

Notes from Airport Commission Planning Session

Held: November 12, 2020

Danville Regional Airport

Attendees:

City Representatives: Marc Adelman, Todd Pinekenstein, Earl Reynolds, Alan Spencer

Commission Members: Sid Allgood, Stephen Daniel, Michael Duncan, Phil Hall, Gene Jackson, Bob Jiranek, Joe Miller

The group gathered at 9:00 am for a tour of the airport via the Trolley. Marc Adelman served as driver and tour guide. Because the weather was overcast, foggy, and raining there was no air traffic on the field at the time of the tour. Airport Commission members visited the South Ramp; Taxiways A, F, and K; Runway 2-20, 13-31, and Closed Runway 24. The tour ended after a visit to the Main Apron. The briefing included history, current concerns/project considerations, airport lighting, signage, and navigational equipment.

After the tour, we gathered in the Terminal's main conference room and Mr. Allgood called the meeting to order at 10:06 am.

The agenda was presented and discussion about moving item 10 to the top of the list ensued. Mr. Miller made a motion to move item 10 to item 1; Mr. Jackson seconded. All voted in favor.

A motion to approve the amended agenda was made by Mr. Duncan; seconded by Mr. Hall. All voted in favor.

It was disclosed that the meeting notes would be derived from the notes taken by Mr. Duncan on the "big post-its" and transcribed to a normal format.

Sid Allgood opened with "ground rules" and commented that we will have an open and respectful discussion, it is okay to offer input at any time, and feel free to talk. We began with an open discussion on the strategic needs of KDAN and the region.

Phil Hall asked for Marc Adelman's input on what were the Airport's immediate needs. Michael Duncan suggested an approach more aimed at 5+ years out. Marc Adelman responded that his principal concern was, with increased demand, the need for more aircraft parking and disembarking locations. He suggested that the South Ramp and Closed 24 Runway could be used for this activity but both require investment. He expressed concern not only from a volume standpoint but from a handling capacity need for larger aircraft, i.e., Boeing Business Jet. He indicated that the Virginia International Raceway (VIR) and the casino will draw more and more jet traffic – which is good but we must be ready to handle it, especially if a major VIR event occurs at the same time when several aircraft access the field to visit the casino. Phil Hall asked if we had enough property for this. Marc Adelman suggested that if we can use the South Ramp and the closed Runway 24, then we do.

Bob Jiranek asked how best to handle airport growth; how should we manage it? Do we need to create an Authority or is the Commission framework suitable? The ensuing discussion elicited a number of responses including helpful information (pros and cons) from Earl Reynolds and Alan Spencer. Out the discussion came the question about how the casino will help the airport and Marc Adelman and Earl Reynolds suggested that the casino, while it will potentially increase air traffic, the key metric for Caesar's is that 1,000,000 of their customers live within 150 miles of Danville and thus vehicular traffic concerns were a much higher consideration for them. The members were polled on whether to pursue this topic, and while all are willing to learn more, the consensus was to hold off for now.

Marc Adelman suggested that our first priority ought to be pursuing Federal and State funding for the rehabilitation of the South Ramp and closed Runway 24 then look to facility development opportunities. Joe Miller suggested that the Commission should look at how to make the field "73" capable (Boeing Business Jet/73 series). Bob Jiranek asked about Caesar's availability for input. Marc Adelman and Michael Duncan mentioned the outreach made to Corrie Bobe (City Economic Development) and her helpful response in arranging a connection in the near future.

Phil Hall suggested a criteria/priority list. Discussion led to a seeming consensus around (1) understanding parking needs, (2) rehabilitation of the South Ramp, and (3) rehabilitation to a useful area for X24. GJ shared thoughts on Caesar's GA market.

The Criteria List looks like this after much discussion:

Present to 5 Years	5+ to 10 Years	10+ Years
13/31 Rehab	Boeing Business Jet Access	Air Carrier Service
General Aviation Traffic Increases substantially	Fire Department Equipment and Staffing Upgrade	
Key Item: Rehab South Ramp (already has power/road access)	2d FBO, if needed	
Rehab Closed Runway 24 (needs power & better road access)		
Maintenance Operations Expanded		
What does Caesar's need		
What does VIR need		
Taxiway H changes		

It appears that South Ramp and Taxiway H projects would be eligible for Federal funds but closed Runway24 would not be eligible for funding presently. Marc Adelman also noted that the costs for these projects are likely to run in the millions of dollars; \$10,000,000 to extend the primary runway, possibly \$2,500,000 to rehabilitate the South Ramp, \$3,000,000 to rehab Closed Runway 24 and \$4,000,000 to rehabilitate Runway 13/31. During the funding discussion, Joe Miller asked about the possibility of securing private money to assist with project costs. Discussion highlighted the possibility of approaching local foundations, etc. as well as the casino.

Airport Commission members talked about creating 2- and 3-year funding scenarios by utilizing a variety of approaches including a request to DRF and other substantial grant-making entities.

Marc Adelman noted that relying on the FAA for funding is challenging because of lead-time requirements and due to their approach with justifying improvements, which is based on current operations. Some discussion ensued about possibly getting our elected federal representatives involved and if possible, such an effort would need to be closely coordinated with the City's leadership.

Gene Jackson brought up the Airport Master Plan (which is now several years old and did not envision the potential impact of a casino) and a discussion around transient pilots arriving for fly-ins, \$100 hamburgers, and other locally oriented, short-stay activities. This added volume might create the need for a second FBO. Sid Allgood mentioned the creation of more retail-oriented services on the field.

The possibility of renewing commercial air service at the airport was briefly mentioned. Sid Allgood and Gene Jackson discussed market correlation to the RV industry, though that may be in some degree of jeopardy with COVID. The current capacity of the Fire Department on the field would require significant upgrades if commercial service were to become a possibility. Bob Jirnanek mentioned a previous Teterboro aviation experience and a desire that the airport be able to offer a similar positive experience for general aviation and business aviation activities. He highlighted that the casino was adding to the economic engine of the region. Marc Adelman did not believe that the second FBO was a five-year consideration but something out further.

A brief discussion was completed about General Aviation/Averett University staffing and progress to transition.

Steve Daniel brought up the self-fueling idea. Marc Adelman expressed concern about the return on investment for financing a self-fueling facility and Gene Jackson mentioned that these operations can be viewed as "unfriendly" from a couple of different angles (physical proximity to equipment, other aircraft; access or times when difficult to operate, etc.)

Michael Duncan asked about when an active Control Tower might be considered; Gene Jackson echoed a similar concern especially at times with high volumes of IFR departures. Marc Adelman expressed interest to see about changing the airspace classification to something other than "E" to provide more positive control and improve safety with respect to radio communication requirements.

A brief discussion was completed about expanding the airport property and the players that may be involved (IDA, etc.). Marc Adelman pointed out that property expansion would require involving the FAA. He suggested to Commission members that now was the time to revisit the Airport Master Plan including Airport Layout Plan revisions given the casino's anticipated impact.

Joe Miller suggested we have the IDA/Econ Dev staff in for a discussion around Airport Development opportunities. Marc Adelman provided a handout that listed the current fee/aircraft personal property tax scale that clearly places Danville as the least expensive of place to house an aircraft in similar environments.

Commission members talked about various promotional activities in a general sense. Nothing is off the table, though airshows are on hold for now.

With respect to the goal of supporting the education/business segment, one focal point is the vintage hangars currently in use by Averett University and Civil Air Patrol. No recommendations were offered.

Sid Allgood reported that Bud Oakey, on behalf of Averett University wanted to meet next week with the Commission. Alan Spencer suggested that we set the date and make sure we allow sufficient time for public notification.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm.