

***MINUTES OF AIRPORT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING***  
***TUESDAY – JUNE 24, 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, Ridgley and Voris were present. Also present were Lindsay Conley, Finance & Administration Director, and Andrew Meyer, Operations Director.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

On motion by Commissioner Voris and second by Commissioner Hawkins, the commission approved the minutes of the May 27, 2025 regular meeting. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

On motion by Commissioner Voris and second by Commissioner Hawkins, the commission approved the minutes of the June 11, 2025 study session. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried.

**TREASURERS' REPORT**

Commission Treasurer Cooper presented the financial report for May 2025. The airport maintained a strong financial position, with an operating cash and investment balance of \$8.7 million, and a project fund balance of \$1.4 million. With 41.4% of the fiscal year completed, operating revenues stood at 39.3%, slightly below budget projections, while operating expenses reached 46.2%, exceeding budget expectations. This resulted in a net operating loss of \$209,031 for the month. The loss was primarily attributed to the payout of accrued leave benefits related to Michael Griffin's resignation, as well as increased professional services costs during the leadership transition. Jetbridge brake replacements totaling \$41,000 and ARFF truck repairs totaling \$24,000 also contributed to the month's operating loss. Despite these one-time and transitional expenses, the airport remains financially stable and well-positioned for continued operations and growth.

**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 on the recent FAA annual certification inspection. One of the key findings was that the flush lights were slightly above the allowable height limits. The Air Force has committed to correcting this issue by August. Col. Ihde also noted that they are working closely with Director Meyer to bring the BAK barrier and associated tape into full compliance. Looking ahead, Polish F-35 jets are scheduled to arrive at Fort Smith Regional Airport by the end of November, bringing the total number of F-35s stationed at FSM to eight. In spring 2026, Finland is expected to deploy an additional eight jets, increasing the total to sixteen.
2. Parking Facilities Operator Proposals – Following the May 27 commission meeting, the three companies that submitted proposals in response to the Parking Facilities Operator RFP – Republic Parking, LAZ Parking, and SP Plus LLC - were invited to present their proposals directly to the commission.

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- SP Plus LLC – Representatives Jason Finch, Christina Combs, and Ed Kafcik proposed a ComputerVision LPR and AI-based parking system featuring new barrier gates. Their proposal included:
  - No upfront cost to the airport
  - A monthly minimum guarantee of \$27,083.33 or 70% of gross parking revenue, whichever is greater
  - A consumer transaction fee based on length of stay, in addition to standard parking rates
  - Access to customer billing zip code data, though they noted this may reflect company-issued card zip codes rather than individual users
  - System reliability of 99.9% uptime, with cellular service backed by Starlink
- LAZ Parking – Chris Hawley, Eric Gomes, and Don Barrett proposed installing new TIBA parking equipment with LPR at:
  - A one-time cost of \$173,675 and a monthly recurring cost of \$700
  - An option to fund equipment through a \$1.00 transaction fee imposed to parking customers
  - A monthly minimum guarantee of \$16,667 or 50% of revenue up to \$29,167, whichever is greater
  - Emphasis on strong client relationships and high customer satisfaction
- Republic Parking – Bill May and Scott Hutchison proposed a HUB Janice parking system valued at \$90,000, featuring a cashless mobile exit system, offered at:
  - No cost to the airport
  - A monthly minimum guarantee of \$10,000 or 70% of gross parking revenue, whichever is greater
  - A record of no reported customer satisfaction issues

Commissioner Barr share that the selection committee unanimously ranked SP Plus LLC highest, citing its strong financial offer and advanced, future-ready technology. Director Meyers supported SP Plus for its potential to streamline airport access with faster ingress and egress. Director Conley noted the appeal of the high minimum guarantee but expressed concerns after hearing about technology issues at other airports, questioning how FSM customers would adapt.

Commissioner Kelly raised concerns about SP Plus's transaction fees and shared a negative personal experience with their system at another airport. Commissioner Cooper appreciated the innovation but was wary of app-based systems requiring excessive personal information. Commissioner Voris, however, appreciated the system's redundancy and reliability.

Ultimately, the commission agreed that Republic Parking's long-standing, positive partnership with the airport, combined with its customer-friendly approach and cost-effective proposal, made it the best choice at this time.

A motion was made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Hawkins to award Republic Parking the Parking Facilities Operator contract and to authorize the Co-

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Interim Director to execute the operating agreement upon review of legal counsel. Voting aye: Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting nay: Barr. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

3. Airport Director Position Salary Range – ADK Consulting & Executive Search provided a recommended salary range for the open Airport Director Position. Based on comparable airports where ADK has conducted similar recruitments, the suggested range was between \$149,000 to \$196,000. It was recommended that this salary range be included in the position's advertising brochure to help attract a strong pool of qualified candidates.

A motion was made by Commissioner Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Voris to approve the salary range of \$149,000 to \$196,000 for the airport director position. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

4. Lamar Outdoor Advertising – Proposed Billboards - Lamar Outdoor Advertising submitted a request for the commission to consider the placement of two billboards on airport property—one near the Casey's location and another adjacent to the Element Hotel. If either of those sites proves unfeasible, a third alternative location has been identified on the east end of the airport's Phoenix property. Lamar has proposed an annual payment of \$10,000 per billboard, which can be negotiated. Commissioner Cooper recommended allowing Lamar to proceed with seeking approval from the City of Fort Smith Planning Department for billboard placement within the Massard Overlay District. At this stage, Cooper did not recommend engaging consulting engineers or conducting surveys. If approved by the City, Lamar will need to come back to the Commission for negotiations and final approval.

A motion to approve Lamar Outdoor Advertising to move forward with the city planning process for two billboards on airport property was made by Commissioner Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Ridgley. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

5. Rockets Restaurant Proposal – Joseph Williams submitted a proposal to open a new restaurant, Rockets, in the currently vacant café space within the airport terminal. His concept envisioned a refined, modern restaurant and bar designed to serve travelers, airport staff, and local patrons alike. Proposed operating hours were 4:00–11:00 a.m. and 4:00–10:00 p.m., with service including both food and alcoholic beverages. Pending completion of licensing, hiring, interior setup, and staff training, Mr. Williams anticipates a grand opening in August 2025. In response to his initial inquiry, airport staff provided a draft lease outlining terms. Under the proposed agreement, rent would be set at 5% of gross monthly revenue, applicable only if monthly revenue exceeds \$5,000. During the commissioners' discussion, Mr. Williams confirmed he has not previously operated a restaurant. Director Conley expressed concern about Mr. Williams' ability to manage the business locally, noting his California residency. Mr. Williams clarified that he has since relocated to Arkansas for employment at the Lock & Dam. Commissioner Voris appreciated Mr. Williams' entrepreneurial spirit but requested a clearer vision of the restaurant's design and atmosphere. Commissioner Cooper recommended that legal counsel review the lease to ensure it includes provisions allowing the airport to terminate the agreement should the restaurant become a nuisance.

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A motion to allow Joseph Williams to move forward in negotiating and establishing a lease, and coming back to the commission with final design concepts for commission approval was made by Commissioner Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Hawkins. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

6. Cabaness Lease Termination - Cliff Cabaness recently sold his property on Massard Road and has requested termination of his lease for a small adjacent parcel, which was leased at an annual rate of \$400.00. The airport is currently in discussions with the new property owner to establish a replacement lease for the same parcel.

A motion to approve the Cabaness lease termination and to authorize the Co-Interim Director to execute the lease termination agreement was made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Ridgley. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley 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. After May's commission meeting, staff, commissioners and Mr. Lavenue followed up with the City of Fort Smith Planning Department, and found that the hangar that the 63'x50' hangar he purchased is too heavy to be set on an 8" concrete pad, as the main frame columns were designed to be set on concrete piers for support. Mr. Lavenue plans to get a building cost for a smaller, lighter weight 50'x45' hangar, and will present those plans to the airport commission for approval later this year.

A motion to approve the Alpine Aviation lease termination and to authorize the Co-Interim Director to execute the lease termination agreement was made by Commissioner Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Voris. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

8. Election of Officers – Rules and Regulations of the Airport Commission provide for the election of a chairman, vice-chairman, and commission treasurer in June of each year. Officers serve until their term expires or their successors are elected. Chairman Pendergrass nominated Commissioner Voris to serve as Chairman, Commissioner Cooper as Vice Chairman, and Commissioner Barr Treasurer for the upcoming year.

A motion to accept the slate of officers with terms to begin on July 1, 2025 was made by Commissioner Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Ridgley. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting nay: none. Motion carried. There was no further discussion.

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

- Mead & Hunt Air Service Development – FSM enplanement levels remain flat year-over-year, with a decline in scheduled seat availability during the summer months. This reduction is primarily attributed to American Airlines' fleet adjustments, specifically the replacement of the 76-seat E175 aircraft with the smaller 65-seat E170. Additionally, the August schedule reflects the removal of the fourth daily flight to Dallas due to underperformance, with a reported load factor of only 66% in August 2024. However, the September and October schedules indicate the return of the fourth flight. To support this added capacity, a targeted social media campaign was recommended for July 2025. The weakest-performing flight continues to be the inbound 8:30 a.m. arrival from Dallas, which struggles with low load factors, likely due to limited early-morning connection opportunities.
- Flight Data – At the request of Chairman Pendergrass, Director Meyer collaborated with American Airlines staff to secure monthly flight performance data for commission reporting. The data includes metrics on on-time departures, delays, cancellations, and the average monthly load factor.
- FAA Grants Update – During the month, the transfer of 2022 Entitlement Funds to the Texarkana Airport Authority was successfully completed. Additionally, the AIG grants for both the Runway 8 Blast Pad and the Snow Removal Building Design have been finalized. The AIG grant application and supporting documentation for the Runway 2/20 Overlay Design was submitted to the FAA. The FAA is currently in the process of reviewing and approving the reprogramming of funds originally allocated for Snow Removal Equipment construction.
- FAA Cert Inspection – Three correction items were noted for follow-up, including residual ponding on the west side of Taxiway Bravo, north of Hotel; a grading adjustment needed at the BAK-12 fairlead beam; and issues related to the BAK-12 system and runway edge lights. The FAA inspector praised the overall field presentation, the implementation of new inspection software, the quality of training records, and the professionalism of both operations and fueling personnel.
- Clear TSA PreCheck Enrollment Event – On Thursday, July 10, 2025, FSM will host a TSA PreCheck enrollment event, offering bundled enrollment options for both TSA PreCheck and CLEAR+. Marketing materials for the event were reviewed and approved by TSA, with a recommended three-week lead time for promotional exposure. FSM is now listed on the official [tsa.gov](https://tsa.gov) website, and appointment slots are currently open. The event has been promoted via the airport's Facebook page, official website, and through notifications sent to 40/29 News and Channel 5.
- Brush-Hogging Estimate – In response to the U.S. Air Force's request to discontinue hay baling—due to concerns that it may attract wildlife and pose safety risks near the runway—staff obtained an initial estimate for brush-hogging services. Niblett Brush-Hogging provided a quote of \$15,365 per cut, with an anticipated four to five cuts per

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year. Staff is currently in the process of securing additional estimates to ensure cost-effectiveness and compliance with the Air Force's guidance.

- **Project Updates** – The Hangar 22 door replacement is progressing, with the new door scheduled to arrive tomorrow. For the fuel pump replacements, all necessary parts are in stock, and staff is currently awaiting confirmation of the installation date. The ARFF Station expansion continues to advance: roof waterproofing has been completed, all windows have been installed, siding preparation is nearly finished, and roll-up doors are expected to arrive within the next two weeks. Perimeter fence improvements are scheduled to begin in late July or August. The SRE Building design is nearing completion; however, construction remains on hold pending funding availability. Lastly, the Air National Guard's PV Solar Array Project is approaching final design, with plans nearing 100% completion. Construction of the Runway 8 Blast Pad rehabilitation was started and expected to be complete within one week.
- **Recognizing Leadership and Dedication** – Director Meyer expressed sincere appreciation to Chairman Eric Pendergrass and Commissioner Robert Hawkins for their outstanding service to the Airport Commission. Commissioner Hawkins was honored for his retirement after 10 years of dedicated service on the commission, following a distinguished 40-year career in aviation. Chairman Pendergrass was also recognized as his term as Chairman concluded at this meeting, with gratitude extended for his leadership and commitment throughout the past year.

### **10. Chairman's Report**

- **AJUA Discussions** – The process remains in the early stages of identifying key issues. The latest cycle's status reports were received earlier that day, indicating some progress, though the pace continues to be very slow.
- **Chamber of Commerce & Regional Council Discussions** – The Chamber of Commerce and Regional Council encouraged the airport to more actively promote the positive work being done and to highlight FSM's commitment to becoming a customer service-focused airport—especially at a time when exceptional service in air travel is increasingly rare. They pointed to initiatives such as the TSA PreCheck Enrollment Event and the strategic realignment of grant funding to minimize operational disruptions as examples worth showcasing. The suggestion was made to “beat our own drum” and consider launching a marketing campaign under the working title: “If you flew Fort Smith, you'd be home by now.” There appears to be strong support for this messaging approach, should the airport choose to move forward with it.

### **NEXT COMMISSION MEETING**

The next meeting of the Fort Smith Airport Commission will be Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

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ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Commissioner Hawkins and second by Commissioner Ridgley, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. Voting aye: Barr, Cooper, Hawkins, Kelly, Pendergrass, Ridgley and Voris. Voting Nay: none. Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindsay Conley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lindsay Conley  
Co-Interim Airport Director