



Portage County Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting Minutes

449 South Meridian Street
Ravenna, OH 44266
<http://www.co.portage.oh.us>

Amy Hutchinson, Clerk
330-297-3600

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

9:00 AM

Commissioners' Board Room

*The Commissioners' meeting minutes are summarized; Audio recordings and backup material are available.
Please contact the Commissioners' Office for specific details.*

The Portage County Board of Commissioners' meeting came to order with the following members present:

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Sabrina Christian-Bennett	President	Attending: 9:02 AM
Anthony J. Badalamenti	Vice President	Present
Vicki A. Kline	Board Member	Present

Also attending: Record Courier Reporter Diane Smith

DISCUSSION

1. Regional Airport Authority

- The Board received a copy of Resolution No. 2021-01 dated February 10, 2021, from the Regional Airport Authority, indicating its intent to dissolve the Regional Airport Authority Board of Trustees and the Portage County Regional Airport Authority. This is the first step in the process.
- Last year, there were extensive conversations and the best way for the Airport to proceed would be under County ownership rather than Airport Board ownership.
- The Airport can no longer continue to operate within the given constraints with the largest being the revenue stream it generates.
- The next optional step recommended by the Prosecutor's Office is for the Airport President and Vice President to attend a public meeting of the Board of Commissioners to present their case as to why the County should take over the Airport in open session.
- The Board will then need to decide and respond accordingly either way.
- If the Board decides to take over the Airport, it needs to set a date so negotiations can begin and resolutions can be put into place.
- The Board will need to sort between decisions it needs to make now and what decisions are still going to be there whether the Board takes it over (ie. broken fuel tank, Nanway Parkway).
- The Board received 3 years of Airport financials, but it has been apparent for the last 5-6 years.
- The Airport's has been able to sustain itself due to one-time payouts (ie. insurance for the hanger and Kelly settlement).

- Commissioner Badalamenti asked what happens if the Board doesn't accept the Airport and Director Bragg responded the Airport continues as is. A budget can be balanced by cutting expenses or raising revenue and the County will either need to provide additional funding to move the Airport forward or they will need to cut expenses by providing less service.
- Most people believe the Airport is a good asset and is in a great location, so most discussion has been that the County doesn't want to lose it.
- Commissioner Badalamenti asked what happens if the Airport run out of money and Director Bragg explained the most damaging aspect would be economic development. If the Airport dissolved completely, the County will have to work with the FAA to repay the money it invested into the Airport to the tune of approximately \$8-9 million of the original \$30 million dollars in FAA grants. If the Airport is reduced in capacity, the County wouldn't owe anything.
- Commissioner Badalamenti asked what would the County own if the Board takes over the Airport and Director Bragg explained the large building off Nanway Parkway is the main Flight Center and it's currently leased by the Fixed Based Operator (FBO). The County owns the land and the FBO owns the building. The agreement is such that after 50 years, the building reverts to ownership of the Airport and we are 20 years into that agreement. At the end of Nanway Parkway are the nice hangars owned and leased by the FBO. The next two structures are the Airport hangars and to the south of the hangars are 2 pads one of which is where the hanger blew over and the other pad was put there for the new construction and never utilized. There's also a road that extends for the possibility of a couple other hangars to be constructed. One of the hangars has a crack in the flooring that is quite substantial. There are two parcels to the north and one of them contains equipment that can be moved so the hanger can be leased. There is also a series of buildings to store equipment.
- If the County took over the FBO, it would gain the flight center and nice hanger, all the other hangars are privately owned and will remain private.
- If County plans to take over the Airport, the Board needs to buy out the FBO and take back control of the tank farm. Staff is currently obtaining appraisals.
- Commissioner Badalamenti noted in order for other aircraft to land at the Airport, an extension is needed and there are options as to how service vehicles can get around the area.
- Commissioner Badalamenti asked if the County owns the land around the former Nursing Home and Director Bragg replied it does. If the Board decided to sell the former Nursing Home, it should consider keep a portion of the land for Airport use.
- Director Bragg noted there are Airport agreements in place and the agreements will be modified to become policies and procedures for the department should the Board take it over.
- If the County takes over the Airport, it should consider keeping the two part time Airport employees (Secretary and Maintenance) and the FBO's employees (Airport Manager and Maintenance).
- If the Board wants a hanger design constructed, it could get that done and programming maintenance.

- The Board may want to consider an Airport Manager and there is someone at the Airport currently providing that service. Ideally, that person should be able to go to places like Kent State and negotiate agreements in terms of their use of the Airport, other organizations that like to use airports, and leasing hangers.
- Commissioner Badalamenti asked if the largest companies in Portage County have been surveyed to see if there is any interest if the Airport is expanded and Director Bragg noted there's been a lot of hesitation because of the history of the Airport.
- The County could start by constructing a hanger and see if there's any interest, then it could start collecting data to see if it's worth going to the next step.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett mentioned Kent State looked into the possibility of closing the Stow airport location to utilize Portage County's airport but didn't because of the payback to the FAA.
- Commissioner Kline asked if there's a time when they won't have to pay that off and Director Bragg explained if the FAA knows Portage County is investing in its Airport, they may be amicable to a merger without a requirement for payback, but they need to see a commitment.
- Commissioner Christian-Bennett stated it depends on whether the expansion is done on the runway that would allow for larger planes to utilize the Airport.
- Commissioner Badalamenti mentioned 12 years ago, a noise study was conducted and found very little effect to the surrounding area. There are 160,000 people in Portage County and who will be served by building the Airport so that it's functional? Director Bragg explained back in the day, there was a lot of pushback to the idea of expanding the runway, particularly from the Shalersville Township Trustees and residents. The current Trustees are amicable to expanding the runway and see the value. The larger picture is that it's not just Shalersville that it serviced, it also includes Aurora, Streetsboro, Kent and Ravenna and they should be considered in terms of how the Airport is developed, as well.
- Director Bragg will continue to propose the County work with either Streetsboro or Mantua to bring a JEDD into the area and then the County would be eligible to receive funding and the JEDD could be used as a possible source of Airport funding going into the future. It is still very speculative, but could be explored.
- The next step is for the Board to decide whether it wants a formal presentation by the Airport Board. If the Commissioners are serious about moving forward, staff needs a deadline to allow them to start talking to people and getting agreements into place. If the Board has no interest in the takeover, the Board needs to send a letter to the Airport indicating it will not agree to the dissolution and the Airport Board should continue operations. Also included in the letter should be basic instruction of what the County will provide or won't provide in terms of funding.
- If the County takes over the Airport, the Airport Board will be dissolved, but an Advisory Committee could be established so the County could meet with them to provide input as users of the Airport so the County is going in the right direction.
- Commissioner Kline noted it's stressful because the Board doesn't know anything about running an Airport and Director Bragg reiterated this is the type of situation when proper employment comes into play. There is a robust market for Airport Managers if the Board wanted to go that route.

- The goal is to develop a revenue structure to be able to do as good at minimum, preferably even better than what's being done now, and the Airport Board believes it will happen under the Board's direction.
- Commissioner Kline noted the Board needs to convince the public that the Airport won't become a money pit and Director Bragg explained it's a worse money pit without the County taking it over.
- Commissioner Badalamenti asked how much funding has been provided to the Airport per year and Director Bragg explained it's been growing, last year they received \$70,000 for the fuel tank and this year the County has already provided \$97,000 and it's probably not the end of the requests as the amount and backlog are continuing to grow, especially the asphalt issues.
- Commissioner Badalamenti asked if the Board should continue providing parcels as a way to support the Airport and Director Bragg doesn't believe that practice should continue as the fixed rate leases were a mistake but most of that will be corrected if the County takes over the Airport.
- Commissioner Kline asked if Exhibit B Land Lease Rate Rent Calculations dated 7-14-99 is current and if the amount for the large hanger should be \$2,400.00? Director Bragg will investigate and report back.
- Commissioner Kline noted Portage Development Director Brad Ehrhart would be a great public relations person because he does an outstanding job brining businesses in. Commissioner Christian-Bennett noted Director Ehrhart has already reached out to her about the issue.
- Director Bragg mentioned it's not just businesses that are going to use the Airport, there's a value for businesses that don't use it right now and having it available is an attractive asset.

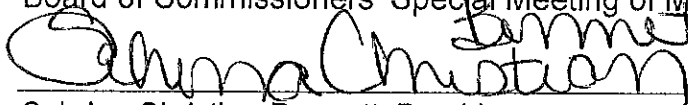
The Board agreed it would like the Airport representatives to come in and make a presentation when Chris Gilmore is available.

Motion: by Commissioner Badalamenti, seconded by Commissioner Christian-Bennett that the Board adjourn the Special Meeting of **March 2, 2021 at 9:43 AM.**

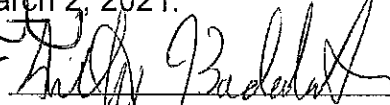
All in Favor: Commissioner Badalamenti, Yea; Commissioner Christian-Bennett, Yea; Commissioner Kline, Yea;

Motion Carries


We do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct record of the Portage County Board of Commissioners' Special Meeting of March 2, 2021.



Sabrina Christian-Bennett, President



Anthony J. Badalamenti, Vice President



Vicki A. Kline, Board Member



Amy Hutchinson, Clerk