

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Tuesday, January 19, 2021 – 5:30 p.m.

via Zoom

Present: Members: Chairman Crawford, Vice Chairman Gonzalez, Alderman Witte, Alderman Dougherty, and Alderman Robinson. Others: Alderman Panus; Alderman Anastasia; Mayor William Aiello; Lens Martial, City Clerk; Jack Hart, City Attorney; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Keri Kerper, Community Development Program Coordinator; Tim Richardson, Fire Chief, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Crawford called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, December 15, 2020)

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2020 committee meeting was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Gonzalez. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Cattaraugus County – Olean Airport

Mr. Ring presented a PowerPoint to the committee and explained that he put together as much information as he could collect on the airport. He explained that the main runway is 4,800 feet long and that there is also a grass hangar that you can't see from the main hanger. He explained that when the wind is really high small planes can land there, and it is a backup runway that we have to maintain per FAA regulations.

Mr. Ring explained that there is a main building with the snow equipment building attached. There are two t-hangars, one built in 2010 and the other built in the 70's or 80's. He explained that each of these hold ten different hangar rentals. He explained that there is a landfill at the airport where the City used to haul its waste. WE are required to monitor seepage and methane gas given off through vents. Alderman Panus asked if we have some costs that go along with the landfill, and Mr. Ring explained that we spend about \$25,000 a year to monitor the landfill. ,He explained that a company samples quarterly, and every once in a while the DEC comes in

and does an inspection for seepage and leachate. Alderman Panus asked if there is an end in sight for this, or if the monitoring is long term. Mr. Ring explained that he can look this up but he would be surprised if the end is anytime soon. He noted that we are going to be approaching extending our contract with the consultant, and that the cost has been pretty much the same year after year.

Mr. Ring explained that the biggest goal at the airport is maintenance. He explained that if you have been up there that you know that it is a nice facility. Twenty years ago it was really run down and it hadn't been maintained that well. He doesn't believe that at that time we were applying for FAA grants, and the runway was being maintained by the City's streets crew.

Mr. Ring explained that about ten or fifteen years ago the City started to take on Capital Projects to maintain the airport. He explained that it is a really good place right now. There is WiFi up there that is good for layovers, and we provide a crew car to anybody that might be flying into the airport. He explained that there is a lounge with magazines and a TV with Netflix.

Mr. Ring explained that the airport provides several things for the community, including support to businesses. This is the only paved airport in Cattaraugus County. He explained that if there is fog in the valley, Mercy Flight can't take off. In this case the helicopter is taxied to the airport and it takes off from there. He explained that our airport is Mercy Flight's go-to as it is by far the closest airport to their hangar at the hospital.

Mr. Ring explained that there are a lot of people that fly out of our airport for recreation purposes or for business. He provided a flight log for the Council that shows that flights have been pretty steady over the past five years. He explained that flights are only tracked from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. when the airport is staffed. Alderman Crawford asked if someone takes off and then later that day lands, if it is counted as two flights, and Mr. Ring responded that it does.

Mr. Ring explained that at night there are times where people are flying overhead and their systems can show where fuel is and what the prices of fuel are. He explained that we try to keep fuel prices as low as possible, so there are people outside of the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. window landing and getting fuel since we have a 24/7 credit card machine. He explained that these flights are not tracked, although he believes that they are probably fairly minimal.

Alderman Crawford explained that it is no surprise that the summer months, especially July and August, are peak in terms of usage. He explained that winter is probably more capital intensive, since we are plowing runways and deicing planes. Last February we had four flights. He asked if we are required to operate the facility year-round. Mr. Ring explained that we have to maintain the facility, and we have to plow and have staff there full time. He explained that we have been looking into that for quite some time, and we don't have to have staff there every weekend or after 4 p.m. If a plane wants to land though, they can call the airport and we can go out and be

accommodating. Alderman Crawford explained that he agrees in accommodation but there is a certain degree of accommodation. When there are four planes in February, it's really accommodating to have someone there full time. He asked how we can get back up to 50 planes a month and increase usage.

Alderman Crawford asked if the airport could shut down through the winter months under the guidelines from the FAA that we are operating under. Mr. Ring explained that he could certainly look into it, We would still need to heat the building and provide some access, but with our fueling station people could not land without the runway being clear. Alderman Crawford explained that if we have to heat the facility anyways that it might only be a marginal savings. He wondered if we could reduce hours.

Mr. Ring explained that he doesn't think that all of the solutions for the airport will come in one session. Once we get to budget numbers and see the progress we have made to this point, we can put together a pool of ideas.

Alderman Witte asked if we have asked to have our taxes reassessed or decreased in Ischua. Mayor Aiello explained that we have been working on this, and that we have asked for a grievance of the assessment. We have been waiting to have that reviewed.

Alderman Dougherty asked if we rent the airport year round, and Mr. Ring explained that it is rented year round and that the cost does not change during the winter months.

Mr. Ring explained that between all budgets, we have reduced a lot since he has been here. He explained that we have reduced the fuel budget and the staff is not there as much, WE are also doing fewer projects. He explained that in 2017 and 2018 there was a \$116,000 loss at the airport, and this past year the loss was \$56,000. He explained that we have been making a notable difference to the budget up there. Alderman Robinson asked what caused the drop, and Mr. Ring explained that we have raised rental fees, as well as looking at fuel costs and sales. We did LED conversions on the lights, and got rid of cable and just have Netflix.

Mr. Ring explained that besides fuel sales and rental fees, the City receives \$17,500 each year from the County. He explained that we had problems with the fuel pump that had to be replaced, and we used County funding in order to complete the project. He explained that in 2020 the County funding was used as a grant match, and this year we received \$85,000 for the runway project. He explained that the airport is on a 400 acre parcel and a lot of it is wooded. He explained that we have received significant revenue from tree cutting, and we recently spoke about a second cutting. H explained that it wouldn't be as big as the first cutting, but we would get the medium sized trees out and we would be paid.

Mr. Ring explained that we rely a lot on FAA grants, which are 90% federal funded, 5% state funded and have a 5% local match, Alderman Crawford asked if there is a lot of lumber on the property, and Mr. Ring explained that it needs time to grow back, but the idea is to get the ash out before the ash beetle gets in there. He explained that it will be a while before we see another six figure revenue,

Mr. Ring explained that we plan projects around grant funding. He explained that it was identified several years ago that the HVAC needed to be replaced, and we were able to receive a grant to replace it and it was 100% funded. He explained that the work will be done in the spring or summer. HE explained that there are other projects that we are waiting for grant funding to take on. Alderman Crawford asked if the CARES funding is for projects or if it can be used for airport shortfalls, and Mr. Ring responded that he is unsure. Mayor Aiello explained that the first stimulus money had funding in there for airports and that was the \$30,000 that we received. He explained that there is potentially another \$20,000 in stimulus funding for airports in the future.

Mr. Ring explained that he works with consultants from C&S Engineers for projects. He explained that they walk us through the whole process and aided with our airport five year plan. He explained that the runway is something that we cannot maintain as a City. He explained that cracks are growing in size and it is not acceptable to have potholes on the runway. He explained that a lot of planes don't have suspension, and they are not like vehicles. He explained that through grant funding we have been able to replace equipment, a t-hangar, lighting system, and modeling of the offices. He explained that the runway is really a priority on the list and it is deteriorating, He showed photos of the runway to the committee and explained that this is a consistent complaint from the pilots.

Mr Ring explained that it would be great to have full time staff at the airport, but it is hard to justify spending more money there. He explained that he looked into a fixed base operator, but that did not bear any fruit. He explained that the current airport manager is 76 years old, and the whole place is run by part timers. We could really use ideas. We need more support from the County, and a continued financial commitment. They need to share the load with our losses. He explained that it is great to have the support of the Council, as he will need it for the next couple big projects that we do.

Mr. Ring explained that there was an idea to take down the old t-hangar when he got here, but we had bulk capacity of the hangars when he got here and now only 8 out of the 10 are rented in the old hangar. He explained that there is a waiting list for the new t-hangar. He explained that if we demo the old hangar, all of the planes that are there would have to move from the airport and we would eventually need to build a new hangar. He looked into refurbishing the hangar, as the FAA currently will not fund construction projects.

Alderman Witte asked how many planes are in the main hangar, and Mr. Ring explained that there are currently five or six plus a helicopter. He explained that the rental space in the main hangar is decided by the size of the main plane. Alderman Crawford asked if expansion of the main hangar is not feasible, and Mr. Ring explained that they did look into that. He explained that the doors are a persistent problem, and we applied for a grant that we did not receive, We have been waiting for another opportunity.

Alderman Crawford explained that if the hangar space seems to be a good revenue source, that it would cost money to invest but if we did, we may be able to break even in the future. He explained that we could have some follow ups on this but if we could get numbers in front of us and brainstorm we may have some ideas. He explained that he knows that the airport gets talked about in public, and the idea is always to expand the runway to get bigger planes, to be like Jamestown and have commercial flights.

Mayor Aiello explained that he was a County legislator during Alderman Witte's administration, and a study was done at the airport. He explained that a part of this study was looking into expanding the runway. He explained that his understanding is that when the report came out, it was found that the southwest end of the runway drops off so quickly that to expand the runway is cost prohibitive to bring in the fill that is needed to bring the slope to where we can have bigger planes. He explained that this study is available for anyone who would like to see it.

Mr. Ring explained that in the 80's, airports that were not commercial carriers would not be subsidized by the FAA. Alderman Crawford asked then if the airport is not eligible now, and Mr. Ring explained that is correct. Alderman Crawford explained that he realizes that the CBD Alliance and OBD have reached out with letters of support, and he would like to ask for their participation and usage of the facility. We would like to keep business local. He asks how we get the SBU athletic teams to use the airport, and how we come together to support each other and have our local businesses use the airport. He explained that Dresser Rand used to use the airport but he doesn't think that this happens anymore. He asked how we can collaborate with these organizations to support local businesses. He explained that this opportunity is on Mr., Ring, the Mayor, and all of the Council.

Mr. Ring explained that he tried to partner with the National Guard in minor ways but there was a lot of negotiation involved and a lot of work needed to work with them. Mayor Aiello explained that to get a better understanding at the County level, he and Frank Higgins will be setting up a taskforce to see how we can get the county better involved at the airport. They will look into how we can get them better involved and promote the airport better.

Alderman Crawford explained that it would be a great facility if people just used it. He explained that Alderman Panus is much more versed than the rest of us with his background

when it comes to the airport, He explained that maybe a full time manager is the way to go. Maybe we should put a list of ideas together and maybe after the discussion the Mayor has with Mr. Higgins, we see what all of our ideas are and just work together

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Dougherty. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30 p.m.