

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: PUBLIC WORKS - AIRPORT

DATE: DECEMBER 8, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS BELDEN
BENTLEY
CHAMPAGNE
CONOVER
WOOD
TAYLOR

OTHERS PRESENT:

JEFFERY TENNYSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
DANIEL G. STEC, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISOR THOMAS
JULIE PACYNA, PURCHASING AGENT
VICTOR MACRI, VMJR ENTERPRISES
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
MONROE
MCCOY

Mr. Belden called the special meeting of the Public Works Committee to order at 9:30 a.m.

Mr. Belden began the meeting by thanking Mr. Bentley for chairing the last Committee meeting in his absence.

Motion was made by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the prior Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Jeffery Tennyson, Superintendent of Public Works, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members, a copy of which is also on file with the minutes.

Mr. Tennyson apprised the first agenda item pertained to a request to authorize the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to sign a letter of intent relative to the proposed commercial development of property located adjacent to the Airport by VMJR Companies; he added that his request had been tabled at the prior Committee meeting pending receipt of further information regarding future expansion of the runway beyond the planned 1,000' extension. He reminded the Committee that the issue to be determined was whether or not to provide the letter of intent, which would allow VMJR Companies to proceed with the planning process through the Town of Queensbury Planning Board in order to gain the necessary avigation easement for the planned 1,000' runway extension, but would limit the possibility of any future runway expansion.

In response to the Committee's request for additional information, Mr. Tennyson advised he had contacted the Airport consultant, C&S Companies, to obtain an analysis on the planned runway extension to 6,000', versus further extension to 7,500' and he noted that a copy of the response received was included in the agenda packet. Mr. Tennyson advised that longer runways allowed for increased safety, as well as for larger and heavier aircraft to land at the Airport. He said there were a number of variables considered when determining how much runway was necessary for plane to take off, including elevation, weather conditions, load size and wind direction; he added that in light of these factors, no particular runway length could be specified to allow new classifications of aircraft to be serviced by the Airport. Mr. Tennyson stated he had also requested that C&S provide a comparison of the Warren County Airport to another airport of the same size with a 7,000' to 7,500' runway and describe the operations at that facility. He pointed out that the C&S analysis included a comparison of the Warren County Airport to one located in Erie, PA which was situated between Cleveland, OH and Buffalo, NY and he noted that this comparison began on page 6 of the agenda.

Motion was made by Mr. Taylor and seconded by Mrs. Wood to approve the request as outlined above.

Mr. Belden questioned when the planned 1,000' runway extension project would begin and Mr. Tennyson responded that the design process would take place in 2012, with construction to begin in 2013.

Before making a decision on the matter, Paul Dusek, County Administrator, recommended that the Committee consider two issues, the first being whether expansion to a 6,000' runway would meet the needs of the facility indefinitely and secondly, what the financial impact to the County would be for acquisition of the VMJR Companies parcel to secure the ability for future runway expansion. Mr. Tennyson advised that along with the agenda packet he had distributed two aerial maps of the Airport property, one depicting the area with a 6,000' runway, and the other with a 7,500' runway. He noted that the 7,500' runway would require acquisition of a large section of the VMJR Companies parcel due to the restrictive nature of the height requirements for the runway protection zone, which would actually require considerable excavation to reduce the topography level.

Mr. Dusek stated there was a very important policy decision to be made by the Committee as the path chosen could either limit the potential for future expansion at the Airport or eliminate the possibility of additional economic expansion related to development of the VMJR property. He said this conflict had begun in 2010 when the Committee had desired to find a solution which would facilitate the runway expansion while allowing VMJR Companies to proceed with their planned development of an industrial park. Mr. Dusek advised they had worked with Victor Macri, President & CEO of VMJR Companies, to develop the agreement specified in the letter of intent which was favorable to both parties and met the desires indicated by the Committee. He noted that if the Committee desired to preserve future runway expansion abilities, they would need to acquire the property owned by Mr. Macri's firm which would impose a significant cost to the County. Mr. Dusek further noted that while there was no right or wrong answer to this dilemma, he wanted the Committee to be fully aware of the potential effects of their decision.

Mr. Taylor apprised that because he was concerned with limiting the future economic growth of the County he had contacted the EDC (Economic Development Corporation) to consult them on the matter and they had provided a listing of aircraft that would be able to land at the Airport under both the 6,000' and 7,500' circumstances and the lists were very similar. Additionally, he noted the EDC was of the opinion that since the production technology was tending towards lighter aircrafts, rather than larger, they did not foresee a future need for a runway length in excess of the 6,000' already planned.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

Speaking as Supervisor for the Town of Queensbury, Chairman Stec stated that he was content with 6,000' runway planned and felt that it would be adequate for the time being, as well as for many decades to come. He added that he did not believe a longer runway would significantly impact the County's economic development, nor was he sure that the Airport in its current state had. Chairman Stec said there was a very limited amount of property available for industrial development as the majority of the County was located within the Adirondack Park, and that which was available had already been built out. He expounded that it was not sensible to turn down a viable economic development opportunity on the off chance that the runway extension might be pursued in the future. Chairman Stec noted the County had faced significant difficulties in removing airspace penetrations presented by tree growth in the past with the current runway length and advised that many area residents were not in favor of further expansion.

Relative to the cost associated with acquisition of the VMJR parcel, Mr. Tennyson advised he had included a copy

of the appraisal previously received for the value of the entire parcel as being approximately \$838,000. Upon providing this information to Mr. Macri, he said there had been some question as to whether the appraisal had taken into consideration the fact that his firm had completed the planning process for the parcel to introduce the industrial park. Mr. Tennyson added that he had consulted the appraisal firm on this concern and had been advised that the appraisal had classified the property for light industrial use and the appraisal would only increase if actual site improvements, such as clearing or construction, were made. He noted that although it was Mr. Macri's opinion that the appraisal amount was very low and not acceptable, the FAA would only consider this total when determining the amount of grant funding to be provided for the property acquisition.

Mrs. Wood stated that she supported the planned extension which would elongate the runway to 6,000' and was unsure whether additional expansion was desired, or necessary. She added there was an opportunity available for economic development and they should pursue it.

Mr. Belden called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to approve the request to authorize the Chairman of the Board to sign a letter of intent relative to the VMJR proposed commercial development adjacent to the Airport property and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 16th Board meeting. *A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Belden thanked Mr. Macri for working with the County to reach an agreement on this matter. Mr. Tennyson noted that the issue would be brought back to the Committee for further discussion in the future, subsequent to negotiations on the aviation easement cost. He further noted that the County had offered \$193,000 for the aviation easement but Mr. Macri was not agreeable to that figure and had not indicated what amount would be acceptable. Mr. Bentley pointed out that the County owned a parcel located on Quaker Road which might be used to trade for the easement and Mr. Dusek responded that in negotiations with Mr. Macri they had considered this possibility, but Mr. Macri had not been interested.

Resuming the agenda review, Mr. Tennyson announced that the new Airport Manager, Ross Dubarry, would begin his tenure with the County on December 19th. In response to a question posed by Mr. Belden as to whether Mr. Dubarry could be present at the December 16th Board meeting to make introductions, Mr. Tennyson advised that it was a possibility as Mr. Dubarry was traveling to the area from his current home in Saranac, NY periodically to search for rental housing; he added that he would contact Mr. Dubarry and make this request. Mr. Tennyson apprised that Mr. Dubarry had been a top candidate for the position when Don DeGraw, former Airport Manager, had been hired. He said that 20 applications had been received for the position and they had narrowed that number to 5 candidates before selecting Mr. Dubarry, who had the necessary qualifications for the position. Mr. Belden recalled that he and Mr. Monroe had met with Mr. Dubarry when Mr. DeGraw was hired and he felt they had chosen the right person for the position.

Concluding the agenda review, Mr. Tennyson presented a request for himself and Kevin Hajos, Deputy Superintendent of Public Works, to attend the NYSCHSA (New York State County Highway Superintendents Association) Winter Highway and Bridge Processional Development Program & Expo in Albany, NY on January 17 - 18, 2012. He noted that there was funding available to support the travel costs and that he and Mr. Hajos would commute to the conference daily.

Motion was made by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Mr. Champagne and carried unanimously to approve the aforementioned travel request. *Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Mrs. Wood apprised that she and her family had ridden the Polar Express train sponsored by the Saratoga North Creek Railway (SNCR) and said they had been very pleased with the experience. She noted there had been a tremendous number of people in attendance and the staffing for the event had been impressive; Mrs. Wood opined that they were definitely on the right track with SNCR. Mr. Tennyson advised a meeting with Ed Ellis, President & CEO of Iowa Pacific Railway, LLC/SNCR, had been held earlier that morning during which Mr. Ellis had noted that the only factor limiting train ticket sales was the available parking for attendees as SNCR could easily bring in additional train cars to transport more passengers if commensurate parking facilities were available. Mr. Belden noted that the train was bringing significant benefits to the Town of North Creek and he said he had received a card from Joanne Smith, Town of North Creek resident, thanking him and the Committee for their support of the railroad as its increased operation had brought life back to their Town.

As this would likely be his final Committee meeting in light of his impending retirement, Mr. Belden concluded the meeting by thanking the Committee members for serving on the Board of Supervisors with him and stating that it had been a pleasure to work with all of them.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion made by Mrs. Wood and seconded by Mr. Champagne, Mr. Belden adjourned the meeting at 10:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist