

JOINT MEETING

- I. Welcome – Spalding County Commission Chairman Edward Goss convened the joint meeting of the Spalding County Board of Commissioners, the City of Griffin Board of Commissioners, and the Griffin-Spalding County Airport Advisory Board on July 16, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in the Welcome Center.

Commissioner Gilreath read from a prepared statement which contended the City of Griffin Board of Commissioners had tried to intimidate and threaten approval of this site selection study process, and he advised the County Board of Commissioners would not be held hostage by these tactics. Most City Commissioners have expressed the opinion in many public forums that they would not agree to fund the remainder of the money needed to complete the process unless the County agrees favorably to annexation of the new airport site into the City. He was disappointed to see elected officials put themselves before those they were elected to serve. If this is the case, then this meeting has no purpose and he, as a County Commissioner, felt this was a waste of his time. He asked those attending tonight to come together for the sake of those they serve. He stated he would be available for any and all discussions of important projects for the controlled growth of the County.

- II. Presentation by LPA Group, Staff and Airport Advisory Board regarding Airport Site Selection Study process to date.

Airport Manager Robert Mohl introduced Jim Duguay and Mike Reiter of LPA Group and welcomed all in attendance. Mr. Duguay presented an overview of the airport site selection study process to date and offered a final analysis. He detailed the current airport's configuration, encroachment limitations and limited runway capabilities, with comparisons to the final selections of Sites 6 and 7 and the top two preferred new locales. The final analysis included refined site layouts, cost estimates, funding timeline, tenant relocation proposals, original master plan recommendations, state system plan recommendations, purpose of the overall study and scope of work. He reported on the methodology used in the process to establish suitability criteria, including GIS analyses to focus on ideal areas and to eliminate unacceptable areas. The group initially began with eight sites, ranked according to infrastructure, land acquisition, environmental considerations, constructability, operational capability and industrial capability; and they have narrowed to the short list before everyone tonight. The formula used in the ranking process was explained. He noted they have worked, and will continue to work, with GDOT Aviation Programs and FAA in this study. Of the top two sites, Sites 6 and 7, Site 6 is the preferred locale on several levels. The total initial airport cost estimates for Sites 6 and 7 are \$56,430,000 and \$74,330,000 respectively with the local funds estimate requirements to be \$2,984,000 and \$3,750,000 respectively. Mr. Duguay noted the potential funding timeline for total costs, FAA funds, State funds and local funds, as well as possible additional landside development in and around the proposed Sites 6 and 7 and the existing facility.

Finally, Mr. Duguay addressed existing leasehold agreements and potential tenant transition, as well as possible redevelopment of the existing airport facility. He concluded with the benefits of a new airport:

- Built to FAA safety standards with better instrument approach minimums
- Improved safety areas and setbacks
- Improved runway length and weight bearing capabilities
- Greater access for corporate aircraft
- Ample developable peripheral property for complement uses (ground transportation)
- Compatible land use
- Economic development opportunities

Brett Lavender, Chairman of the Griffin-Spalding County Airport Advisory Board spoke to the process and introduced Board Member Carl Pruitt to continue the presentation. Mr. Pruitt who has been a board member for about five years has a vested interest in seeing this economic engine for our area remain healthy even though he does not fly himself. He provided an overview of airports in the south metro area, noting that Griffin-Spalding has the shortest runway length, narrowest runway width, smallest amount of developable acreage, and by far the fewest number of 2009 individual operations (flights) for this Level II airport which speaks to greatly reduced fuel sales, while the other facilities -- Peachtree City's Falcon Field, Newnan-Coweta County Airport, and Thomaston-Upson County – are all Level III facilities. The last airport built in the State of Georgia, in 1991, was the facility at Thomaston-Upson County. The major differences, he noted, are not simply aesthetic but

fundamental; the more up-to-date facilities that are built to current FAA standards with the accompanying improvements will accommodate a greater number of operations and from much larger aircraft than can presently be serviced here. Configuration, lighting, fuel sales, peripheral businesses, approaches, etc. all converge to produce facilities that are more cost-effective, revenue-producing, and profitable from a tax analysis for appraised values and assessed values, for personal property ad valorem and property taxes. The number of aircraft has gone from around 101 to about 70 over the past two years, and the Griffin-Spalding County Airport has lost more than one business to other facilities where they continued to thrive, primarily because our runway was too short or the facilities too lacking to accommodate their needs. These businesses who left took with them not just their tax dollars, but their employees and the trickle-down economics that accompany those organizations. He detailed each of the surrounding airports and the type aircraft they can effectively service. These aircraft, ranging in cost from \$3,100,000 to \$37,500,000 can generate a tremendous amount in taxes provided, i.e. Newnan-Coweta County produces \$1,773,285 in total taxes just on five aircraft stationed there while Griffin-Spalding produces on \$107,044 in both property taxes and hangers. Falcon Field produces \$1,292,772 in total property taxes on just four of its aircraft; Thomaston-Upson County Airport produces \$102,469, almost as much in taxes on just two aircraft hangared there as Griffin-Spalding Airport produces in taxes on everything, from buildings to property. Total airport taxes generated has reduced from \$156,467 in 2005 to \$107,044 in 2009.

Jobs and industry must be viable if Griffin and Spalding County is to remain competitive, and it is easily evident that an airport is a major attraction to the new and larger industrial clients who will improve our tax base. Another SPLOST in 2014 could be considered to provide the needed capital for the new airport, given the funding timeline. It could be used to fund a new terminal building, acquisition of existing properties at the old airport and fund new hangars and infrastructure at the new business park. He noted that Kraft Foods is considering a \$50 million, 1,000,000 plus square foot plant somewhere in the south metro area that will employ 200+ people on about 90 acres, and he surmised it would be wonderful for us to be able to offer a brand new airport on one side of the road (Site 6) across from the new industrial park at Big Shanty (The Lakes at Green Valley) on the other side of the road.

III. Consider authorizing Phase III (Phase I of the Environmental Permitting Process) for Airport Site Selection Study

Robert Mohl stated he was hoping for a vote tonight to proceed with authorization of the Phase III study. Through a unanimous vote, the Griffin-Spalding County Airport Advisory Board makes the following recommendation to the City and County Commissioners: To develop our economic engine, the Griffin-Spalding County Airport (gateway to Griffin and Spalding County) to a Level III, ILS Airport, to encourage the growth and development of Griffin, Spalding County and the four county region.

City of Griffin Mayor Dick Morrow explained the City's position on annexation, which is they would desire to supplement in this manner the loss of tax revenue they will experience with the anticipated closing of the existing facility. This would simply allow them to convey to their taxpayers that they would get that money back. There is no desire to hold anyone hostage, but rather just to replace anticipated lost income. He commended Mr. Mohl and the Airport Advisory Board on the fine job they have done in running the current airport. No particular details have been worked out to date and all issues will be on the table for future negotiations. However, the important thing tonight is to endorse proceeding with the environmental permitting process so that the site selection study can move forward.

Mr. Mohl said to do nothing would be to cut off being able to increase industry, tax base and peripheral businesses here while still being required to maintain and support the existing facility. Some discussion followed regarding protocol should environmental concerns be detected in the potential sites. This environmental review will be conducted by LPA Group in coordination with EPA, Corps of Engineers, GDOT and FAA, of course. Discussion followed, as well, regarding the application process that would secure funding which, at this point, is probable but not defined as is the case with all grant funding whether it be stimulus or of another variety.

City Commissioner Morrow said he would like to see a partnership situation continue with the County in the operation of the airport and this funding, as well, but he would certainly like to see the County entertain the notion of allowing annexation in an effort to recoup the City's tax loss for its taxpayers. Commissioner Gilreath asked if the City was giving an

ultimatum as he has heard Commissioner Morrow state, and Commissioner Morrow said this desire for annexation was not an ultimatum but rather a wish. His was only one vote on a commission, as was Commissioner Gilreath's. Should the County decide not to approve annexation, Commissioner Morrow answered Commissioner Gilreath that he would have to go back to the City Commission and poll his fellow officials since they worked as a team.

County Commissioner Flowers-Taylor said she had heard nothing from any City Commissioner to indicate that any ultimatum was being issued. She has reviewed the issues and the numbers, and she had no problem with annexation. The School Board, the City and the County could all collectively benefit and would participate in increased services. These increased services could greatly benefit this area of the County where such services have not been in place heretofore. There are no guarantees with any type of grant funding, and with this economy, we need all the help we can get to help with the tax base. She wanted to see them proceed with the environmental assessment needed and the issue of annexation can be dealt with at a later time. Everyone can reap the benefits now.

County Commissioner Eddie Freeman did not want to see the County allow this tremendous opportunity to go by the wayside as it has with many chances for progressive development in the past. This issue requires foresight and cooperation. He, too, had no problem with considering annexation to further this development.

Motion/second by City Commissioners Doug Hollberg and Joann Todd to fund the \$180,000 request to proceed with the environmental study and request that the County please entertain the issue of annexation in the future. A review of cash flow will need to be undertaken as some of the out-of-pocket expenditures come forward noted Mayor Morrow. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion/second to move forward with the request to fund \$180,000 to proceed with the environmental study if not attached to annexation at this point was made by Commissioners Phillips and Freeman and motion carried 4-1 with Commission Chairman Goss voting in opposition.

IV. Comments – No comments were allowed.

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Chairman

County Clerk

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