

**Commissioners' Journal**  
**March 11, 2017**

*The Geauga County Board of Commissioners met in special session on March 11, 2017 at 8:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Chambers located at 470 Center Street in Chardon, Ohio.*

*It is declared and determined that all formal actions of the Board of County Commissioners concerning and relating to the adoption of all resolutions that were adopted in this meeting, and that all deliberations of the Board of County Commissioners that resulted in such formal action were open to the public and were in compliance with all legal requirements, including section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.*

*The President of the Board, Ralph Spidalieri opened the meeting at 8:15 a.m. by leading the Board and audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.*

*The Board met with members of the Airport Authority Board that included Chip Hess, John Rowland, George Davis, Bill Meyer, Tim Randles, Ben Nicastro and their Business Manager Patty Fulop.*

*County Administrator David Lair expressed that everyone had been copied back and forth on the emails that transpired between him and Ms. Fulop at the Airport Authority and the consensus of the Board of Commissioners was to look at the economic development possibilities of moving the airport forward, and the opportunity is here to stop and take a look to ask questions as a responsibility to the taxpayers.*

*Current Airport Authority President Bill Meyer explained that they wanted to discuss four things with the Board, the primary being the Operating Agreement, and to share concerns along with our wants and needs. Mr. Meyer asked Ms. Fulop to give a brief history and milestones of the Airport.*

*Ms. Fulop stated that the relationship started in 1992 when under the ORC the Commissioners formed the Airport Authority and they became their own entity; in 1996 the first operating agreement was put into place. In 1996 the property was purchased from Firebird Aviation, Ohio Enterprise, for \$890,000.00 and \$250,000.00 was paid by the Airport Authority that required the payback to put onto paper. In 2007 the operating agreement was extended for another ten years, and the balance of the remaining \$47,000.00 was forgiven. Currently, the agreement has expired and we need to look at it and move forward. Commissioner Lennon expressed that the Board asked for a one year extension to work with the Airport Authority to look over things and see if we want to take the Airport to the next level, making improvements.*

*Commissioner Spidalieri stated that currently we have a Board of Commissioners that are in support of the Airport and asked what direction we need to go to look at moving it forward. He raised the possibility of getting a Full-time Director that would focus on bringing business, finding people that want to invest in it, and move it from a community based to a business based Airport. This might remove the responsibility from the Airport Board, noting that they have looked at other Airports throughout the State and considered how they are doing things.*

*Mr. Spidalieri stated that right now no one has ever been in a position to move the airport forward and taken the initiative to do it. Mr. Meyer stated that the Airport Authority Board would like to see a new Operating Agreement that addresses the market analysis being discussed and provide a length of time that will allow for the changes being discussed. Mr. Meyer stated that their Board has contracts that they need to renew and feel that they cannot move forward without the Operating Agreement with the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Meyers stated that it needs to be flexible and allow for growth.*

*Commissioner Claypool stated that right now we have excitement and ideas of moving forward and we have good people that take care of the Airport. Mr. Claypool stated that we have different viewpoints on both sides and we need to come together on those, and it's sometimes difficult to deal with change. Mr. Claypool stated that we really need a new operating agreement, and while it has expired, the current agreement still has some weight if something were to happen. Mr. Claypool stated that he had attended the Airport Authority meeting on Monday night and looked over what it was they had put together for a consultant and that he felt there were different ideas on what it is they are looking to do. Mr. Claypool noted that the addendum gives us a year to look over all of these ideas and see where it is we want to go, and once we get over this little hurdle we can then move forward.*

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*Airport Authority Board Member Chip Hess asked the Board what is the "Vision". Mr. Claypool stated that the Commissioners could take over the operation of the Airport but there is no interest in doing that, but there is an interest in enhancing and solidifying the agreement making improvements for all of us going forward. Mr. Claypool added that the other piece is moving us beyond where we are now for the future, while keeping the current atmosphere.*

*Airport Authority Board Member Tim Randles stated that the operating agreement is crucial, and that the members that the Board appoints need to be the liaisons to the Board of Commissioners.*

*Mr. Lennon stated that the Commissioners need to work hand in hand over the next year on what the goals are for the future. Mr. Meyer stated that they want to see a long term operating agreement that will allow them to do the long term growth. Mr. Hess stated that they need to decide the purpose of the agreement that spells out the responsibilities. Discussion continued about the responsibilities to the tax payers, and the oversight of the budget, and what each of the Board's expectations are. Mr. Lennon stated that right now we have an opportunity to look at all the options and see what is best for Geauga County.*

*Discussion was held in regards to the need for the ten year agreement, to which Mr. Hess responded that because they hold leases with the EAA, individual T-Hangar tenants, the FAA, and the Soaring Society feel they cannot operate on a year to year agreement with the Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners suggested that the lease agreement with Air Methods include the Board of Commissioners, which the Airport Authority questioned and asked if then the Commissioners would need to sign off on the other 44 agreements that they hold. Mr. Claypool noted that in the operating agreement the Board of Commissioners still has oversight over the Airport Authority. It was noted ORC Section 308 was mentioned as the guidelines for the Airport to be operating under. Mr. Claypool asked for a one year extension of the current agreement and in the meantime suggested that we look at the operating agreement and make the necessary changes before even considering a ten year agreement.*

*It was discussed about getting an expert on Airport Authorities and have them give an opinion about the situation, the agreement and ideally what is best for the Airport. Mr. Claypool asked the question that if this is what you have, and you could be "God" for the day, what would you ideally envision, to which Ms. Fulop stated that what they want is in the plan. Currently the runway is 3,500 feet and if the runway is extended to 4,400 feet it then changes the displaced threshold and has different design standards. Ms. Fulop stated that in order to get to 4,400 feet property needs to be purchased across State Route 528 as well as addressing property issues on State Route 608. Obstructions, power lines and eminent domain were discussed. Mr. Spidalieri asked what have we done to approach business or what has been compiled over the last several years, adding that we need to find out what the interest is in the growth and what money could be brought to the table to grow and bring money to the table and not expend a lot of expenses to move forward. Mr. Spidalieri brought up an idea of creating a foundation, citing Mr. Kochy as an example, that he had mentioned a partner who wants to get into the airport, and instead of the Commissioners putting funds into a 5% match, funds from the foundation could be used. Mr. Spidalieri stated that they need to find an aggressive person that is willing to reach out to business and see what options are out there to improve what is there now, and ask the question is there a value, something we can embrace to make the Airport something to be proud of and at the same time bring in revenue to the County. Mr. Hess stated that they have been approached by businesses to build private hangars and that they have met with Mr. Kochy who has an investor. Mr. Claypool then asked for a plan, citing that the Airport plan from 2009 does not include all the specifics he is looking for.*

*Mr. Lennon asked Ms. Fulop for her opinion on the airport to which Ms. Fulop responded that they had discussed with Mr. Kochy about the leasing of a hangar, which he looked at 2 years ago, and that they offered him to build a personal hangar and he has said no, several times, so the Commissioners are not getting all of the information from Mr. Kochy. Ms. Fulop stated that they had gone to businesses and that they asked if they built it that yes they would come, but the first thing needs to happen is get to the 4,400 feet runway. Since the last study was done about ten years ago, the Airport stated that they wanted to build T-Hangars and they were not completed, and that they have always had a ten year plan. Mr. Spidalieri expressed that he didn't want this meeting to become the Airport Authority against the Commissioners, to which Ms. Fulop stated that her opinion was that its already been contradicted, that Mr. Claypool wants to keep the Board and that Mr. Spidalieri wants to hire a Director. Discussion took place*

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*about the length of the ten year agreement; Ms. Fulop noted that the FAA Agreement commits to the Airport operating for twenty years each time a grant is taken. Ms. Fulop stated that what hinders them with a one year agreement is that they have 44 places that can be rented and three major tenants. Ms. Fulop feels that they cannot go out for a full year agreement with a renter if there is not a full year agreement into place. It was noted that the ORC cites the responsibilities of the Airport Board and that the operating agreement is not required, but that the initial agreement was done due to a debt, and now that there is no debt, Ms. Fulop stated that they would like to see an agreement with the Commissioners that clearly spells out both of the obligations and responsibilities for each of the Boards. Ms. Fulop stated that the Airport Authority is their own entity. Mr. Spidalieri cited the Fair Board as an example, as the Commissioners own the property, and the Fair Board holds meetings and makes decisions and doesn't keep in close contact with the Commissioners, adding that if something happens, the Commissioners will be the first one that someone comes to. Ms. Fulop stated that FAA required co-sponsors and so the Commissioners were put on for financial support. Ms. Fulop talked about the original agreement and that an opinion came from an Attorney in Cleveland in 1996, noting that he felt it was sloppy, as the ten years was a contradiction with the FAA and it was recommended for changes to be made. Mr. Spidalieri asked why the Commissioners are just learning about things that they have never heard of before, and said that we need to reach out to someone who specializes in Airports. Mr. Lair noted that the Air Methods agreement expires at the end of April, and Mr. Hess stated that it may be in limbo until Air Methods comes to an agreement with University Hospitals.*

*There was discussion about the authority's obligation to run the airport under the ORC 308 and keep it safe. It was agreed that they feel that an agreement is necessary because twenty years down the road most likely there will be different Board members and we need to include things we feel need to be in place for the future. It was noted that a plan needs to be formulated to get moving forward with contacting businesses, get the seeds planted and build excitement and if that happens it will allow the airport to grow.*

*Ms. Fulop asked the Board of Commissioners regarding the request to replace Mr. John Rowland on the Board and noted that she had sent recommendations to the Board at the end of last year, and that they would like to see Cornelius Halsmer on the Board.*

*Mr. Meyer expressed that this was one of the four things that they wanted to discuss today. Mr. Lennon made a motion to appoint Mr. Halsmer and Mr. Claypool seconded the motion to appoint Cornelius Halsmer to fill the unexpired term of John Rowland.*

*Discussion went back to the Airport plan, and that the Authority has come to the Commissioners and asked for funding and the Board didn't have all the information needed to make a decision. Mr. Lennon summed up that at this point, no one is willing to sign an operating agreement, and the Air Methods lease doesn't expire until the end of April. FAA requires a vision (a plan) and if it's not within that plan they won't approve funding for it. Mr. Claypool noted that FAA is one of their funding options, and added that the Commissioners are also one of their funding options, and better details of the goals they want to accomplish will be beneficial to the Commissioners in making a funding decision. It was agreed that the Airport would not lose Air Methods, that they would do what was necessary to keep them there.*

*Discussion took place regarding the hangars, noting that they are outdated and need to have improvements done. It was explained that people interested in building a hangar feel that they will not receive a return on investment of only twenty years, and that if they did bring a plan before the Board it would be put before the Commissioners for consideration to extend that out to 30 years in order to receive that anticipated investment. Ms. Fulop stated that they have not brought us a plan and that the twenty years wasn't long enough. Mr. Lennon posed the idea of having a FBO (Fixed Base Operator) or Port Authority to which Ms. Fulop explained the requirements for an FBO, that include selling fuel, supplying insurance of \$3 million and that they would have their own maintenance department. Mr. Lennon asked Ms. Fulop if she could set up the airport however they wanted, what would she do, and she stated that hangar space would be a priority, and keep it the same except to look at adding an FBO. It was noted that Lake County has an authority that governs the airport but also includes economic development. Along with these changes comes an investment of additional funding. This compares to Geauga County who has 2 separate departments, Planning and Economic Development.*

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*Commissioners' Clerk Christine Blair mentioned that the ORC 308 keeps referring to the original resolution and any changes to the structure of the Board, or other adjustments would need to be made through that original resolution. Ms. Fulop added that there were amendments that were made to the original resolution. The Commissioners have contacted an Attorney and working on getting an agreement into place and that we need to look over all of this and find out where we are and what we need to move forward. Ms. Fulop asked about asking the Ohio Attorney General for an opinion, to which Mr. Claypool stated that you can find opinions, but if you contact them for an opinion they will direct you to hire an Attorney. Mr. Lennon added that CCAO is also a good resource. Discussion moved to what the RFQ for the Airport Consultant should contain, and that if they are moving towards more of a strategic plan there are different ideas and requirements for that. The current RFQ includes the items that the FAA is looking for. Ms. Fulop explained that while the Commissioners own the property the FAA also gets to be included in the decision as they also own property, citing that they have provided funds for the purchase of property for the obstruction removals. Ms. Fulop explained that the FAA has a different concept of ownership and can limit what the Board feels that they can do with this property.*

**COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE – APPOINT CORNELIUS HALSMER TO THE AIRPORT AUTHORITY BOARD**

*Motion: by Commissioner Lennon, seconded by Commissioner Claypool to appoint Cornelius Halsmer to the Geauga County Airport Authority Board to replace and fill the unexpired term of John Rowland through December 31, 2020.*

<i>Roll Call Vote:</i>	<i>Commissioner Lennon</i>	<i>Aye</i>
	<i>Commissioner Claypool</i>	<i>Aye</i>
	<i>Commissioner Spidalieri</i>	<i>Aye</i>

*Mr. Lennon inquired about the CPI and the rates for the hangar rental rates, to which Ms. Fulop stated that during last summer they did a survey of expenses, the tenants rates, and the revenues coming from the rentals and decision for the rate increases. Ms. Fulop stated that they have a waiting list of 30 people, to which Mr. Lennon added that they should consider that list for setting the rates as well. Ms. Fulop added that you have to consider what other places offer for rates, giving the FBO as an example. Mr. Spidalieri proposed an idea for phase 1 of establishing new hangars, to which Mr. Hess and Ms. Fulop stated that they had gone out to bid for additional hangars and they couldn't afford it and never moved forward. It was brought up to look at Community Development to see if they have any programs that could assist in costs, and start to look at building new hangars as a way to continue to grow. Mr. Claypool brought up the idea of having different hangars, giving the example of Corporate, Industrial, Private, etcetera. Ms. Fulop asked the Board to talk to Mr. Gilson as he looking to put together an LLC to build some T Hangars.*

*Mr. Meyers asked the Board to assign a member to attend their meetings as they feel some of the discussion taken place today could have been eliminated if the lines of communication had been open and they would like to keep it that way. Mr. Meyer asked what the best way to get communication to the Board. They discussed that they all read the email from the airport but none of them directly responded back to you, but they asked for the extension. If there is a decision it can complicate things, but keeping an open line with either a Commissioner but also it was recommended having Mr. Lair involved to convey the information to all of them since they can't discuss things outside of a meeting. If you need something to get to all of them just give Mr. Lair a call and he will get it to them right away.*

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***BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD***

*Motion:*        *by Commissioner Lennon to adjourn the meeting at 10:47 a.m.*

*Geauga County Board of Commissioners*

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*Ralph Spidalieri*

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*Walter M. Claypool*

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*Timothy C. Lennon*

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*Christine Blair, Commissioners' Clerk*

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