

**DeFuniak Springs City Council
Workshop Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
January 27, 2025**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Bob Campbell called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Present: Mayor Bob Campbell, Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum (Seat 1); Councilmember Josh Sconiers (Seat 2); Councilmember Amy Heavilin (Seat 3); Councilmember Glen Harrison (Seat 4); Councilmember Anthony Vallée (Seat 5).

Absent:

Also, present were City Manager Koby Townsend, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Finance Director Steven Rausch, and City Clerk Rafael Ali.

2. MUNICIPAL AIRPORT PROJECT UPDATE / DIRECTION

A. Attachments

Mayor Campbell opened the floor to Mr. Townsend to discuss the Municipal Airport Project Update.

Uriah Mathews with the Walton County Economic Development Alliance introduced Zach Gilmore, who is with the Small Business Development Center at the University of West Florida.

Mayor Campbell asked what the name of the program was.

Mr. Mathews answered that it is called "Starting a Small Business Development Workshop."

Mr. Townsend stated that the council should have the slide for the presentation.

Mr. Townsend presented all the projects at the airport and identified which projects currently have funding associated with them.

Mr. Townsend presented the city's FDOT work plan dollars for the next couple of years: this year, we have \$1.5 million; next year, \$900,000; and in 2027, \$300,000.

Mr. Townsend stated that we have \$600,000 in AIP funds and \$585,000 in AIG funds.

Mr. Townsend mentioned that those are the funds we have from the FAA.

Mr. Townsend stated that if any councilmember had questions, they should let him know.

Mr. Bierbaum asked for clarification about the diagram and whether it represents current information.

Mr. Townsend stated that this is a previous diagram.

Mr. Townsend mentioned that for the terminal apron expansion, there is an appropriation of \$1.1 million that will be used to pave A and B on the diagram.

Mr. Townsend introduced Andre Lewis Kent, the Airport Operations Manager, to give an update on what he is dealing with at the airport.

Mr. Kent stated that there is a lot of unrealized revenue at the airport.

Mr. Kent emphasized that he wants to keep the amenities available to paying customers.

Mr. Kent stated that he wants to set the city up for success as the airport continues to grow.

Mrs. Heavilin asked if Mr. Kent had any statistics on this information.

Mr. Kent answered that there are 10 hours a week of people asking for tugs.

Mrs. Heavilin asked how much revenue that would generate.

Mr. Kent asked how that could be quantified.

Mr. Kent mentioned that his father waited 45 minutes for a tug.

Mrs. Heavilin asked how we would quantify the people who don't want to pay.

Mr. Townsend stated that these are very common practices at many airports.

Mrs. Heavilin asked how many tugs we had. Mr. Kent answered that we have one.

Mrs. Heavilin asked if we can track this for one month. Mr. Kent answered yes.

Mr. Bierbaum asked if we could charge tie-down fees and parking fees. Mr. Kent answered yes, we can.

Mr. Kent mentioned that we currently have an overnight parking fee.

Mrs. Heavilin asked which numbers Mr. Kent used. Mr. Kent answered that he called a few airports in Wisconsin, Alabama, and Chillicothe.

Mrs. Heavilin asked what data we have to measure who will come to our airport.

Mr. Lewis stated that we have Virtower data.

Mr. Townsend thanked Mr. Lewis for the update.

Mr. Townsend stated that he is going to request the county for an easement to cross county property.

Mr. Townsend stated that this property is included in our ALP.

Mrs. Heavilin asked where the north-south runway is.

Mrs. Heavilin asked what decision he has been made on keeping it.

Mr. Townsend stated that it has been discussed, but there hasn't been a formal motion made on the project.

Mrs. Heavilin asked what would happen if we remove the north-south runway.

Mr. Townsend stated that this current project does not impact on the north-south runway as it exists currently.

Mr. Townsend stated that Runway 927 is the largest project currently unfolding, and he mentioned that we issued a task order in the amount of \$129,580 roughly a year ago. He expects the work to be completed in May or June of this calendar year.

Mr. Townsend stated that once the 5 acres are purchased, it will have to be included in the plan. Mr. Townsend also mentioned that there is a change order for \$40,759.

Mr. Townsend stated that there will need to be a new noise analysis that will need to be done.

Mr. Townsend stated that it is his recommendation to move forward with the change order because of the timeline that we are currently on.

Mr. Townsend stated that this is the newly depicted scope for the runway project, and everything remains the same except for the acquired 5 acres.

Mayor Campbell asked the public to be respectful of the current workshop.

Mr. Townsend explained the timeline for the EA.

Mr. Townsend stated that he will need a notice to proceed from the council for the design.

Mr. Townsend stated that the last section concerns ground leasing and economic development.

Mr. Townsend stated that he would recommend the council move forward with the opportunity for ground leasing.

Mrs. Heavilin stated that we need to address how it impacts people using the north-south runway.

Mr. Townsend stated that the ALP is built around keeping the runway.

Mr. Townsend asked if the council wants to keep the runway.

Mayor Campbell asked if flights will be affected because of construction on the east-west runway.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that as a council, this has been discussed, and he thinks that there is an opportunity to look at the long-term picture of the airport, ensuring it is operating in a sustainable fashion. One way to do that is to look at ground leasing and hangars at the north-south runway.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that if we convert it to a grass runway, it will cost \$1 million. He asked what that accomplishes.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that making it a commercial lease would bring a lot more to the airport.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that it is a smart play with our funding.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that this is the key to unlocking the success of the airport.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that we can make this the best general aviation airport on the Gulf Coast.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that we should not put any more money into the runway.

Mr. Campbell stated that he does not want to get into a situation where no one can land an aircraft at the airport.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that this is the only airport in Walton County.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that we have over 14 acres there for hangar pads.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that from an operational perspective, getting rid of the north-south runway is better.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that we have talked about this for 3 years.

Mayor Campbell stated that he has concerns about how long the runway will be shut down.

Mrs. Heavilin asked what the solution is for those who use our airport when weather conditions don't allow them to take off. Mr. Bierbaum answered that they don't take off; they wait.

Mr. Bierbaum pointed out that the San Diego International Airport has a single runway.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that you can operate an airport with one runway.

Mrs. Heavilin stated that there are pilots who have come and stated that they use the north-south runway.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that we have heard from pilots that they don't want to use a direct runway.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that the runway does not give us revenue.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that parking lanes and fueling planes do.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that he wants to make sure that the departments aren't a drain on the general fund.

Mr. Mathews stated that the topography at the end of the runway can be used for vertical takeoff drones.

Mr. Mathews stated that the key takeaway is that there is an opportunity for drones at the airport.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that he would like us to authorize staff to proceed with the existing hangars.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that we can then develop the ground lease program.

Mr. Bierbaum stated that it is our desire to open up the northwest runway for ground leasing.

Mr. Sconier stated that he likes the idea of generating revenue.

Mayor Campbell stated that he talked to a lot of airports, and all they had were east-west runways.

Mr. Vallee stated that he would like to see ground lease revenue come in, and he would like to see if there is interest.

Mr. Vallee stated that he is not entirely in favor of the elimination of the north-south runway.

Mr. Vallee stated that he would like to see a little more information on this topic.

Mr. Bierbaum said that what he would like to see is us authorizing Barge to develop a conceptual plan that would show us eliminating the north-south runway and how the hangars will look.

Mr. Vallee stated that he would also like to have an economic study to go along with that request.

Mr. Townsend stated that with this property we are in the position to move forward with some of this.

Mr. Townsend stated that the biggest thing is what the council would like to see.

Mr. Townsend stated that there are 47 acres that we can put something in.

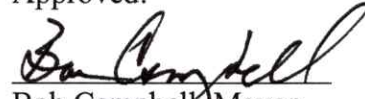
Mr. Mathews stated that this is super exciting for the future and that many communities are doing economic development around the airport.

3. OPEN DISCUSSION ON CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

4. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Adjourned 5:00 PM.

Approved:


Bob Campbell, Mayor

ATTEST:



Minutes taken by Rafael Ali
City Clerk
Proper notice having been duly given

