

***MINUTES OF AIRPORT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING***  
***TUESDAY – MAY 27, 2025***  
***FORT SMITH REGIONAL AIRPORT CONFERENCE ROOM***

The regular meeting of the Fort Smith Airport Commission was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairman Pendergrass, presiding. Commissioners Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly and Voris were present. Also present were Lindsay Conley, Finance & Administration Director, and Andrew Meyer, Operations Director. Commissioner Ridgley was absent.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On motion by Commissioner Barr and second by Commissioner Hawkins, the commission approved the minutes of the April 22, 2025 regular meeting. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

On motion by Commissioner Cooper and second by Commissioner Hawkins, the commission approved the minutes of the April 28, 2025 special meeting. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

**TREASURERS' REPORT**

Commission Treasurer Cooper presented the financial report for April 2025. The airport maintained a strong financial position, with an operating cash and investment balance of \$8.8 million, and a project fund balance of \$1.4 million. With 32.9% of the year completed, both operating revenues (31.1%) and operating expenses (31.0%) were slightly below budget expectations. Net operating income for the month totaled \$63,624. Rental car fuel revenues experienced a notable decline due to a malfunctioning pump; however, a replacement has been ordered to resolve the issue. Miscellaneous revenue was generated from the sale of surplus snow plow blades to the City of Lowell. Key expenditures for the month included AOG gas costs, chiller system repairs, and hangar roof maintenance.

**ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

1. Air Force Report/Update – Col. Nicholas Ihde, Commander of the US Air Force 85<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, provided an update highlighting a potential growth opportunity at the airport involving Adversary Air Support operations in jet aircraft format. The initiative would require exploring hangar rental space at the airport, enabling the jets to be based at Fort Smith (FSM) rather than at Bentonville or Mena. While no formal contract with the Air Guard was in place, discussions were in the early exploratory phase. Col. Ihde also noted that the use of the Exped BAK 12 aircraft arresting system will be temporarily extended until testing of the BAK 14 system is completed. Additionally, the Air Force has initiated preliminary planning discussions for a potential Air Show in 2027. A key requirement for moving forward with the event will be the identification and securing of a sponsor.
2. Baker Donelson AJUA Discussion – Steven Hyjek, Michael Reynolds and Tom Shaw of Baker Donelson, a law firm in the Southeastern U.S., joined the commission meeting virtually to discuss the Airport Joint Use Agreement (AJUA). Baker Donelson has been contracted by the City of Fort Smith to draft a new AJUA between the Airport and the Air Force, with the goal of ensuring legal clarity and mutual protection for all parties involved. The AJUA defines the

## ***Minutes of F.S.A.C. Regular Meeting***

*May 27, 2025*

*Page 2*

shared responsibilities of the Airport and the Air Force to support the FMS mission. A new AJUA is needed due to significant changes in the mission scope, including the introduction of new aircraft, expanded infrastructure and a new leasehold at the Air National Guard (ANG) base. Baker Donelson will work to align the policies and requirements of both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Department of Defense (DOD). A full draft of the AJUA is expected to be presented for revisions by the end of July 2025.

3. Executive Search Proposals – Airport Director Position – Staff received proposals from five recruitment firms for the Airport Director position. After initial review, three firms were removed from consideration:
  - SGR Executive Recruitment – excluded due to involvement with the recent City of Fort Smith auditor search.
  - Horizon Executive Search – excluded due to its UK-based operations.
  - Keller-NPA Search Services – withdrew, citing a limited candidate pool for this specialized role.

Two firms were selected to present proposals to the commission virtually at the meeting:

- ADK Consulting & Executive Search – Rod Dinger presented on behalf of ADK, highlighting the firm's status as the leading airport executive search firm in the U.S., with a candidate pool of over 70,000 individuals. Their recruitment strategy includes advertising through AAAE, Airport Magazine and weekly industry newsletters, along with direct outreach to qualified candidates. The Full Search cost was \$45,306, and included final interviews, offer letters and background checks. The Hybrid Search cost was \$28,660 covered the process through the selection of final candidates. The search would begin with a 30-day advertising period, followed by candidate screening and selection.
- Total Aviation Staffing – Sam Gentel outlined their nationwide recruitment process, which included briefing, research and mapping, candidate assessments, shortlisting, weekly steering meetings, interview and referencing, and offer management. The estimated timeline for their process was 4 to 6 weeks and cost \$25,000.

After discussion, the commission decided to proceed with ADK's full search package, citing the firm's proven expertise in airport executive placements and the airport's positive prior experience with their services.

A motion was made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Kelly to approve ADK Consulting to perform the executive search for the Airport Director position. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

4. ARFF Station Expansion - MCCA Modification and Change Order Request - The ARFF Station Expansion is being funded through a Military Construction Cooperative Agreement (MCCA). Staff received a request from the National Guard Bureau (NGB) to approve an MCCA Modification, which would provide an additional \$174,746.82 in funding. These funds are designated for the relocation of the Monaco Mass Notification Fire Alarm System. Following this, NGB submitted a change order request to the Beshears ARFF Station

## ***Minutes of F.S.A.C. Regular Meeting***

*May 27, 2025*

*Page 3*

Construction Contract. The change order, totaling \$174,745.82, covers the procurement and installation of the Mass Notification System within the expanded facility. With the inclusion of this MCCA Modification, the total construction funding approved by NGB stands at \$5,477,941.92. Incorporating the proposed change order, the updated total for the Beshears construction contract is \$5,477,940.92.

A motion to approve the MCCA Modification and the Beshears Change Order request and to authorize the co-interim director to execute the necessary contract documentation was made by Commissioner Voris and seconded by Commissioner Cooper. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

5. Parking Facilities Operator Selection – The current operating agreement with Republic Parking is set to expire on June 30, 2025. In preparation, staff issued a Request for Proposals (RFP), and received submissions from three firms: Republic Parking, LAZ Parking and SP Plus LLC. After a thorough evaluation, the selection committee unanimously ranked SP Plus as the top candidate, citing their strong technical capabilities, financial return, and innovated approach. SP Plus proposed implementing a License Plate Recognition (LPR) and AI-based parking system, including new barrier gates, entry terminals with intercoms, cameras and supporting hardware at no cost to the airport. Their model included a consumer transaction fee based on the duration of parking, that would be charged in addition to the standard airport parking fee. Staff contacted two current SP Plus clients, both of whom provided strongly positive references, although neither had yet implemented the new LPR/AI-based system. Commissioner Cooper shared a negative personal experience with SP Plus at another location, where the system failed and their staff was unable to assist. Commissioner Kelly expressed concern about the additional transaction fee, noting that FSM should avoid giving travelers a reason to choose another airport. Staff said that Republic Parking had expressed interest in presenting their proposal directly to the commission. Commissioner Barr, a member of the selection committee, emphasized that if Republic were allowed to present, all proposers should be given the same opportunity. He reaffirmed his belief that SP Plus offered the best overall solution for FSM's parking operations.

A motion to table the issue until all proposals could be presented to the commission at a future meeting was made by Commissioner Voris and seconded by Commissioner Hawkins. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

6. TSA PreCheck Mobile Enrollment at FSM - To enhance passenger convenience, staff is coordinating with Clear, an authorized TSA PreCheck enrollment provider, to offer recurring monthly TSA PreCheck mobile enrollment at FSM. Clear has confirmed the ability to dispatch a mobile enrollment team from their Tulsa office. The team will operate from the vacant café space adjacent to the TSA checkpoint, with a proposed schedule of one Friday per month. They will arrive at 4:30am and operate through 3:00pm, accommodating early morning travelers. Both appointments and walk-ins will be accepted throughout the day. To promote the service, staff will launch a multi-channel outreach campaign, including social media announcements,

## ***Minutes of F.S.A.C. Regular Meeting***

*May 27, 2025*

*Page 4*

updates on the airport's website, on-site signage near the TSA checkpoint, and outreach to local media outlets. Each enrollment event will cost \$650. A motion to approve Clear to perform monthly TSA PreCheck enrollment events at FSM and subsidize the associated costs was made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Hawkins. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

7. Alpine Aviation Lease Termination - In April 2025, Al Lavenue of Alpine Aviation entered into a lease agreement to construct a hangar on the Charlie South ramp. Following the lease execution, Mr. Lavenue applied for a building permit through the City of Fort Smith. During the permitting process, he was informed that the city would require the removal of the existing concrete and the installation of a new concrete pad, piers, footings, and apron—an unanticipated requirement with an estimated cost of \$50,000 to \$75,000. Due to these unforeseen expenses, Mr. Lavenue formally requested to terminate the lease. He expressed a continued interest in building the hangar at FSM, but only if the existing concrete slab on the Charlie South ramp could be used, contingent upon approval from the City's planning department. Commissioner Kelly recommended engaging with the planning department to determine whether the additional construction requirements were indeed necessary. Commissioner Cooper agreed to follow up with the department to explore potential flexibility or alternatives. No formal motion was made, and the matter remains under consideration pending further discussion with the City of Fort Smith.

8. Snow Removal Equipment (SRE) Building – Project Update and Grant Strategy - The Snow Removal Equipment (SRE) Building is a key component of the airport's 2025 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and was originally slated to receive funding through the FAA's Airport Infrastructure Grant (AIG) and Airport Improvement Program (AIP) for both design and construction. In early May, the project was advertised for competitive bidding. A pre-bid meeting was held on May 13, and sealed bids were opened on May 20. Two bids were received: Beshears Construction: \$3,653,267 and Crawford Construction: \$4,525,000.

In parallel, Kelly Johnson, the airport consultant engaged by the commission in April, applied for a Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) grant through Senator Boozman's office to fund the SRE Building. This week, the project was selected to advance in the competitive grant process, with final award decisions expected in July.

To avoid committing FAA funds to a project that may ultimately be funded through Congressional appropriation, Ms. Johnson is collaborating with Glenn Boles, former FAA District Manager for Arkansas, to strategically reallocate projects within FSM's CIP. FAA grant applications are currently being prepared for the design portion of the SRE Building, and the design of the Runway 2/20 Overlay, originally scheduled for 2026. Mr. Boles was working to temporarily transfer expiring AIP/NPE funds to another Arkansas Part 139 airport, with the intent to return those funds to FSM in 2026 for use on a different priority project.

If the CDS Grant is awarded, the airport will have until August 18, 2025, to award one of the construction bids received. This would allow FSM to redirect approximately \$3.6 million in

## ***Minutes of F.S.A.C. Regular Meeting***

*May 27, 2025*

*Page 5*

FAA AIP and AIG funds to other high-priority capital projects. If the grant is not awarded, the airport retains the option to rebid the SRE Building construction at a later date.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Voris to authorize the Chairman to execute the FAA grant applications for the SRE building design and the Runway 2/20 Overlay Design, and to authorize the temporary AIP funds transfer. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

### **9. Director's Report**

- Mead & Hunt Air Service Development – Airline profitability is down across all sectors, prompting many carriers to reduce service heading into the fall. Despite this, FSM's service levels remain stable. The regional pilot shortage has now reversed, with an oversupply of pilots in the market. However, Delta has phased out its smaller regional jets, and any potential return to FSM would require demonstrating the ability to consistently fill 210 seats per day. American Airlines continues to perform well at FSM. However, for FSM to attract additional routes, it must be shown that local passengers are choosing other carriers at XNA, rather than flying American out of XNA. American is unlikely to add service that would cannibalize its existing passenger base at XNA. To support this effort, Mead & Hunt will conduct an updated passenger leakage study in July – the first since 2023. The goal is to gather compelling data to demonstrate FSM's potential and make a strong case to carriers for new route development.
- Runway 8 Blast Pad Project – A Notice to Proceed has been issued to Forsgren, Inc. Their personnel are currently undergoing the airport badging process. Construction is scheduled to begin in June, and is expected to be completed within 5 working days.
- Hangar 22 Door Replacement – The replacement door has been ordered, with installation scheduled to begin on June 16. The project is expected to take 5 to 7 working days to complete.
- ARFF Station Expansion Update – The project is currently 60% complete. Work is underway to separate existing utilities onto new meters, allowing for independent tracking between the ARFF station and the future SRE building. Completion is expected in November.
- Perimeter Fence Project – The Passenger Facility Charge (PFC)-funded project has reached 100% design completion, with no comments received from the TSA or FAA. Construction is expected to begin in July or August.
- FSM/USAF Project Coordination – Staff is coordinating with Air Force, FAA, and engineers to plan and phase several key projects, including: Temporary Vertical Launch (VL) pad, Taxiway E Realignment, Runway 2/20 Mill and Overlay, and Permanent VL Pad. These efforts are aimed at supporting the F35B operations throughout the construction period.

***Minutes of F.S.A.C. Regular Meeting***

*May 27, 2025*

*Page 6*

- FAA Annual Safety Certification Inspection – The FAA’s annual safety inspection is taking place the first week of June.
- Full Scale Emergency and TSA Security Exercises – Both exercises were successfully conducted on May 16, with strong participation from community partners and stakeholders.
- Quarterly Airport Safety Newsletter – Staff has launched a new quarterly safety newsletter, distributed to airport stakeholders to enhance communication and promote safety awareness.
- Runway 8 Approach End Crack Seal – Crack sealing work at the approach end of Runway 8 was completed on May 5.
- AEP Swift Water Rescue Plan – The Airport Emergency Plan (AEP) Swift Water Rescue Plan has been approved by the FAA. Staff has also submitted an Airport Security Plan (ASP) rewrite and Airport Certification Manual (ACM) revisions.
- Project Gantt Chart - Director Meyer created a Gantt chart outlining all current and planned FSM projects, which has been shared with the commission for tracking and planning purposes.

**NEXT COMMISSION MEETING**

The next meeting of the Fort Smith Airport Commission will be Tuesday, June 24, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On motion by Commissioner Hawkins and second by Commissioner Cooper, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass and Voris. Voting Nay: none. Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Lindsay Conley  
Co-Interim Airport Director