

Airport Advisory Board First Year Report to Airport Customers

The Rockwall City Council appointed an Airport Advisory Board for the Ralph M. Hall / Rockwall Municipal Airport in March 2016. The Airport Advisory Board members are: Matt Murphey, Tom Woodruff, Kellie Roby, Brad Bassett, Mark Berglund, Dwight Royall (Chairman of the Board), and Mike Potter (Vice-Chairman). The Board's first meeting was held on Thursday, March 24, 2016.

In April 2016, the Board recommended that the City Council authorize the City Manager to send a Letter of Interest (LOI) formally requesting TXDOT Aviation place the Airport Development Plan improvements in the State's Aviation Capital Improvement Program. An LOI was sent to TXDOT Aviation in May 2016.

An Airport Customer Appreciation Day event / Meet & Greet were held at the airport on Saturday, June 4, 2016. This event was hosted as an opportunity to meet the Board members and for the airport customers to provide comments to ask questions about topics of concern. Approximately 35 people attended the event.

In June 2016, the Board appointed an Airport Marketing Subcommittee to look at ways to better market the airport. It is believed that by promoting the airport throughout the region, the City will benefit economically by having those with airplanes fly into Rockwall, enjoy many of the shopping, dining, and recreational destinations the City has to offer, spend the night, contribute to the local economy, and fly out the next day with little impact to city services. The Subcommittee will consist of Mrs. Roby, Mr. Woodruff, and Mr. Bassett. The airport's website was created at www.rockwallairport.com

In July 2016, the Board considered a request by JJ Smith to hold a balloon festival at the airport. The Board generally liked and supported the idea of a balloon festival in Rockwall but there were several concerns regarding logistics, impact to operations, potential cost vs. revenue, crowd control, and safety. Mr. Smith's plan was to model the Rockwall Balloon Festival after the Plano Balloon Festival and bring participants and spectators into Rockwall, as well as offer non-profit organizations an opportunity to earn money for their respective charitable endeavors.

In August 2016, While there were still concerns with the location and logistics of the event, the Board approved a recommendation to the City Council that the Rockwall Balloon Festival be held at the Ralph M Hall / Rockwall Municipal Airport.

JJ Smith discussed the Rockwall Balloon Festival at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, September 6, 2016. There were similar concerns regarding expected numbers of attendees, vendor space, parking, budget / costs of the event, personal property of airport tenants, and the organizer's 501 c3 status. Mayor Pruitt made a motion to approve

the recommendation of the Airport Board to allow the balloon festival to take place with the stipulation that Mr. Smith first obtain his tax exempt status, that there be no alcohol served, and that all owners at the airport not be inconvenienced Councilmember Hohenshelt seconded the motion; however, he requested to have a more comprehensive plan presented to the city council by the first city council meeting in October (an operational plan reflecting parking, number of people, pricing, budget, etc.). The motion failed and the event was not held at the airport.

In October 2016, the Airport Advisory Board studied how to optimize revenues. The primary discussion points were:

- Empty hangars need to be rented (look at drainage and surface improvements)
- Increase fuel sales with a goal of 4000 gallons a month (based on historic figures)
- Evaluate being closed on Sundays (consider opening during peak flying season)
- Evaluate the cost and feasibility a self-service fuel island
- Promotional Events / Marketing
- Evaluate steps to sustain operations until land lease hangars become fully owned by the City and the related revenue is available
- Discuss if TXDOT will allow for construction of enclosed T-hangars on the east side (single-sided, facing west)
- Look at building up spaces to make them more desirable
- Explore opportunities for private partnerships to build hangars
- Look to draw recreational pilots into Rockwall using the airport

In December, the City of Rockwall Public Information Officer wrote an article featuring pilots departing from Ralph M. Hall / Rockwall Municipal Airport on a mission to deliver Christmas gifts as part of a greater outreach in Mexico. The team of pilots made 9 individual flights carrying 3300 gifts.

In January 2017, the Board approved a Resolution recommending that the City Council consider adding the local matching funds necessary to participate in the State of Texas Airport Capital Improvement Program to the next City of Rockwall bond election.

The City Council formally accepted the resolution on February 20, 2017. The next City Capital Improvement Plan bond election has not been scheduled.