

## AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

3:30 p.m., Thursday, June 2, 2016

Time: 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Location: Bryan Room, Institute of Aviation

Members Present: Steve Carter (Chair), Tom Berns, Lori Cowdrey Benso (via phone), Mike DeLorenzo, Jayne DeLuce, William Dick, John Frasca, Bill Giannetti, Bruce Knight, Max Mitchell, Mike Monson (for Laurel Prussing), Seamus Reilly, Chris Schroeder, Dan Sholem, Rick Snider, and Bill Volk

Others Present: Gene Cossey, Pat Pioletti, and Bruce Walden

Members Absent: Amanda Fulfer, Karl Gnad, Gozen Hartman, Marvin Lacy, Robert McCleary, Alan Nudo, Jud Nogle, Craig Rost, and Laura Weis

### Meeting Summary

#### **Welcome and Introductions – Steve Carter**

Chair Steve Carter started the meeting at 3:36 p.m. by welcoming attendees and thanking them for their time. A final version of the Executive Summary of the Airport Impact report was shared with the committee members. This summary will be used to share the information revealed by the impact report to the various stakeholder groups throughout the community.

#### **Airport Economic Impact Report – Final Version**

Mr. Carter explained on behalf of Committee member Craig Rost, CEO of the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation, the goal for the executive summary is to show various groups the importance of Willard Airport to the economic health of the community. Mr. Rost would like to schedule meetings with various groups throughout the community to present the information from the Executive Summary. The purpose of the small group meetings with private sector individuals is to gain support for Willard Airport and raise the awareness in the community of the need for the airport. Mr. Rost also plans to have one meeting with all governmental representatives to share with them the information on the importance of the airport and how its success should be a priority for the governmental groups.

Ultimately, the goal is to show the county and city stakeholders how the airport impacts their areas financially. Supporting the airport is a good economic investment for them, regardless of how far away the airport is from their business or community.

Gene Cossey, Executive Director of Willard Airport, also stated the Executive Summary of the Economic Impact Report captures the main information from the full impact report. The impact of the airport on economic development, its significance to the surrounding communities, and the importance of growing the airport is thoroughly explained in the summary. There are two ways to grow the airport: by acquiring additional air service and by developing the economic infrastructure of the airport through more aviation related businesses located at the airport.

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Mr. Cossey stated that in the short term, the goal is to generate additional financial support for the 'revenue guarantee' for new air service. A revenue guarantee is not a subsidy and it is not just a set amount of money that is given over to an airline company in agreement for them to set up additional airline service. The revenue guarantee does absorb some of the risk that a company will take on when they decide to invest in a new route. Currently, there is money set aside to be used as a revenue guarantee, but does not equal the amount other regional airports have and the smaller amount does make it harder to compete for a new route with these other airports. Once the airlines are aware of the demand for air service at Willard Airport and the revenue guarantee funds are compiled, then it will be easier to get an airline to agree to set up air service at Willard Airport. Mr. Cossey explained the next phase in this process is to reach out and meet with companies within the community and ask them for financial support of this revenue guarantee. A group of the Airport Advisory Committee members, including Craig Rost from the EDC, will join Mr. Cossey to meet with company executives to ask for their support for this guarantee.

Chair Carter added that the add-on study portion of the report focusing on how much impact a new route will have on the community will also help convince community members to support the revenue guarantee. Mr. Cossey responded that he believes a new daily route to Charlotte, North Carolina's airport would be easily filled with the current demand in the community for flights to the east coast.

### *Questions from the committee:*

- Bill Dick asked what the estimated fixed costs are for an airline to come in to a new hub. Mr. Cossey said the typical cost is about \$100,000-\$150,000, but it really depends on the airline and their needs in the airport when establishing a route at a new hub.
- John Frasca asked how the 60% capture rate of customer demand is considered achievable. Mr. Cossey responded that the data is based mostly on business travelers and the volume of passenger demand already seen at Willard Airport. Business travelers are most concerned about time and convenience.

### **Airport Director Report** – Gene Cossey

- *TSA Pre-Check Registration Event:* This was extremely successful with 1,200 appointments scheduled online. Including the walk-in customers, there was a total of 1,700 people using the service at Willard during the two-week event. There are plans being made to have a similar event at Willard Airport sometime in the latter part of 2016.
- *Public Engagement:* Mr. Cossey has had several public engagement events to promote Willard Airport during the past two months. Each event is used as a way to encourage people to use the airport's website when they begin a search for airline travel as well as sharing information about what changes are occurring at the airport.

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- *Congressman Rodney Davis' Roundtable:* This discussion focused on the unmanned aerial systems, or drones. There was good information shared between the attendees during the roundtable. Drones should not be seen as 'bad' for the airline industry, but there is a need for regulations when it comes to airport airspace safety. Mr. Cossey has been talking with the local remote control factories – Hobbico, Horizon Hobby – in an attempt to determine ways to encourage more local development and growth in this industry.
- *Marketing Coordinator:* The current search to fill this position is now at the semi-finalist stage. The selected 2 finalists will have interviews with committee stakeholders before a candidate is chosen for the role.
- *Emergency Drills:* Recently completed the required FAA tri-annual emergency exercise drills with local emergency responders. There was good coverage of the drill in several media outlets. The event went well and produced some informative feedback from reacting to an emergency situation at the airport.
- *Construction Projects:* There is taxi-way construction going on and the new hangar for FlightStar is being built.
- *JumpStart Air Service Development Conference:* This is a conference in mid-June that Mr. Cossey will attend and speak with airline carriers about opportunities to provide new air service to/from Willard Airport. Meetings with the airline carriers are about 15-20 minutes for each airport representative.
- *New Concessions:* There is a Request For Proposals (RFP) being reviewed by the university's procurement department. This will be for a small coffee and food shop in the airport.

### *Questions from Committee:*

- Bruce Knight asked which airline carriers are showing interest in a route to Charlotte. Mr. Cossey responded that the most interest in a Willard/Charlotte route is from SkyWest and American Airlines. The pilot shortage is affecting the number of new routes being established by airline carriers. The lack of pilots is making it difficult for any airline company to set up new routes.
- Bill Dick asked if University representatives attended the JumpStart conference prior to this year. Bruce Walden indicated he did attend conferences in the past on behalf of Willard Airport.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

#### **Airport Development** - Dick Helton

Chair Carter reported on behalf of Mr. Helton. The subcommittee is continuing to discuss zoning concerns around the airport with the Champaign County Board representatives.

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### **Ground Transportation - Karl Gnadt**

Mr. Cossey explained the updating of taxi service regulations for the airport are now in the hands of Willard Airport. The Champaign and Urbana governments reviewed their regulations and decided they did not need to alter their current taxi regulations. The parking automation project has begun with the Request for Proposals (RFP) currently being reviewed by university's procurement office.

*Dan Sholem* asked if there is current process to regulate the overall taxi service presentation for customers or if one is being considered. Mr. Cossey responded he is interested in having something permanent in place that will regulate how taxi services are approaching travelers; however, there is more research needed to develop the proper regulations for the taxis and Uber/Lyft drivers.

### **Marketing - Jayne DeLuce**

Ms. DeLuce provided a handout with updates on specific marketing items and events since the past Airport Advisory Committee meeting. The next airport related event will occur on June 21-24. Willard Airport will be a designated stop that weekend for the Air Race Classic. A block of rooms at Hilton, Homewood, Home 2 Suites and Hawthorn are being held for the pilots and there are shuttles for the pilots to/from airport.

The future events still in progress for events at Willard Airport include the AOPA Fly-in and the 2017 Airfest. Both of these are specific events that will be centered around the airport to bring it public recognition.

Future marketing display ideas at Willard Airport include the 'Sense of Place' and Tuskegee Airmen. These are still being developed and more details will be shared at future meetings.

### **Regional Aviation Development - Seamus Reilly**

Mr. Reilly reported the subcommittee met and discussed what the group can focus on to aid in achieving the overall goals of the strategic plan for Willard Airport. Topics discussed included the Institute of Aviation and its importance, the economic development impact of Willard Airport, specific aviation related industries in the community, partnering with the university in the areas of research and development, and the potential of the Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) on the aviation industry. The group discussed how they could aid the airport's goal most effectively by working in tandem with the larger community group to develop long-range development plans and the completion of constructing the new airport control tower.

### **Additional Topics**

Mike DeLorenzo gave a report about the overall yearly progress of the university. A new chancellor is expected to be announced in the fall. The University is being impacted because there is no state budget; however, not as much as other institutions, such as Eastern Illinois and Western Illinois. Overall, the university received less than 30% of the total funding the university expected to receive for FY2016.

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Mr. DeLorenzo also reported the freshman class is expected to be higher for the upcoming school year, about 7,300, and the international student numbers are expected to be the same as last year.

Seamus Reilly added that Parkland College is facing similar budget hardships and will eventually receive a third of the funds they expected for FY2016. As a result of the budget concerns and reductions, Parkland College decreased their total workforce by 49 employees this past year.

### **Wrap Up & Adjourn**

Chair Carter thanked everyone again for their time and looked forward to seeing them at the next meeting in a few months.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, ~~August 4~~, October 6, 2016

3:30-5:00 p.m.

Bryan Room, Institute of Aviation