

**STEVENSVILLE AIRPORT BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

**MARCH 14, 2023 – 5:30 P.M.
STEVENSVILLE TOWN HALL**

STEVENSVILLE AIRPORT BOARD:

- Craig Thomas – Airport Board Chairman
- Rich Perry
- Dustin Wood
- William Rowe
- Kelli Weed
- Brian Germane
- Cindy Brown – Council Representative

STEVENSVILLE AIRPORT REPRESENTATIVES:

- Tyler Reed – Airport Engineer (MMI)
- Tim Smead – Airport Manager

OTHERS PRESENT:

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

- a. Meeting began at 5:30 PM

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **Meeting Minutes 02/14/2023.** Minutes from last month were approved.

3. ENGINEER’S REPORT

- a. Tyler updated the Board on the Master Plan Update project. He’s been in discussion preliminarily with Tim and Craig. He provided a couple of examples of how other airports have structured the process to gather feedback and develop a facility plan.

4. AIRPORT BUSINESS: DISCUSSION/DECISION

- a. **Montana Skydive Situation.** Will spoke to the Mayor this morning. The Mayor said the agenda item had been removed. The Mayor said Greg Overstreet spoke to him and said they didn't have skydiving insurance for the town and they went back and forth. Will said the waiver was developed with an attorney who is an aviation attorney, and the waiver is standard across the nation. Will said he’s not speaking as a board member, just as a business owner, he can’t understand why the proposal is dead. Will explained the sponsor assurances address discriminatory issues. If the FAA or Missoula Tower decided the skydiving wasn’t safe, that would be a different story. Otherwise, the Town shouldn't be able to stop it. Will said he contacted Jenelle to try and add it to the agenda again. Will's attorney has been advised with what has happened and is figuring out what has to happen. Will said during one of the previous council meetings, the council made determination for will to work with Overstreet to develop.

Rich - What other airports have skydiving?

Will - Whitefish, Three Forks, maybe Kalispell

Rich - Maybe you can talk to those guys?

Will - Whenever you bring up skydiving to a town, they can be a little reluctant. Therefore they need to educate more, and hopefully they don't need to get the FAA involved. Cliff notes version - it's a mess.

Rich - So there's nothing the Board can do?

Will/Craig - No, just recommend to council.

Will - I sent another email to try and get it on the council meeting for the next meeting.

Cindy - There's a form on the website and you need to get it in by a certain time.

Rich - Who took it off the agenda?

Will - As far as I know, the Mayor did.

Dusty – The Board makes a recommendation to go down to the Town, fill out a form, get a copy. And I've done this numerous times and I feel like it's against some kind of rule or regulation. It shouldn't be up to him to put it on, take it off. I don't know the legalities but it's a public meeting. To me, it's not legal for him to say you can't show up.

Tim - From my perspective is the FAA liability and financial liability that the town would fall under with the grant assurances. You can find many other situations that occurred with FAA etc.

Rich - What's the town's liability if an aircraft crashes on the runway?

Will - That's something I brought up as an analogy. If someone says we don't have insurance for skydiving. Well, we also don't have insurance for Part-135 operations. Overserving at a bar is another example. Messing with the FAA and grant assurances can be very expensive.

Hangar Lease and Update, Whitehair

Craig - I threw this on the Council Agenda but didn't include any explanation. Don had an accident on the airport - they have amputated part of the foot, but have been able to save the remaining part of the foot. Craig is asking for a Board recommendation to the Council by not charging lease payments for a year or so since he spends all his time on his feet. Don has been in and out of the hospital and updated Craig on what's going on. He's the breadwinner for the family, so I would suggest the board bring to the council. Brian made motion to waive his lease for two years. Motion passed. Will will add it to the agenda.

Rich - When did it happen?

Dusty - About a month ago.

Craig - A lathe fell on it and his son was able to jack it off of him. I don't know all of the details.

5. AIRPORT MANAGER'S REPORT

Tim – The only thing I can update the Board on - the guys who were contemplating building an FBO are thinking about steering away from the FBO right now but still work on developing the fuel farm.

Rich - This is the guy from MQS?

Tim - Yes

Rich - it seems like everything the Airport brings forward to the City, the City has a problem with it. It feels like it's two different worlds. I don't understand why the City is so against the Airport. We're one of the fastest growing communities and I can't think of anything negative about the airport.

Dusty - I think you're saying it right. It's gotten a lot worse the last about 5 years.

Craig - It's been very difficult with this current administration.

Dusty- So what do we do?

Rich - I'm open to suggestions. It would be great if the Mayor could attend one of these.

Tim - Maybe you guys could request a meeting with the town council?

Rich - It makes it very difficult for someone looking to build a business up there and you don't know what to expect.

Dusty - Just look at Hamilton. It's growing like crazy. Stevensville, not a lot of interest. No one wants to build here.

Brian - Once they dip their toes in, they see the dysfunction.

Dusty - I wouldn't build there again. I was a good airport then (2006) when I built.

Rich – If you run it properly, it could be a great revenue generator.

Brian - Hamilton is landlocked to a certain degree. So, Cindy what would we have to do to get a meeting with council?

Cindy - I don't know. I apologize I was sick for the last few meetings. I'd have to ask around, it's my first year so I don't know if a meeting with the Council would work or not.

Rich - To me, it means a lot since there's a lot of opportunity.

Dusty - You shouldn't have to fight for something you should be able to do anyway.

Will - There's a lot of potential up on the hill.

Tim - Yes there is a lot of opportunity.

Rich - What happened to the gravel pit?

Tim - My understanding is the Mayor told the County 'no'.

Brian - What about AOPA?

Tim - They've been helpful in the past, they recommend having a podium to present the benefit to the Town with the Airport.

Brian- How do we incentivize a better behavior?

Tim - Showing the council and staff how much money can be utilized by the town. The TIFF is a relatively small portion compared to the actual influence. Having the opportunity to present the whole picture would help get the point across. You're not going to slow the growth. It's getting everyone on the same page you got to have the opportunity to stand in front a podium.

Cindy - Have you tried to be a guest at a council meeting?

Craig - I make lots of comments.

Cindy - There is a "guest" section at the council meeting.

Brian - During public comment?

Cindy - No, it's a "guest" section. I'm not sure how to get that scheduled

Rich - When do they meet?

Cindy - Twice a month. We had a guest around Jan/Feb.

Tim - I'll ask Jenelle. The forest service lease, the Town got excited about that since the dollars are what gets people excited. No one really knows what a FBO but if you tell them how much money could be brought in, they like to see that.

Rich - What kind of financial shape is the City in?

Cindy - I apologize, I was planning on bringing them but didn't get the actual financials. And, we're still going through audit. The council was postponed. The Council is aware, we need to know where we are on the budget. The mayor asked to wait until they get it done.

Tim - They won't present the budget to any meetings until the audit is done.

Tim - I got an email from the FAA since it's been 6 years since they've received a reply about an audit.

Cindy - The 2020 budget is completed.

Rich - How do you operate like that?

Cindy - Go ask the former mayor, ask him how it worked. We had to hire a new accountant to do the audit out of Kalispell, they've been on it since January.

Rich - When are public officials accountable?

Cindy - I think Craig can answer that question, I won't answer. The Guest idea may be an option. You can present whatever, you're a guest to the council.

Craig - Financially, you can't ask any question, they won't have an answer until after the audit.

Tim - I think I blew the whistle earlier when I said I don't know how we're going to keep the lights on.

Cindy - The mayor put us off until the reports are done. The Council's hands are tied. We're trying to get the answers. Maybe you can start working on a presentation.

Craig - This is a failure of the Sponsor of the Airport. I think we go to the FAA and ask do we need to be an airport authority. Hamilton?

Dusty - That might be our best option.

Brian - What are the unintended consequences?

Tim - You can ask the State to take over the airport. Or, airport authority. Those are all dead end roads from my side of it. It would operate better if it was either on the state level or an airport authority. If someone blew the whistle, it would be similar to what the Council is experiencing.

Craig - When will the audit be done?

Cindy - They had a deadline to have reports in, but did not tell council when they would have the reports back to them

Rich - Who at the state level who is in charge of handing out the money.

Tim - Similar to writing your senator, you can write Aeronautics a letter.

Brian - This is pointless, it's fun to get together and talk but it's pointless.

Brian - I hate to leave without a plan. Do we hold a special meeting?

Craig - For the next meeting, everyone bring an idea. An assignment for everyone: you write down the situation you see it, what is the direction we need to go and the options. No emails. It has to be in the public meeting.

Dusty - We can have a meeting here, or a special meeting, but we can't hash it out without it being a public forum.

Tim - I could request that members from the local airport group attend?

Dusty - I've asked them a hundred times.

Cindy - I can invite the Council to the meeting.

Brian - Even just to get some free advice.

Craig - You can call AOPA.

Tim - I've contacted them before, that's something we can do again.

Cindy - I understand what you're saying - when you explain the issues and bring options on how to solve them. The last few weekends I've spent the whole weekend on Council stuff. We're taking the time to review.

Rich - What happened to the guy planning on building all the hangars?

Cindy - What happened to all the work on the leases I did?

Tim - I'm not sure. I'm not sure if Robert is taking care of these still.

Cindy - I emailed the spreadsheet to Robert. For any new ones, I'm not sure, I don't know if they were recorded.

Tim - I don't know what Josh has done, or what has been signed.

Craig - Maybe after 11 months of trying to get a lease, they ended up going somewhere else.

Craig - So for the next meeting we'll come with our ideas, suggestions, and options. Cindy, thanks for coming.

Brian - I think everyone is operating with sincere motives. But it seems like it's a roadblock after another.

Cindy - Maybe posting something at the airport to get the word out?

Tim - If you're a 501c3, you can have an event at the airport. So anyone who wants to have an event at the airport.

Cindy - Is there an event you could tack-on? I'm part of the Mission group. We have volunteers that go and open the place, is there anything with maybe western heritage day that's coming up where you can reach out. Maybe mention the museum or something. Just throwing out ideas. At the Mission, we don't have much money either.

Tim - Like the police dept, the chili cookoff?

Cindy - This Saturday.

Tim - I've thought of ways to have an event (like flying kites, bbq), but couldn't do that without being a 501c3.

Cindy - There's kids that need volunteer time for events. I know FFA kids are always volunteering and raising money. Key Club.

Tim - It wouldn't take anything to call Don Lorenzen to bring a bunch of boy scouts up there and they'd make it happen. Mark has offered that mechanic apprenticeship program.

Brian - What are the limitations for using the airport for any of these functions?

Tim - As an individual/individual group, it's a public airport and you can have an event. That's why I like flying clubs and 501c3s.

Cindy - And the Civil Club, we've worked a lot with them getting in a lot of events coming up, adding info to flyers.

Rich - I would think the newspaper would want to get in on it.

Tim - You could still be a mover and shaker up there, you could still move this airport in the right direction without the town and in theory the town should jump on board. Really, it's gathering people who have an interest in GA.

Brian – The warm weather months are coming up, so now is the time to plan.

Cindy - The once-a-month Saturday series are doing wonders for the organization. It's something maybe 15-20 people are interested... they're over there. That is working well for us. I'm not sure if that's something that would work well for the airport. Maybe something once a month.

Tim - museum of modern flying - could do movie night, car clubs could do some events. WE can do anything we want or what we like to, it's just a matter of getting people to help out.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

7. ADJOURNMENT

- Meeting Adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Next Meeting – Tuesday, April 11, 2023 @ 5:30 P.M. (Town Hall).