

**MINUTES**  
**IOWA CITY AIRPORT COMMISSION**  
**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2004 – 5:45 P.M.**  
**IOWA CITY AIRPORT TERMINAL**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Randy Hartwig, Baron Thrower, John Staley, Daniel Clay

**STAFF PRESENT:** Steve Atkins, Sue Dulek, Ron O’Neil

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Lehman

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairperson Thrower called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of the January 8, 2004, Commission meeting were approved as submitted.

**REVIEW OF EXPENDITURES:**

O’Neil reviewed the check requests for February with the Commission. He said the only maintenance repair not routine was the replacement of the motor and switch for the 100LL remote fueling station hose reel.

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION – ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA:**

Thrower said there were a significant number of people at the meeting that wanted to address the Commission. Thrower said that in the interest of time, each person would be allowed speak for three minutes. Dulek and Thrower discussed when the proper time would be for the public to discuss their issues. Thrower decided that this would be the best time for the discussion. Thrower said a further clarification of the discussion format was that there would not be a dialog with the Commission. They were there to listen to the views of the speakers.

Several speakers presented information, most of the comments concentrating on support of the airport and support for keeping the Commission as an autonomous board. The following persons presented information: Rick Mascari, Mark Anderson, Howard Horan, Greg Zimmerman, Carl Williams, Tom Schnell, Terry Kruse, Dennis Gordon, Forest Holley, Dean Thornberry, Harry Hinckley and Emmett George.

Dulek reminded those present at the meeting that the Commission could not vote to relinquish control of the Airport. They could make a recommendation to the Council and the Council could schedule it for a public vote if there was to be a change from an autonomous commission to a voluntary commission

**UNFINISHED ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION:**

No items were presented.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION:**

- a. **Governance Structure for the Iowa City Airport Commission** – Thrower invited the City Manager, Steve Atkins, and the Mayor, Ernie Lehman to participate in the discussion. Lehman said the Commission runs the Airport, but the City Council, from the public’s perspective, has the responsibility for the Airport. There have been a few people from the public, over the years, that have not appreciated the Airport. He said that over the last ten years that he has been on the Council, the majority of the Council has supported the Airport. He said it is an economic asset to Iowa City. Lehman said that in 1995, the Master Plan planned improvements totaled about \$10,000,000. That required a 10% match by the City of Iowa City. He said it was a 7 – 0 vote by the Council to support the Master Plan. He said there have been individual Commission members over the years that have thought that if the Airport was under direct control of the Council that the Airport would close. He said that is simply not true.

Lehman said that last year, the Commission had requested funding for a consultant to do a strategic report. Over the objections of the City Manager, the Council approved the funding. He said the report was critical of the Commission’s management of the Airport. He said that after the report came out, half the Commission resigned. He said the Council has to answer to that.

Thrower asked Atkins to share some of his ideas on what the City of Iowa City might want to support specific to the future of the Airport. Atkins said he doesn’t have any specific ideas. These are decisions to be made by the Commission and the Council. He said he has not been asked by the Council to prepare any type of formal report on the Airport or how it would be restructured if managed by the Council.

Hartwig said he agreed with Lehman and thought it was important to make the management of the Airport as effective as possible. Staley said he agreed with Hartwig. He said he would appreciate comments from Atkins and Lehman on the current structure of the Airport.

Atkins said his opinion was that the Council should have direct oversight of all City departments. Lehman said that he has said several times, the Commission has an Airport Manager, let him manage the Airport. Don’t micromanage the Airport. He said there have been good people on the Commission, but they have a professional manager. Let him do his job and have him be responsible for the Airport.

Atkins said that although the City’s financial position is good, additional cuts at the State level could cause a continual decline. When the Council has to make difficult budget cuts, the Airport becomes a target. Atkins said he knows the Commission has limits on the ability to raise revenue and that some level of funding from the general fund is going to have to be acceptable. That will not keep the detractors from complaining about the Airport. Atkins said that since the Master Plan was accepted, the Council has provided matching funds every time a grant was offered.

Lehman said the budget last year was difficult to balance and this year’s budget will be more difficult. There were cuts in many departments. There is nothing to cut in the Airport budget. If the City wants an Airport, it will need to fund it. Lehman said the rumor that the Council wants to close the Airport is simply not true.

Clay asked how the Airport would benefit if the Council was given direct control? Atkins said that the Airport would probably not change substantially from an operational perspective. Atkins said he has not proposed this and neither has Lehman. Atkins said he

thought the Council should have a stronger hand in running all of the City departments. The Airport and the Library are, by statute, different from the other departments. If the Commission could find a way to cover all Airport expenses, there would be no management issue. But that would be very difficult. Lehman said that hardly any airport is self-sufficient. He said Transit is subsidized annually by about \$1.8 million. The Airport receives \$180,000. But the Council is responsible for the actions of the Commission. If the Council is to be responsible, they should be in a position to govern those actions. Atkins said that larger contracts, like for the FBO, should be reviewed by the Council.

Atkins said the debate seems to be because of what is happening with the City Council and the budget. He said the Commission has a capable Airport Manager. He said the ABS study was critical of the management of the Airport. Atkins said he did not think the ABS study was necessary. He said the Commission paid ABS to tell them many of the things they already knew. Lehman said there is an expectation that the Commission will take action on some of the recommendations. The Council has no interest in running the Airport. They have every interest in making sure there is an Airport and it is run efficiently. He said the Airport is not effectively marketed. Atkins agreed. Lehman said that is a Commission issue. Staley asked Atkins if he had comments about the report to share them with the Commission.

Thrower made a motion to recommend to the City Council to change the governance of the Iowa City Airport. This would mean changing the Commission from an autonomous board to an advisory board. There was no second to the motion.

- b. Aviation Commerce Park (ACP)** – O’Neil said he received an e-mail yesterday, from Kirk Hiland of Iowa Realty, saying he would not be able to attend the meeting. O’Neil said he had hoped Hiland would be there to introduce himself to the Mayor and City Manager. O’Neil said the Commission had voted to renew the leasing part of the agreement with Iowa Realty. Iowa Realty would like to renew the agreement with the Council to sell the property.

Hartwig asked about updating the appraisal. O’Neil said he contacted Cook Appraisals and an update would cost about \$ 800.00. O’Neil said he discussed this with the City Manager and Atkins agreed it should be updated. Clay said he thinks this is a critical issue for the Airport and the Commission should make this a priority over the next year. He said he would like someone from Iowa Realty to be at the next meeting.

O’Neil said one of the things still being discussed in the Council budget is a speculation building to be leased or sold. The realtor and Commission are in agreement that if a first tenant could be secured for the ACP, it would help attract other businesses.

Rick Mascari addressed the Commission. He said one of the options the Commission has would be to sell enough to pay off the infrastructure loan and the balance due on the hangars and then the rest of the property could be leased.

Clay said he is concerned that Iowa Realty was invited to the meeting and they did not send someone to meet with the Commission. O’Neil said that, like with any contract, if Iowa Realty is not performing as outlined in the contract, the Commission has an option. Dulek said there is no agreement with Iowa Realty. It was a three-way agreement between the Council, the Commission and Iowa Realty and the Council has not extended the agreement. Thrower said he has been less than satisfied with Iowa Realty. He said there has been inconsistency in answers given to the Commission. The property is being shown but there have been no serious buyers. Clay said this might be a good opportunity to see if there are

other firms interested in selling the property. O'Neil said he thinks the appraisal update is important to make sure the property is still competitively priced.

Staley asked how long it would take to go through a selection process for a different realtor. O'Neil said it would take two or three months, by the time the Commission advertised and interviewed companies.

Clay said he would like to make a motion to advertise for a different realtor. There was no second to the motion. Staley asked when this would be on the Council agenda to discuss Iowa Realty? O'Neil said he would be discussing this with Atkins to put it on the Council agenda. O'Neil said that if Iowa Realty doesn't convince the Commission at the March meeting that they should continue as the realtor for the ACP, the Commission should relay that information to the Council.

- c. **Runway 07 project** – David Hughes, from Earth Tech, said a contract has been sent to the FAA for review. The FAA has said they wanted the Commission to wait on signing a contract until the Environmental Assessment is completed. Thrower asked what the next step would be? O'Neil said the largest concern from the FAA is how Willow Creek will be removed from the Obstacle Free Area, either by rerouting it around the OFA or putting it in a culvert. O'Neil said the reason he wanted to move forward with the design was to try to take advantage of any discretionary money if it was available toward the end of the fiscal year.

Hughes said he would discuss with the FAA the possibility of breaking the project up differently. O'Neil said H.R. Green told him that the FAA had everything they needed to review the EA study. He said he received an e-mail from Joe Trnka, from Green, saying that the FAA had received the information they needed just this week. O'Neil said he would contact the FAA to see where the hold-up has been. He said he was given the impression the FAA had all the information several weeks ago.

O'Neil said the Commission should get a grant offer for about \$1.4 million for the first part of the project. The runway design should not be affected by what happens to Willow Creek. Willow Creek is in the OFA, but is not in the area to be paved. Hartwig asked if O'Neil had a contract ready for the Commission? O'Neil said the contract has been negotiated and is ready for approval. The FAA will not offer an opinion on the contract until the EA is completed and the Willow Creek issue is resolved.

O'Neil said this would be a two to three phase project. Because they are dealing with an EA and with moving or somehow affecting Willow Creek, several state and federal agencies are involved. O'Neil said we will get through it, it may just take more time than if it was all up to the Commission and the FAA.

- d. **Environmental Assessment project** – Thrower asked if there was anyone from H.R. Green at the meeting that wanted to speak? O'Neil said there was no representative at the meeting.
- e. **Obstruction mitigation project**- Mike Donnelly, from Stanley Consultants, apologized for missing the last meeting. He said he was in Baghdad on another project. He said much of the preliminary work has been done. He said O'Neil had asked him to explain the construction phase to the Commission. Donnelly circulated a construction schedule to the Commission and reviewed the schedule with them.

- f. **Strategic plan**– Thrower said all of the Commission members had received a copy of the final report from ABS. Hartwig said the Commission needs to review how they will implement some of the recommendations suggested by ABS. A few items could be reviewed by the Commission at each meeting. O’Neil said a letter has been drafted, explaining to the Council that the Commission has received a final report and that there are several recommendations that the Commission will take action on. The Council will receive a copy of the final report. O’Neil said the Commission should vote on whether or not they would accept the report as completed. He said he believes it is important for the Commission to put a strategic plan together. Thrower had given the Commission an outline to get started with a plan. O’Neil also circulated a copy of a report on how to complete a strategic plan.

Clay said it sounded like Lehman thought the Commission did not have any intent to act on the ABS report. O’Neil said that is what the letter explains to the Council. Thrower said the Council is aware that the report is completed and is expecting an explanation on what the Commission intends to do with the report. O’Neil said that one reason a final report has not been sent to the Council yet was Thrower’s concern that the report was not complete enough to be a stand-alone document. His concern is explained in the letter.

O’Neil said the document he handed out on how to conduct a strategic plan recommends having a facilitator assist in the early development. Community members should also participate in the development of the plan. O’Neil said he could generate a draft plan, but it would be much better to involve the Commission and the community. He said he doesn’t know how many other City departments have strategic plans or Master Plans.

Staley said Dennis Gordon, a tenant at the Airport, had submitted an outline on how a committee system could assist the Commission in developing a strategic plan. Staley made a motion to accept the ABS report and submit it to the Council. Hartwig seconded the motion and it passed 4 – 0.

### **CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT:**

Thrower said his term expires at the end of February and he will not apply to Council for a second term. He thanked the Commission for their support and said he enjoyed working with them. He will support the Airport and will pass on to O’Neil the information he has collected on developing a strategic plan. He said there are several groups for the Commission to try to incorporate into the Airport environment. Thrower welcomed Clay to the Commission.

### **COMMISSION MEMBERS’ REPORTS:**

Hartwig thanked Thrower for his service. Hartwig said he appreciated all the comments from the public that attended the meeting.

Clay said he also appreciated all the comments from the public and thought that keeping an open dialog was important. Clay wished Thrower luck on his written exam for his instrument pilot’s license.

Staley asked O’Neil about an earlier comment about how this might not be Thrower’s last meeting? O’Neil said that he would like to have a special meeting to approve the Stanley agreement. Thrower suggested 12:00 p.m. on February 20. The Commission agreed to meet on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Staley thanked Thrower for his service and said he would also like to thank the public, Mayor Lehman and City Manager Atkins for their comments.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:**

The cost to update the property in the Aviation Commerce Park from Cook Appraisals would be \$800.00.

There are two terms on the Airport Commission being advertised. One ends in March of 2007 and the other ends in March of 2010. The applications are due February 25 and the appointments will be at the March 2 Council meeting.

There was a letter in the packet to ABS, stating that the Business Report project contract has been completed.

O'Neil said he has accepted an appointment to the Iowa Department of Transportation's Aviation Advisory Council. This is a two-year term. They meet quarterly in Ames.

A memo reminding the Commission of the rules of the State open meetings regulations was in the packet.

O'Neil provided a memo to the Commission concerning upcoming IDOT grant applications. O'Neil asked the Commission to look at the list of potential projects and give him an idea of what projects they would like him to submit grant applications for.

The Iowa Public Airports Association is sponsoring an Aviation Day at the Capital on March 9, inviting state legislators to discuss aviation issues with them. O'Neil said he has gone to the event in recent years and met with the local Johnson County representatives. Local Johnson County representatives have been supportive of State AIP funding.

**SET NEXT MEETING:**

The next special Commission meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2004, at 12:00 p.m.

The next regular Airport Commission meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2004, at 5:45 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

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Baron Thrower, Chairperson