

**ERIE REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY  
MEETING  
Wednesday, September 26, 2018**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Erie Regional Airport Authority duly posted and advertised, held in the Board Room in the terminal of the Erie International Airport, Tom Ridge Field, 4411 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Millcreek Township, Erie County, Pennsylvania.

**Attendees:**

Christopher Parker	Derek Martin	Kathy Fatica, County Council
Namon McWilliams	Michelle Magee	Cas Kwitowski, City Council
Patrick Cappabianaca	Ian Bogle	Valerie Myers, Times News
Andrea Zdaniewski	Bill Banister	Emily Matson, WICU/WSEE
Daniel Giannelli	James Pacansky	Elena LaQuatra, WJET
Gregory Hayes	Jennifer Gornall	Douglas Youngs, Teamsters

**Members of the Public** (that signed in):

Charlotte Bryan	John Reitinger	Bob Reitinger	
Guy Glendening	Jenny Grimshaw	Denise Harman	Lou Norman
Lois Shafer	Kristine Shafer	Marissa Shafer	Tina Pershun
Douglas Pershun	Lorelei DeAngelo	Cheryl Clark	Mike Inman
Ashlee Engell	Emily Heerseen	Dawn Howard	Kathy Weed
Amy Babinsack	Don Spence	Brent Basham	Martin Vega
Andrew Ferrick	William Weidler	Toni Abromoski	Dan Prischak
Bill Patterson	Joe Ceresa	Milisa Rodrigues Burgos	

Opened: 12:03 PM

Board President Christopher Parker opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Mr. Parker announced that the Board met in an Executive Session prior to today's public meeting to discuss a personnel matter.

Board Member Patrick Cappabianca invited the members of the public to enter the Board Room.

**Approval of Agenda:**

Mr. Parker proposed the following additional items to the agenda:

4.a.) presentation by Derek Martin, Airport Executive Director

4.b.) presentation by Charlotte Bryan, Aviation Consultant

Mr. Cappabianca wants agenda item 9. to read Airport K9 Discussion as he requested; not Security as it reads now.

Mr. Parker asked for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Namon McWilliams moved and Daniel Giannelli seconded; Approved by Yeas: Christopher Parker, Daniel

Giannelli, Namon McWilliams, Gregory Hayes, Patrick Cappabianca, and Andrea Zdaniewski.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Board Meeting- August 22, 2018

Patrick Cappabianca moved and Namon McWilliams seconded. Approved by Yeas: Christopher Parker, Daniel Giannelli, Namon McWilliams, Gregory Hayes, Patrick Cappabianca, and Andrea Zdaniewski.

### **Derek Martin Presentation**

Mr. Martin presented information on best practices for canines, federal regulations, Airport Security Plan requirements, the role of TSA at the airport, and recommendation to eliminate the Airport Police K9 Program. He provided information on canine certification requirements and stated that it is currently not certified and hasn't been certified in five years. Mr. Martin expressed his opinion on the irresponsible local reporting regarding the issue of eliminating the K9 program and offensive remarks made by some members of the public through social media.

### **Charlotte Bryan Presentation**

Charlotte Bryan is a nationally recognized expert in aviation security hired by the Airport Board. She toured the airport and assessed our current security including reviewing the Airport Security Plan (ASP). Ms. Bryan stated that per federal law 15.42, a canine is not required. In response to a question from Mr. Cappabianca, Ms. Bryan stated that there is nothing in the federal law that says an airport can't have a canine either.

### **Public Comments**

Mr. Parker acknowledged the large number of public in attendance and asked each speaker to limit his/her statements to 3 minutes. He added that the Public Comments portion of today's meeting will be capped at 45 minutes.

1. Doug Pershun of Erie Gymnastics Center pledged his support of keeping the K9 program at ERI. Mr. Pershun has committed \$10,000 of the proceeds from his Stars and Stripes gymnastics tournament scheduled for January 19-21, 2019 to support Smoke.
2. Guy Glendening, retired Maryland State Trooper apologized to Mr. Martin if he was offended by any of the statements he made during his interview with Emily Matson on September 11, 2018. Mr. Glendening shared his firsthand experience following the after of 9/11 and his work with law enforcement canines. He feels that eliminating the K9 program takes away the airport's credibility in the eyes of the community. Public safety measures should never be cut.
3. Dr. Jenny Grimshaw, Millcreek Animal Hospital shared that her husband, also a veterinarian at Millcreek Animal Hospital was deployed on 9/11 as a U.S. Marine. Dr. Grimshaw announced that Millcreek Animal Hospital is offering Smoke vet care and whatever else he needs to keep healthy and working. After an inquiry from Dr. Grimshaw, Mr. Martin stated that in 18 years, the airport canines have never found something that an Airport Police Officer could not. Mr. Martin

- reiterated that this is not a financial issue; this airport has no requirement for a canine and our current canine is not certified.
4. Emily Matson of Erie News Now stated that she was the local reporter Mr. Martin referenced in his presentation. She stated that she filed a Right to Know regarding the K9 Program budget, but it was denied by the Airport Authority. Mr. Cappabianca stated that there is no reason to deny such a request.
  5. Dan Prischak, local business owner stated that many people fly out of Erie. Why take away the extra bit of precaution that Erie offers with Smoke? If he is not certified, then what do we need to do to get him certified? Public perception is that it is less safe to travel in out and out of Erie once the K9 program is eliminated.
  6. Lou Norman, local business owner expressed his dismay that at first it seemed that the K9 program was being eliminated due to budget issues, then because it is not required, then because kids touch the dog, then because Smoke is not certified; what will the next excuse be? Mr. Norman pledges \$2,000 to get the dog certified. The events of 9/11 are the reason there is a K9 program here; how quickly we forget! Mr. Norman commented again that in all his years he has never once seen the Airport Police Chief, but I can remember seeing Smoke countless times!
  7. Ashely Engell, a supervisor with SkyWest (Delta) at Erie asked why the airport is choosing to put human lives at risk instead of just keeping the dog. What does the airport plan to do if there are explosives planted here, but there is no dog to find them? Mr. Martin responded that the City of Erie PD has a bomb squad; there are methods available.
  8. Lois Shafer, resident, stated that her husband was in the Navy in Somerset, PA on 9/11. She pointed out that Erie is a sanctuary city. An explosive canine on site may be a deterrent; we don't know if it is or isn't.
  9. Vince an EMT/Firefighter stated that he is sick of "the powers that be" making decisions without seeing the bigger picture. He also asked why kids petting Smoke is such a problem. What is the big deal? Vince said that he has firsthand experience with working dogs- all have interacted with the community through petting, playing, etc. Law enforcement public outreach promotes unity!
  10. Kristine Shafer stated that she is like a sister in law to Lt. Morell who is Smoke's handler. She asked if anyone has considered how eliminating this program will affect Smoke and his handler. The Authority needs to consider things other than financial.
  11. Toni Abramoski, a frequent traveler stated that the airport cannot understate what needs to be done to keep deterrents in place. She tried to clear up some confusion concerning certification of the canine. Smoke is not a TSA certified canine and does not need to be. Mr. Martin explained that Smoke is a community asset, but the liability falls on the Airport Authority since the dog is not certified. Ms. Abramoski asked why the dog hasn't been certified and if the dog needs certified then do it! The Airport Authority is responsible for making sure the dog is certified! Take advantage of the support being offered and get the dog certified!

12. Bill Patterson owner of North Coast Air at the airport suggested that the Executive Director be allowed to manage the airport; a job he is more than qualified to do.
13. Mel Davis asked Mr. Martin and the Board if they have ever seen Smoke work. It seems that those running the Airport have no interest in safety; you just want the dog gone.

Someone from the public asked who is responsible for getting the dog certified/recertified. Mr. Martin stated that the handler is responsible.

### **Committee Reports:**

Finance Committee- Finance Committee member Daniel Giannelli reported that the Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, September 25, 2018. The Committee reviewed the Cash Forecast, Finance Report, Capital Fund Transactions, Bill to be Paid, and Expense Reports with no concerns. Mr. Giannelli stated that the Committee recommends approval of the Bills to be Paid. Daniel Giannelli moved and Patrick Cappabianca seconded. Approved by Yeas: Christopher Parker, Daniel Giannelli, Namon McWilliams, Gregory Hayes, Patrick Cappabianca, and Andrea Zdaniewski.

Chief Financial Officer James Pacansky, Sheilah Bruno reported a net surplus for the month of August of \$4,166. Year to date, we are \$173,065 favorable to budget. Ms. Bruno added that year to date revenue is \$28,758 favorable to budget and expenses are \$144,307 favorable to budget.

### **New Business**

Mr. Parker started the new business discussion of the airport's K9 program by reading a letter sent to Board Member Pat Cappabianca from Dennis Kudlak, a retired pilot in Erie. Mr. Cappabianca invited Kathy Fatica, Erie County Council Liaison and Cas Kwitowski, Erie City Council Liaison to speak regarding the elimination of the K9 program. Ms. Fatica thanked Mr. Martin for the additional information on the regulations and the current K9 program. Ms. Fatica feels that a mistake in training/recertification is not a reason to eliminate the program at this airport. The issue has been discovered so get the dog certified then put something together to avoid this same issue in the future.

Mr. Kwitowski agreed with Ms. Fatica, that a mistake was made; so now fix it. The officer did have a responsibility for canine training and certification, but so did airport management and certainly this Board did too. This is Erie, little things become big things. This is evident with the amount of public that came out today in support of the airport's K9 program.

Mr. Cappabianca welcomed the public then addressed the Board. He stated that we, the Board, are the bosses here. Mr. Martin and the rest of the staff follow our orders; not the other way around. Mr. Martin has tremendous credentials. Mr. Cappabianca said he has a lot of faith in his abilities to lead and grow this airport. Part of his job is to make and/or recommend policy; the Board's job is to approve it. Mr. Martin is new here, but Sheilah

Bruno and Chief Ian Bogle are not. Mr. Cappabianca stated that he believes Mr. Martin was given bad advice on this issue and Ms. Bruno and the Chief should have known better. Mr. Cappabianca holds Ms. Bruno accountable for this. Mr. Cappabianca explained that he met with Lieutenant (Lt.) Morell over this matter as well as asked for financial information from the CFO. Mr. Cappabianca is upset that it took days to get the requested information from Mr. Pacansky and wants to know who was advising him to stall and why are we trying to hide information from a Board Member. Mr. Cappabianca stated that while performing his due diligence he discovered that the dog has already been fired! Notification was given to Lt. Morell on Monday September 10<sup>th</sup> that the program was being eliminated at the end of the month. Mr. Martin was interviewed about it on Tuesday September 11<sup>th</sup>. All of this was done without the Board being notified. Mr. Cappabianca again stated that he holds Ms. Bruno responsible. Mr. Cappabianca doesn't understand why this is all coming up now. Is there something else going on here; another agenda maybe? Board Member Greg Hayes stated that he completely agrees with Mr. Cappabianca. As a Board Member, he had no knowledge that the program was being eliminated until members of the public and the media started reaching out to him.

Mr. Cappabianca asked Lt. Morell to speak. Lt. Morell explained that he was told year after year that the budget for K9 training was cut. In response to a question from Board Member Dan Giannelli, Lt. Morell explained how Smoke gets certified. Mr. Hayes asked Lt. Morell if he put in a request for training; Lt. Morell said he has not because he was told there was no budget for training and management has never been supportive of the program. Mr. Giannelli asked Lt. Morell if he had been offered training in 2017 and Lt. Morell said no. Mr. Cappabianca asked if training was in the budget. Ms. Bruno said that it has been in the budget every year. Mr. Parker stated that the Airport has a legal liability since Smoke is not certified. Solicitor Jennifer Gornall stated that she believes it is dangerous to send the dog out for service when he is not certified. She recommends that Smoke not be utilized until he is certified.

After discussion the Board passed the following:

**Resolution 2018-20 Approval to Rescind the Elimination of the Airport K9**

**Program-** approval of this resolution rescinds the Executive Director decision to terminate the K9 program effective Septmeber 28, 2018.

Patrick Cappabianca moved and Gregory Hayes seconded. Approved by Yeas: Christopher Parker, Daniel Giannelli, Namon McWilliams, Gregory Hayes, Patrick Cappabianca, and Andrea Zdaniewski.

**Resolution 2018-21 Authorize the Board President to Appoint an Ad-Hoc**

**Committee to Review the Airport K9 Program-** the Board President will appoint an Ad-Hoc Committee to study and enhance the program.

Patrick Cappabianca moved and Namon McWilliams seconded. Approved by Yeas: Daniel Giannelli, Namon McWilliams, Gregory Hayes, Patrick Cappabianca, and Andrea Zdaniewski.

**Resolution 2018-22 Approval of Restrictions Pertaining to the Airport K9-** approval of this resolution mandates the K9 unit does not leave the property to work until proper training and necessary certification is accomplished. Entities that the K9 supports will be notified of the dog's inactive status.

Christopher Parker moved and Patrick Cappabianca seconded. Approved by Yeas: Daniel Giannelli, Namon McWilliams, Gregory Hayes, Patrick Cappabianca, Andrea Zdaniewski, and Christopher Parker.

### **Liaison Comments**

Ms. Fatica and Mr. Kwitowski both thanked the Board for reconsidering the elimination of the K9 program and taking the necessary steps to correct the issue. Ms. Fatica added that the Board was quick to realize the mistake and is ready to fix it. Mr. Kwitowski said the Board can learn from this. He added that he feels Mr. Martin will do a great job here and that community support is very important.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Mr. Martin announced that we will be hosting a TSA Pre-check Enrollment Event in the terminal November 5<sup>th</sup> through November 9<sup>th</sup> in the terminal. There will be more information on the airport website homepage and Facebook page.

Patrick Cappabianca made a motion to adjourn and Gregory Hayes seconded. Approved by Yeas: Christopher Parker, Daniel Giannelli, Namon McWilliams, Gregory Hayes, Patrick Cappabianca, and Andrea Zdaniewski.

**Adjournment: 1:48 PM**

---

Namon McWilliams, Secretary