

Port of Kennewick
Regular Commission Meeting
Tuesday, May 12, 2009

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Local Pilot and Farmer Chep Gauntt read a statement reminding the commissioners that the Vista Field issue deals with money belonging to the citizens. He has watched the commissioners waffle on the future of Vista Field for two years. In 2003 with two of the current commissioners on the board, there was a vote that Vista Field would remain open as an airport until 2021. That was with a lot of public input. "Why do you continue to spend my money on studies?" he posed. "You gave your word that you would agree to keep the airport open. You have done a nice job with the other projects you have been working on. I am proud of those efforts, but I am not proud that you are allowing the Kennewick City Manager and the City Council to push you around. It's time for the Commissioners to take back their authority. The City sees that area as their new downtown—as their new entertainment center. That would make it the only city in Washington with a multi-story jail as the centerpiece of their entertainment district. Focus your efforts on the other projects you have going. Take Carl Cadwell's offer to improve the airport. I don't understand why you would turn down a \$10 million offer. You will leave a legacy. I hope it is that you are a builder, not a destroyer. When you tear out that airport, it's not coming back. Vote as J-U-B recommended in 2006 to follow the Comprehensive Plan and take no action."

Local Pilot **Ed Keenan** spoke about the new TSA requirement that all employees, pilots, and airport users on airports with scheduled airlines will need to be badged starting June 1st. He pointed out that with Vista Field not having scheduled airlines, therefore not requiring badges, Vista will be of even greater appeal and may drive some pilots to Vista.

Local Pilot **Don Clayhold** confirmed Mr. Keenan's thoughts, announcing that as an employee of Bergstrom's, he now is required to go through the badging process.

Jim Katzaroff, President of Advanced Medical Isotopes Corporation, expressed the importance of keeping Vista Field Airport open to support his business. His business is ready to begin shipping medical isotopes to hospitals via air transportation. He is working with others to bring some developers here who would build a European model of retail and mixed use that would incorporate the airport into their design. It is a viable project which involves bringing businesses here and people who are willing to invest.

VI. REPORTS, COMMENTS, AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

B. Vista Field Airport Update

1. Comment on Integrated Planning Process

Executive Director **Tim Arntzen** reviewed the procedures which were outlined by Foster Pepper Law Firm on the Integrated Planning Process. This includes updating the Comprehensive Scheme. The draft Request for Qualifications has been sent out to several well-known consulting firms. BergerABAM and Makers responded, with Makers saying that this will be a larger process and more expensive than initially thought. Adequate staff time will need to be devoted, but Makers advised not letting the other projects go unattended due to the focus on Vista. The worst thing, according to Makers, is no decision.

BergerABAM says make it a two-step approach with one Comprehensive Plan for all of the other properties and a separate one for Vista Field. The Vista Field plan would likely be even larger than the other.

Mr. Arntzen says if you are going to go through the Integrated Planning Process, you may as well figure it is going to cost \$150,000 and last through the end of 2009. It will take staff time. He expressed concern that when they go to the public, the commissioners will hear the same thing they heard at the joint Port-City meeting, which is "Make a decision". Whether the decision is to close the airport or enhance it, either will require going through the process. The only way to avoid going through the process is to follow the Comprehensive Plan already in place from 2006, also known as the "as-is plan" or "no-action alternative". The other thing the Port could do to avoid going through the Integrated Planning Process is to sell the airport. If they want to make a decision sooner, these two options are the only alternatives.

According to Mr. Arntzen, "The newspaper makes it sound as if developers are lined up waiting to buy Vista Field. They are not. You might ask the City or Carl Cadwell if they would like to purchase the airport. If they don't want to buy it, then the only alternative to avoid this Integrated Planning Process mess is to follow the no-action plan. This would get the Port out of this mess. I've heard the community say over and over, 'Just make a decision!' I am frustrated and tired over this. The Port Commission gets attacked for not being able to make a decision. That's a crock! They don't know what you have gone through. Because other people in this community don't want to take the time to understand what you've been through, I don't think they should be cast in stone for saying you can't make a decision, because you can. You've gathered all the evidence and have all the documents you need to make a decision. The Integrated Planning Process is going to cost more money and take more time. I've shown you the two things you can do short of going through the Integrated Planning Process."

President **Dave Hanson** offered, "Maybe we should just make a motion to adopt the J-U-B Study, make a decision, and get on with it."

Commissioner **Gene Wagner** asked how much the property would be worth.

Mr. Arntzen said they would need an official appraisal, but \$6million was a good estimate for the land inside the fence.

Mr. Wagner asked that we look into what we would need to do to offer the land for sale. He feels the airport is a money drain.

Mr. Arntzen: "What I am hearing is offer the land to the City at the appraised value, give them 30 days to respond to that offer. If there is no interest from the City, then you go with the no-action alternative. This avoids having to go through the Integrated Planning Process. Last night in the joint meeting with the City Council, I felt you were criticized for not being able to make a decision. This is one heck of a decision. I think you have risen to the occasion, if this is what you want to do. Offer it to the City and give them a chance to put their money where their mouth is, and if they don't want to buy it, then I think in fairness, they should back off. Then you work with people like Chep, Carl Cadwell, Jim Katzaroff, and do it that way. If you do this, you'll have a decision that doesn't have to go through the Integrated Process, you'll be able to sleep at night and the staff will be able to get some work done."

Mr. Wagner: "I think it's time we do something. I don't know. Kevin, is thirty days enough time?"

Assistant City Manager **Kevin Ferguson**: “I don’t know. You spent time talking about this last night. I don’t know why this didn’t come up then.”

Mr. Wagner: Maybe we should add another 15 days and make it 45 days.

Mr. Arntzen: If the City comes back and asks for another 15 days, we can always give it to them.

Mr. Hanson: “When is the LATS thing supposed to be done?”

Mr. Arntzen: July.

Commissioner **Calvin Dudney**: “I thought that was where we were at. As late as 8:00 last night when we left the meeting that’s where we were unless something else happened that I don’t know about.”

Mr. Wagner: “What do the LATS experts say? Do any of you foresee any monstrous changes in developments?”

Mr. Arntzen: Responding to a question from the Board, Mr. Arntzen affirmed that if the City were to purchase the airport property, they would have the responsibility of the SEPA Study and changing the Comprehensive Plan unless they chose to follow the 2006 plan of no-action, which is already in place. The public would still have opportunity for comment.

“It has been really hard to find a solution where we could move forward. If this has merit, let’s go forward with it. I’m frankly sick and tired of this. I know Jim Katzaroff has a business he wants to expand here in Kennewick or else he’s going to have to go to Boise. Let’s let these people make some plans.”

“I’d like to hear what Mr. Gauntt has to say to this.”

Chep Gauntt: I think it is excellent to move the process forward. If the City wants to buy it and they want to go through the study, I don’t have any problem with giving them the opportunity. I don’t think it should drag out. There needs to be a decision made. Vista Field is a good place, it could be business incubator; it has been under utilized. It hasn’t been given the opportunity because it has seen so much negativism. I really think that the money should be used down here (at Clover Island). I am so pleased with the work that has been done on Clover Island. I see many opportunities for the Port. There is nothing wrong with the Port owning an airport. That’s what the Port is about. I would like to see you give the City an opportunity. It’s time to get in or get out.

Mr. Katzaroff: Does it have to be given to the City first because they are squawking the loudest or are you going to put it out for others?

Mr. Wagner: They are our partners and we do work with them.

Mr. Katzaroff: “I understand you have a contract with the City until 2021? So why are you even entertaining discussion?”

Mr. Wagner: We are trying to do a lot of things and it all costs money.

Mr. Arntzen: We will give you something in two weeks.

Mr. Arntzen: The Kennewick Irrigation District sent a letter saying they wanted to keep Vista Field as an airport. The City has expressed a desire to build a 12 story hotel. I would like to investigate that a bit and bring that information back to you.

2. Comment on Joint Council/Port Commission Meeting

Hanson: In general it was a good meeting.

Mr. Dudley: I thought I heard last night that “no option” was not an option, so I’m surprised we are talking about that today, since we didn’t talk about it last night.

Mr. Arntzen: “I think the meeting went well. You talked about all of the Port projects. A little more attention was devoted to Vista Field, but it went well. Very candidly, I sensed a little hostility from a couple Council members when they made comments that you couldn’t make a decision, and to be honest with you, that bothered me. That’s about all I have.”

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Young Eagle Coordinator **Marjy Leggett** reported that the Young Eagle Rally at Vista Field on May 9th went well with good weather, 80 Young Eagle flights, and 8 pilots participating. It was one of the highest turnouts in a long time at Vista Field. There were lots of positive comments and words of thanks from the public for offering this opportunity to kids.

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