



Spalding County online

Board of Commissioners

JOINT SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Spalding County, Georgia and the Board of Commissioners of the City of Griffin held a joint meeting on Tuesday, February 3, 2004 in the Meeting Room of the Courthouse Annex in the City of Griffin, Spalding County, Georgia, beginning at 4:00 o'clock p.m.

Those present from the County were Chairman Michael Kendall, Commissioners Cecil Davis, Eddie Goss, Johnie McDaniel and Dick Morrow. Also present were County Manager William Wilson, Stephanie Windham representing County Attorney James Fortune, Administrative Services Director Jinna Garrison and County Clerk Phyllis Doane.

Those present from the City were Mayor Cynthia Reid Ward, Commissioners Walker Cook, Cora Flowers, Doug Hollberg, Jr., Bill Landrum, Rodney McCord, Joanne Todd. Also present were Acting City Manager Lisa Hutcherson and City Attorney Drew Whalen.

Also present was Bob Stapleton, Manager of the Griffin-Spalding County Airport who introduced the speaker from the FAA. Mr. Scott Seritt is Director of the Atlanta District Office of the FAA under the Southern Region. This is the office that reviews the improvement plans and approves the federal money from the Aviation Trust Fund, which is a user fee related to aviation. Over the last decade, the Griffin-Spalding County Airport has received \$2.384 Million for airport improvement projects.

The Chairman of both Boards called the Special Called Meeting to order.

Chairman Kendall stated that the purpose of the meeting is to jointly discuss the safety concerns at the Griffin-Spalding County Airport as the County Commissioners have some concerns with liability issues. The County asked a representative from FAA to come to a meeting and address some of these concerns. The City being co-owners and the day to day operators of the Airport asked that they be involved in this meeting. Part of the meeting will be for both Boards to discuss their concerns together. Mr. Kendall commented that there will not be any public comments taken at this meeting.

Mr. Scott Seritt made a presentation to the Boards. First of all he stated that the FAA does not consider the Griffin-Spalding County Airport to be unsafe but the Airport could be safer. He said the role of his office is to protect and enhance the nation's aviation system and he said that this airport is a very important part of this aviation system. He said in 1997 this airport was estimated to create \$2.9 Million in local annual economic activity and had created approximately 61 local jobs with 47 being at the airport. He said that his office has been providing funding to Griffin since 1958 and has provided in excess of \$2,384,000. In return for these funds, airport owners, which in this case is Griffin and Spalding County, agreed to a number of conditions (grant agreements or assurances). He enumerated these conditions. These conditions are binding for twenty years from the date of the last grant. If the owners are not in compliance with these conditions, future federal funds could be withheld.

City Commissioner Rodney McCord commented that he represents District #6, which is on one end of the runway (northwest) and that area was told at one time they were living in the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ). He commented that these people on this end of the runway are scared for their lives.

Mr. Seritt said that his office has heard about some safety issues at this airport. He said the runway safety area is a rectangle that surrounds the runway to protect aircraft and passengers. Standards for this airport say that you need 300 ft. from the end of the runway which is basically flat and sterile. This airport meets those standards. He said that the Runway Protection Zone starts 200 ft. from the end of the runway and expands to a trapezoid as shown in the Attachment A which is attached to all grant applications. Their policy recommends that the airport owner control that RZP either through ownership, easements or zoning or a combination of all three. The purpose of the RZP is to protect the property and people on the ground. He said that FAA will provide funding to help you clean these areas out within a reasonable amount. The funding is at 95% to relocate residences and find comparable housing through a grant. The maximum range of grants is \$500,000 to \$1 Million. The airport does get an entitlement of \$150,000 per year and if you want to use this money to acquire properties in the RZP this is pretty much an automatic approval. The procedure for the acquisition of homes in the RZP is to have an appraisal of the property

done and make an offer at the fair market value. FAA will help find comparable housing in a comparable neighborhood and pay relocation costs. FAA will also relocate people who rent homes or help renters become a first time home buyer that are in the RZP as well as pay fair market value to the property owners. The program takes the individuals out of the location they are in and makes them whole somewhere else and hopefully with no cost to them. Mr. Seritt commented that this is a very good program.

Mr. Seritt commented on the rumors of a regional airport for this area, possibly in Butts County. He said that no one has approached the FAA regarding the planning or funding of a new airport. He said that new airports are extremely hard to build. There has been one new general aviation airport built in the State of Georgia in thirty years. He said that over a dozen efforts to build a new airport have failed. He said that it takes five to seven years to build a new airport and it costs \$10 Million to \$20 Million to build an airport and you are going to find opposition on all sides. He said that he understands that the Butts County site maybe near a landfill and if it is, as far as the FAA is concerned, that would prohibit the project. The ruling is that FAA would not provide any funding for a new airport within 10,000 ft. of a landfill or within five miles if that landfill attracted birds across the airport or the approach to the airport.

Mr. Seritt commented that this Airport belongs to the people of Griffin and Spalding County and basically decision is up to you all whether you expand this airport, close this airport, or replace this airport. He said it was really a local decision and they would do anything to help us with that decision. You have to really sell FAA on why you would want to build a new airport. He said what they are saying to cities and counties now is that we would like for you to invest your money in a relocation study and an environmental impact study and if you are still committed at this point, they will work with you. This usually costs between \$300,000 to \$400,000, which you will be reimbursed after you commit to build the new airport.

Commissioner Kendall stated that we have two (2) divergent groups, one is on the southeast side of the runway who do not want to be disturbed but people on the north west side who do want to be disturbed and want to go. Mr. Seritt commented that anything you can do to improve the RPZ to protect people and property on the ground would be acceptable.

Commissioner Morrow commented that the Airport Master Plan calls for buying out thirty (30) homes at a cost of \$7.5 Million and the shopping center and four or five apartment buildings at a cost of \$8 Million. He asked Mr. Seritt isn't the procedure that you can adopt the Plan and get funding piece by piece, one house at a time, if necessary. Mr. Seritt responded with a positive comment. He said that you might be awarded \$2 Million for this land acquisition and with the "big pot" of money out there, the FAA could possible grant another \$2 Million for the project. It usually takes one to two years to fund a project once it is approved.

Commissioner Kendall asked if there was any consensus with these two (2) Boards to address the acquisition of homes in the RPZ. The City Board of Commissioners appeared divided on whether to proceed with the process as some members felt that removing homes would make space for the future expansion of the existing runway. Commissioner Todd commented that this Board had made a commitment to the previous Board of Commissioners not to have any expansion of the airport. Commissioner Hollberg stated he would rather see the money used to construct a new airport instead of spending money on the present one to relocate people in the RPZ. Mayor Ward and Commissioner Flowers stated they did not have enough information to make a sound decision and needed to obtain more information. The majority members of the County Board of Commissioners were interested in relocation of homes in the RPZ, at least those that wish to be bought out.

Commissioner Landrum took this time to clear up a statement he had made earlier regarding closing the Airport. He stated that he was not for closing the airport. He feels that we need to make it safe; however he is not in favor of extending it. If it takes buying thirty homes on one end of the runway he sends no problem with it if it is affordable for the City and County. Several of the City Commissioners agreed with Mr. Landrum.

Commissioner Kendall commented what he personally intended to do, as a member of the Spalding County Board of Commissioners, is to see if he can get a majority of the County Commissioners to proceed to try to address these safety concerns at least on the northwest end of this runway. He asked the City Commissioners to do the same thing. He said if we cannot get a majority, then the owners will be at an impasse as to what to do. He said that the joint ownership does not seem to be a workable solution to these issues until we can come to a consensus on how to address the safety concerns that are already in the existing Master Plan. Both Boards, as owners, have got to decide on a future direction for the airport.

With no further discussion, motions were made by County Commissioners Cecil Davis and City Commissioner Rodney McCord to adjourn the Joint Meeting. The Chairman's of both Boards declared the meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.

County Clerk

Chairman

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