

Open Work Session
Airport Runway Extension Project
July 19, 2016

Mr. Wayne Strausburg, Director of Administration, and Mr. Bob Bryant, Airport Manager, came before Council. Mr. Strausburg said they meet periodically with Lyle Hogg, President of Piedmont Airlines and at the last meeting on July 6th, Lyle went over Piedmont's goals and objectives for the coming fiscal year. One of the objectives is that they will accelerate the changeover of the fleet from the Dash 8 turboprop to regional jets. The regional jet that America Airlines has settled on is the Embraer 145. Mr. Strausburg said what came out of that meeting is that the Embraer 145 may require a longer runway than what the airport currently has right now. The runway is currently 6400 feet. Lyle has indicated that fully loaded, this particular jet with a load of fuel and full passenger compliment may take 7000 feet to get into the air. He said Piedmont is accelerating the transition to be completed by 2020. Therefore, they need to get in front of the FAA and this justifies the need to extend the runway from 6400 feet to 7000 feet. Mr. Strausburg said a few years ago the County finished an extension of the runway and the reason the runway was extended to 6400 feet was in anticipation of jet aircraft replacing the turboprop DASH 8 fleet based on the performance characteristics of jets in use by regional carriers ten years ago when the runway extension was being planned. At that time neither the county nor Piedmont could prove to the FAA there was aeronautical justification for a runway longer than 6400 feet. The County can now provide the justification because the passenger air carrier is employing an airframe that requires a longer runway. Mr. Cannon said Mr. Strausburg said, "may," but he thought this was a fine science and that there were federal guidelines that the County has to follow. Mr. Strausburg said the airline will negotiation with their chief pilot on what length of runway the chief pilot will certify the aircraft for. He said there is some negotiation in play, but they are counting on the fact that they do not think Lyle would say 7000 feet if he did not ultimately think that is what they needed. He said Council can look at the performance specs on the aircraft that Mr. Bryant provided and depending on the model, fuel load and passenger compliment, the runway length is going to be 7000 feet because that is what Lyle has indicated is needed. Mr. Creamer explained that this information was just given to the County a few days ago and soon as more information is available, they will know more. Mr. Strausburg said they quickly got together with Delta Airport Consultants, who are the technical people that assist the County with these matters, and there is a timeline that they are up against. They have to provide to the FAA a justification for the desired runway length and that has to go through a review process with the FAA; we need to meet a deadline of May 2017. The white paper or justification normally requires about 6 months. Mr. Strausburg said they have indicated to Delta that we would like to accelerate that timeframe because we want to allow the FAA as much time as possible to go through their review process. Obviously, the FAA is important because they are going to authorize the length of the runway, and they pay 95% of the project costs. Mr. Strausburg said he wanted Council to be aware that this project recently came up. It was somewhat of a surprise to them. They are going to meet with Lyle on Thursday to provide him with an update, and they are meeting with Senator Mathias this afternoon to talk about some assistance that the County may be requesting from the state with regard to the airport as well. Mr. Joe Holloway asked how much more land does the County own heading in that direction.

Are we out to Twilley Bridge Road? Mr. Bryant said they are heading southeast. He said the County owns all the property that will accommodate both the runway extension and, if necessary, the relocation of the current approach lights. Mr. Strausburg said one of the first questions he asked is does the County have to do any clearing, and the County does not. Mr. Strausburg said Council will notice in the spreadsheet one of longest lead times is the Environmental Assessment. Council may ask what is the big deal with the Environmental Assessment, as the airport went through that process to extend the runway to 6400 feet. He said we are going from turboprops to jets, which is a complete different airframe and a completely different environmental footprint. Mr. Cannon asked if the layout plan shows the extension going over Airport Road. Mr. Strausburg explained that what Mr. Cannon is looking at is restricted airspace. There is a glide path there with restrictions as to the elevations the further you get away from the airport. Mr. Cannon clarified that the extension is showing in red on the layout plan, to which Mr. Bryant confirmed that it is. Mr. Strausburg said the County is looking at radio towers for the new radio system, and they had some interesting site exploration in terms of the tower that will be located close to the Civic Center because it is in the restricted airspace; it is in the glide path. They could not place the tower where they wanted to place it because of the height and it interfering with the glide path. Mr. Strausburg said, at some point in time, he is going to assume that the media will notice the project, and he wanted Council to beware of what the first steps are in the process. Mr. Cannon asked what the anticipated local costs are going to be. Mr. Creamer said that is the first task they will ask Delta to look into. Mr. Cannon asked if it would benefit the County to extend the runway out further. Mr. Strausburg said the County has to justify to the FAA the reason for the extension. The FAA will not let you extend the runway any further than what is required for safe operations of the airframes that are utilizing the airport. Mr. Strausburg said it is interesting that Donald Trump's 757 landed safely at the airport and took off safely. It is the efficiency of the airframe as the 757 can get up fast. Mr. Joe Holloway said Trump's plane probably was not loaded with 300 people. Mr. Strausburg said the plane was not loaded with passengers and that is the other issue. Mr. Cannon said he is surprised that the pilots make the recommendations, not the FAA. Mr. Strausburg said it is the chief pilot. The FAA will have its standards. The chief pilot will negotiate with the air carrier within that footprint. It has to do with where the planes are going, fuel loads, and average passenger counts, so each plane that takes off has a completely different calculation. There is negotiation inside the airline on that decision, but they are going to be prepared for 7000 feet.


Signatures are on the following page.

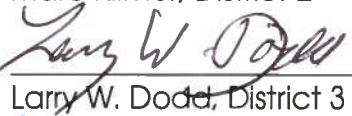
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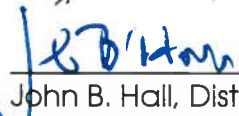

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Joe Holloway, District 5


Matthew E. Creamer, Council Administrator