

# **SPECIAL ASSEMBLY JOINT MEETING W/ AIRPORT BOARD #2024-07 MINUTES**

**March 06, 2024 at 5:30 PM**

**Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar**



<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/93917915176> or 1-253-215-8782 Webinar ID: 939 1791 5176

Immediately followed by Assembly Finance Committee

## **A. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Weldon called the Joint Special Assembly and Juneau Airport Board meeting to order in City Hall Assembly Chambers and via Zoom at 5:32 p.m.

## **B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – read by Ms. Hale**

## **C. ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Mayor Beth Weldon, Assemblymembers Michelle Hale, Wade Bryson, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Greg Smith, Christine Woll, 'Wáahlaal Gídaag, Paul Kelly and Ella Adkison. Airport Board Members Acting Chair Danial Spencer, Jodi Garza, and Chris Peloso

**Absent:** Airport Board Members Al Clough, Dennis Bedford, Theresa Yvette Soutiere, and Jason Custer

**Staff/Others in Attendance:** City Manager Katie Koester, City Attorney Robert Palmer, Acting City Clerk Di Cathcart, Airport Manager Patty Wahto, Finance Director Angie Flick, Assistant City Attorney Sherri Layne, Budget Manager Adrien Wendel and Finance Administrative Coordinator Tony Perletti.

## **D. AGENDA TOPICS**

### **Joint Assembly Meeting with the Juneau International Airport Board**

Mayor Weldon noted that with only 3 members of the Airport Board present there was not a quorum of the Airport Board however no action was taking place only updates. The meeting continued and the agenda was adopted as presented. Mayor Weldon thanked the Airport Boardmembers and Ms. Wahto for attending and noted it's taken a while to schedule this meeting and appreciated everyone's flexibility.

### **1. Juneau Douglas North Crossing – Update from City Manager Koester**

City Manager Koester referenced the memo included in the meeting packet related to the Juneau Douglas North Crossing; recognizing that this project is the Assembly's number 1 legislative priority and staff is working through a planning and environmental linkages study process. There are two stakeholder meetings taking place on March 7, at 1:00 PM and at 6:00 PM. The Airport is included in these meetings as a stakeholder, and the project team will be presenting the different alternatives at those meetings. Ms. Koester stated she is familiar with how important this project is to the Assembly because of the safety, the transportation efficiency and the potential economic development and housing development. She recognized the Airport has some concerns with how the project might interfere with Airport development; that issue came up at an Airport Board meeting and staff had the opportunity to bring the DOWL Project Team to the Airport Board meeting and meet with staff.

Ms. Koester said she learned a lot from that meeting about the nature of the Airport's concerns and included a couple of pages pulled from that presentation in this packet; noting probably the most relevant is on page 5 where it shows runway height and the approach issue and the reason why she wanted to make sure that this joint body had an opportunity to talk about the Airport's concerns as well as the Airport Board learning from the Assembly about this priority and to spur that conversation between the two bodies so that as we work together on this project and there's a solid understanding of both perspectives.

Ms. Garza commented that her understanding was the language that came out of that meeting, and that is now part of the packet addresses all the concerns the Airport had in terms of Airport safety, runway safety, and expansion projects; and we've landed at with the language that's in the project is now sufficient.

Mr. Spencer commented that on behalf of the board, he wanted the Assembly to know that the board's not taking a position on the North Douglas crossings, except as it relates strictly to the Airport and any potential constraining of development of the Airport.

Ms. Woll noted that she will be attending the March 7 meetings.

Mr. Smith appreciated this information being added to the packet as he'd heard concerns from community members about the approaches and was glad a comment was added during the public comment period. He said he also felt good about seeing the response from DOWL Project Team.

## **2. CIP Current Status and Upcoming Projects – Update from Airport Board Member Garza**

Ms. Garza reported the Airport has spent \$230 million in FAA grants in the past 15 years: runway rehab, taxiway, rehab, terminal reconstruction of the North Terminal, and terminal seating, snow removal equipment, sand chem building fuel facility, runway safety area, passenger boarding bridges, aircraft parking, apron float pond, baggage conveyor system, parking lot rehab, Airport Rescue Firefighting (ARFF) truck acquisition, reconstruction of our stations and base sustainability master plan, culvert road replacement and cargo road rehab. Projects are a vital piece of airports and keep them going which is why, as an example, you see constant construction at the SEA-TAC Airport when traveling through. Projects and FAA grants are very important to the Airport.

Ms. Garza updated the Assembly on current capital projects for the Airport as follows: main ramp rehab (\$17.7 million), Gate 5 passenger boarding bridge (\$2 million), Parking Lot (\$10.5 million) was just completed, unexpected culvert replacement (\$700,000), an outbound baggage conveyor (\$1.6 million) is still in progress and the last underground fuel tank removal on the Airport property (\$200,000) was just completed and is going through some remediation for the potential contaminated fuel there.

For the Airport CIP project list for 2024 - 2028, we've got a \$2.7 million design, runway safety area, grade Master Plan update, acquiring an additional RT truck, and acquiring a wetland rescue vehicle in 2025. The Airport has a \$4.2 million project includes runway safety, area construction design with the FAA, runway 26 MALSR (Medium Intensity Approach Light System w/ Runway Alignment Indicator Lights) completion and also in 2026, a \$14 million construction runway for 26 MALSR and snow removal equipment acquisition and also a land acquisition for the channel or coastal hangars, which is currently owned by the Logans and is the last part of land on Airport property that is privately owned. The FAA has approved a land acquisition grant for that property.

## **1. CARES Grant Funding Update - Update from Airport Board Member Peloso**

Mr. Peloso reported that one of the silver-linings we had with the pandemic is that while it caused a big dent in the number of passengers that came through the Airport, it freed up a bunch of federal funds. The Airport Board has been working to try and use up those federal funds before we lose them. Mr. Peloso noted this has given the Airport the opportunity to work on projects that would have been longer-term projects or ones we wouldn't have gotten to right away. When passenger traffic was down, it made it a bit easier to build new things at the Airport without disrupting passenger traffic. CARES grant funding actuals came to about \$13.275 million with \$299,000 left in unspent CARES grant funds. There are a few different things the Airport has planned to make sure we use every dollar we can and not have any unspent funds at the end of the year.

Ms. Garza added that the \$299,000 is an estimate of what we'll have left of the CARES Act funding and not the final number; some of the numbers that we have plugged into that equation are not complete yet and as projects progress, a lot of times there is a surprise at the end with either more money or less money. One of the ideas for

using the remaining CARES Act funds if it comes down to the wire is to use that final funding for interest or debt payment which has been approved by the FAA as an allowable use of CARES Act funds.

## **2. Airport Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) Truck status (both interim and long term)**

The Airport needs to have three ARFF trucks onsite. There are currently two that are functional and a third that is coming down from Palmer on the ferry to Juneau.

## **5. Maintenance Items:**

- a. RWY Culvert Issue
- b. Underground Fuel Tank Removal
- c. Mendenhall River embankment repairs

The parking lot project is now completed, a \$10.5 million project, and part of that project was an unexpected, but needed, culvert replacement for \$700,000.

Work was just completed for the underground fuel tank removal which came in at \$200,000 and the Airport is now going through some remediation for any potential ground contamination related to the fuel tank.

Work is ongoing for Mendenhall River embankment repairs including a lot of backfilling of rip rap as the river bank shifted due to the August flood.

## **6. Deputy Airport Manager Recruitment**

Recruitment has been difficult since the position requires a very specific skill set. The Assembly and Airport Board discussed options regarding recruitment including review of the pay. Assembly and Airport Board members gave huge thanks to Ms. Wahto for continuing to stay on as Airport Manager way past her initial plan for retirement.

## **7. General Passenger Traffic and Operations Summary**

Mr. Spencer reported that passenger traffic drives a lot of things. It drives what the FAA considers us to be a smaller, non-hub airport and that makes a difference in what we can or can't use money for. In 2019, the Airport saw about 460,000 passengers move through and about 2/3 of those were large carriers (Alaska & Delta). The pandemic hit in 2020 and passengers dropped to 164,000 in one year. Passenger numbers have continued to rebound since 2020 with a slight decrease in 2023 from 2022.

## **E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

**Laurie Craig**, resident of the Auke Lake area, brought several items forward to talk about. Ms. Craig thanked the Airport for the excellent job clearing the snow this winter and keeping our airport open as well as the Emergency Vehicle Access Road (EVAR) clear which allowed hundreds of people to be able to be outdoors and walking this winter thanks to that road staying plowed. Ms. Craig said she listened to Monday nights meeting when people were testifying about the school board and the word, transparency seemed to come up a lot thought it was important for the public to understand some of the issues that were just discussed tonight. In the most recent information that came out from DOWL, there was no category for aviation safety and no discussion of the things that you all know about, but that I don't know about as a member of the public. This project is a very public process I've been involved with four EIS's over the last 30 years and public comment, comments from the experts, comments from airport staff, the letter from December 14th needs to be laid out so that people can understand what the problems were and then how you've resolved them because it sounds like you have but the public doesn't know this discussion.

**Ron Somerville**, resident of the Mendenhall Valley area, began to speak on the Juneau Douglas North Crossing. Mayor Weldon interrupted to get the approval of the rest of the body to allow Mr. Somerville to testify on a topic that was an earlier agenda item; the body approved, and Mr. Somerville continued his testimony as well as

handed out written copies to the group. Mr. Somerville, we created a Mendenhall Wetlands Study Group (MWSG), made up of 26 professionals and people that have been linked to the Mendenhall Refuge with a keen interest in what happens within that area and have been involved with this process from the very beginning. The reason he was testifying is the fact that this process is not going well. He appreciated being involved and being able to witness what happened at the last event with the issue of airport safety which had not been identified at all by DOWL. When this started with DOWL on the PELT process, for transparency, DOWL was supposed to provide a substantial amount of information to the public and that hasn't happened yet, which is concerning. Being able to view the information and make recommendations prior to it going through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is necessary.

Ms. Woll thanked Mr. Somerville for testifying and asked if he could talk a bit more about his concerns about compromising the NEPA and what he thought the result of that could lead to.

Mr. Somerville responded that he had previous experience with NEPA and the Endangered Species Act during his time at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), noting that, If you have a faulty or poorly done pre-preparation for the NEPA process, it can tunnel the whole process, so that process needs to be open and as on the record as possible. If airport security is an issue, it needs to be addressed and made available to the public, so they know the Airport Board expressed concerns. MWSG feels strongly about the transparency issue because MWSG concerns are not being transparently presented either.

Ms. Hale commented that it's the State of Alaska Department of Transportation who has contracted with DOWL and not CBJ, but CBJ is part of the Project Team as a stakeholder.

Mr. Smith asked Mr. Somerville if he felt the make-up of the Stakeholders group had changed and that has caused a reduction in transparency. Mr. Somerville noted that it's a complicated process that has gone on longer than expected and as a result people get busy with other priorities.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked for clarification on the drafted letter that was discussed and whether it was submitted to DOWL or not. Ms. Koester said the letter was drafted but was not included on the Airport Board meeting agenda because per Advisory Board rules, all communication with elected officials needs to go through the Assembly; we want to communicate with one voice. The concerns that were raised were worth addressing and having that conversation, so DOWL was brought in to present to the Airport Board and it was a good opportunity to clear things up.

**F. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS – None**

**G. ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business to come before the Assembly, meeting adjourned at 6:21 p.m.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Diane Cathcart, Acting Municipal Clerk

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Beth A. Weldon, Mayor