with the City Manager on procedures and suggested including other pilots on this.

Eric Farewell said they have made efforts to have a meeting, one was two weeks ago and that one is set for Sunday. Eric Farewell said that the City Manager wrote to Ms. Hill last April that the rules in place were ineligible as it was not her place to do so. So far no other rules have been put in place. His school operates under a certain set of rules, the issues are with her invitees using her facility not his school.

Ms. Hill said he has contracts with the Qataris and we all need to work together. Mr. Farewell said the Qataris are in her facility and they have nothing to do with the Qataris. The last trip they served as advisors but not this time. Ms. Hill asked if they helped them find land to rent. Mr. Farewell confirmed this but in a whole different area outside the airport. Ms. Hill said they know all about paramotoring and they should work together. Mr. Farewell said they offered their services but they were declined. They encouraged them to operate safely but they have no control over what they do in the air. There has been ongoing communication to encourage them to operate in certain areas do this.

Ms. Hill said she does the day-to-day operations and no one listens to her. She just wants everyone to be safe. The upcoming meeting is good, the open line of communication is good and Terry Short should be brought in.

Mr. Farewell reviewed previous efforts to set up a meeting that were unsuccessful.

An audience member (unidentified) reported that a previous meeting was productive but there are ongoing safety issues but not with the school but the issues hurt them. They will be at the airport for the next 10-20 years. They have a relationship with them but no contract. They are friends and encourage the others to be safe. They are trying to meet as there are still issues to work out.

Ms. Hill said she foresaw this happening with the skydiving and paramotoring and we all need to work together and anyone that's out there. Mr. Farewell said they offered to move to give the skydivers more room, they try to be out of the way when skydivers land. They are doing their best but they have no control over other paramotorists out there. They do advise on operating responsibly when needed.

Ms. Hill said they fly near the AWOS which is City property and wanted to be sure he knew that. Mr. Farewell said he did.

Chaba - Reported that he is pilot for Betty and flies everyday. There have been some incidents and we need to establish standard operating procedures. Dale Marks asked if they have radios and Chaba said they do and use it all the time but not all the operators do. Mr. Marks asked Mr. Farewell if they use radios. Mr. Farewell said they monitor the radios but don't use them for constant calls. They are used if traffic is in the way. Mr. Marks suggested that communications is an issue. Everyone should be on the radio. Chaba said they are not sure where the paramotors are. Chuck Loomis said that it does no good to have radios if we don't know where they are at.

Ms. Allen reminded everyone that this will be worked out and that minimum safety standards established for everyone.

The chair asked Chaba if the meetings were working. Chaba said there has been some progress but this needs to be on paper. The chair said this is the most activity the airport has seen in years. Many agreed with this.

Richard Porter said he is one of Betty's pilots and reported on an altercation on Saturday with one of the Paramotors. He asked Mr. Farewell if he saw it. Mr. Farewell confirmed that he did. He said we need to focus on where we go from here. He has established procedures that he has to follow and he expects others to follow them. The paramotors are having fun and fly like bumblebees. The guy was in front of him and came out of nowhere. Mr. Farewell commended Mr. Porter on his flying. This was not one of his guys and did not know what the operations manager did. Mr. Porter said that they were all grounded for the day. No one wants to run anyone off. Some procedures need to be established so that we can continue without problems. Mr. Farewell offered to share a copy of their procedures. Mr. Porter reported on another incident with one of Farewell's students. where two lifted off when he did. All the paramotors packed up and left by the time he returned to the ground and were gone for a month. Ms. Hill said she saw the 2 paramotors that day. The Qataris have maroon and white canopies that say army. Mr. Farewell said he had no recollection of this. Mr. Porter said this issue is a huge liability for the City.

Ms. Allen said the Airport Manager will be there and talk with everyone and set some minimum standards for everyone at the airport.

Ms. Hill said she can ground people in her business if they do something they shouldn't. But she did not know their procedure. She grounded everyone on Saturday after the incident. Mr. Farewell said they try to avoid things like that.

Dale Marks expressed concern about the danger of this situation. He suggested bringing in help from FAA to resolve this issue. Most of the hangar is used for skydiving. Some guidelines are needed regarding use of the building. Everyone should be on the radio. This may be violation. Ms. Allen said she will call the FAA and request assistance.

Brian Feste, an instructor at the Skydiving Center, he contracts with the Qataris the last few years. He was involved in both incidents. He has history with the Qataris and they are not familiar with our laws or regulations partially due to language. We need to set an example for them on professional behavior. They emulate the poor behavior of other paramotors. He reviewed their requirements for operating safely on any drop zone. They are educated professionals but there is concern when other pilots are unsafe and there is no radio after they leave the airplane. They check the area for interference before they leave the plane.

He has trained there for years and would like to continue to do but described the safety concerns. He shared an incident on February 21 where their skydive was interrupted by a paramotor. He said that Mr. Farewell apologized to him as he didn't know the jump craft was up there and he shouldn't be flying up there where they could be a collision. On a second occasion there was a paramotor at an altitude where they would be skydiving and in free fall. On March 5 he was on the plane with Richard and was aware of what was happening when the engines were reversed at full throttle to abort his takeoff and thought he and his wife would go through the windshield. The passengers were in a panic as they thought they were going to crash. He said its important that everyone needs to be aware of the traffic around us to avoid larger incidents. We have the capability of having safe traffic patterns. All the aircraft have regulations that govern conduct. WE need to follow regulations to help bring in funding to help the Airport grow. The skydivers are concerned about safety.

Dale Marks asked Mr. Feste if the skydivers interfere with general aviation Mr. Feste said there is no interference. He asked if Lake Wales is the best place for skydiving. Mr Feste said it is the ideal place. Charles Loomis asked how often they have had to abort due to general aviation aircraft. Mr. Feste said never. Mr. Loomis said that is because procedures are set up but there does not seem to be procedures for the paramotors. A procedure should be set up as we do not want this to get worse. An audience member said their is no issue with general aviation. Mr. Loomis said there are other skydiving airports in the area and he hears when skydivers jumps. Mr. Marks said perception wise it is a skydiving airport.

Mr. Marks asked to be kept abreast of the progress on getting the Airport Manager. Ms. Allen said the new manager will establish procedures to make safety a priority and allow all the groups to function out there. Mr. Marks said he foresees a Polk County Airport Authority. Ms. Allen said we need to be careful not to jeopardize future funding for the airport so these issues need to be handled correctly and everyone works together.

Travis Burns, said he is a pilot with paramotoring and reviewed his background. They are familiar with the regulations and they try to follow all the regulations and coexist with everyone out there. They provide training to students from all over the world. They hear everything on the radio and they ground students when skydivers jump. There was an incident where they screwed up and they are sorry for. They try not to fly like bumblebees, they have specific maneuvers. Mr. Marks asked if new regulations in 2020 will affect them. Mr. Burns said it will not affect them as they don't apply to ultra light aircraft. Mr. Marks said he will check that. Mr. Burns invited the Airport Authority members to come see their business. He reviewed some of the difficulties they have had and said they want to work with skydiving pilots.

Charles Keniston asked if they can work this out from now on. Mr. Burns said they agree to work this out. He cautions about inviting FAA out. The past regulations were so restrictive that could jeopardize funding from FAA. They are professionals and take what they do seriously. They cannot control the Qatar paramotoring team but they do make suggestions. The incident this week was scary and they wish they could prevent.

Ms. Allen said that the new candidate will have a background in FAA rules and regulations and will stop anything out of place and things will be handled immediately.

Chuck Loomis says what they do is different from what he does. These issues will come up. Ms. Allen said we can't turn any groups away. They will be sure everyone can be there but regulated.

Ms. Hill explained that they were not trying to keep them out, but needed to protect the City.

6. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

None

7. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is April 4, 2016. The meeting was adjourned.

ATTEST

Commission Secretary

Chair

Chair

ATTEST

Commission Secretary