

## Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

“Special Session”

February 12, 2007

James L. Purnell, Jr., President  
Louise L. Gulyas, Vice President  
Judith O. Boggs  
Linda C. Busick  
James C. Church  
Robert L. Cowger, Jr.  
Virgil L. Shockley

The Commissioners met with Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan, City Council President Joseph Mitrecic, and members James Hall, James Hancock, III, Nancy Howard, Mary Knight, Lloyd Martin and Margaret Pillas at the Eagles Landing Golf Course in West Ocean City to discuss the proposed Ocean City Municipal Airport (OCMA) Expansion Project.

Mayor Meehan thanked the Commissioners for meeting with them to discuss the proposal and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to present the facts to both the City Council and County Commissioners. He stated that Worcester County is a tourism based economy, which would greatly benefit from the proposed expansion because it would be able to accommodate critical aircraft and increase airport revenues. He further stated that the OCMA is a valuable mode of transportation that helps to ensure potential visitors and business persons can travel to and from the area. He asked the Commissioners to support the proposed OCMA expansion project.

Ocean City Public Works Director Hal Adkins presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled “Ocean City Municipal Airport, Worcester County, MD, Past, Present, Future,” outlining the airport’s history along with the proposal to upgrade the existing facilities along with extending both the North-South runway (#02/20) from 3,200 feet to 4,100 feet in length and the primary East-West runway (#14/32) from 4,070 to 5,000 feet in length. The proposal also outlined needed land acquisition, and findings of a recent environmental survey. Mr. Adkins stated that the project would cost approximately \$25 million over the next five years with funding as follows: 95% funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), 2.5% from the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA), and 2.5% from local matching funds from Ocean City.

Mike Waibel Chuck Trice, of the engineering design firm URS, discussed the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS), and explained that as a NPIAS recognized airport, the OCMA is eligible to receive federal funding through the Airport Improvement Program (AIP).

Terry Page of the FAA stated that the FAA will award \$3.5 billion nationwide for airport improvements in FY07/FY08. He stated that the funds are used primarily for safety and operations improvements. He further stated that the two OCMA runways do not currently meet all FAA safety requirements. He stated that the OCMA would first be required to bring the

existing runways into compliance to be eligible for future funding.

Mike Henry, Easton Airport Manager, stated that after a similar expansion project to a 5,000-foot runway at the Easton Airport, traffic increased from 70,000 to 160,000 flights, revenue increased to \$54 million and staff grew to 362 employees.

In response to several questions from Commissioner Boggs, Mr. Waibel stated that the day-night average sound level (DNL) of incoming flights varied between 65 decibels (db) to 75 db.

Commissioner Church stated that he understood Ocean City Government's desire to expand the OCMA, but also stated that the need to expand was unfounded. Commissioner Church stated that the Easton Airport was a commercial airport and could not be compared to the OCMA, which is a general aviation facility. He stated that West Ocean City residents are overwhelmingly opposed to the proposed airport expansion project. Commissioner Church further stated that the Salisbury Airport is a viable facility that is in the beginning stages of expansion, which will accommodate another commercial airline and bring greater numbers of visitors and business persons to and from the area. He recommended using available funding to expand the Salisbury Airport instead.

In response to a question from Commissioner Cowger, Mr. Adkins stated that 4 homes would be displaced if the airport expansion is approved, however, the City would provide those property owners with adequate compensation.

Commissioner Gulyas stated her support of the project, and explained that expanding the airport would help to improve safety and develop even greater economic opportunities in Worcester County through increased fuel sales, hanger rentals and flights. She stated her support for the project as presented.

In response to a question from Commissioner Purnell, Mayor Meehan stated that the responsibility for acquiring the properties needed for the proposed expansion would fall to Ocean City rather than the County.

Commissioner Shockley stated that expansion of the North-South runway #02/20 to 5,000 feet rather than the East-West runway #14/32 could be a more ideal solution because there would be much less adverse impact to surrounding residents. In response to several questions from Commissioner Shockley, Mr. Adkins stated that a greater number of residential subdivisions would be adversely impacted by this proposal because arriving and departing aircraft would be rerouted over the residential developments along MD Rt. 611. He further stated that the environmental impact study confirmed that tidal wetlands would have to be disturbed if the North-South runway #02/20 was to be extended to 5,000 feet. As proposed, Mr. Adkins explained that Ocean City would need to acquire 174.2 acres, which is made up of 17 parcels and 4 homes, to expand the OCMA. He stated that relocating MD Rt. 611 would add 16 seconds to the driving time for vehicles traveling this section of MD Rt. 611.

Following the presentation, the Commissioners along with City Council members and staff took a tour of the Ocean City Municipal Airport and had lunch.

The board adjourned to meet again on February 20, 2007.