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### South Central Regional Airport Agency Officially Gets Down To Business



South Central Regional Airport Agency officially got underway Thursday afternoon holding it's first meeting in the basement of Oskaloosa City Hall

Oskaloosa, Iowa – Without much notice, the hard work of making a new regional airport happen started Thursday evening.

The six members of the new South Central Regional Airport Agency Board held their first meeting Thursday evening in the Basement of Oskaloosa City Hall. Pella's Mayor James Mueller started off the meeting until the newly constituted board

was able to organize itself. "First of all we want to thank everybody for volunteering and accepting the appointment to this board. It's going to prove to be a very important position long term," saying it will have a positive impact in the region.

Mueller also wanted to emphasize to the new board that they were to work independently. "That's what this board is created for. Not to succumb to undue influence. You will represent the entire region, not just the individual communities or individual entities within the communities."

Mueller also reminded the new board to be mindful of the open meetings law. "We want to make sure this is an absolute open and positive discussion. We want to make sure everybody who has input has the opportunity to provide that input. Nothing behind doors, nothing closed to the public."

Oskaloosa Mayor Dave Krutzfeldt reiterated the sentiment of Pella's Mayor in that the board should stand apart from the respective councils. Speaking to the new board, he said, "Quite literally, you're on your own to make decisions as you see fit."

"Many of the decisions you're going to make are going to be ones that have a lifetime of 80 to 100 years." Krtuzfeldt told the board, helping to relay how their decisions will impact the area for decades to come. "When we get into the inevitable differences that are going to happen as a board, I would encourage you to run those differences through that filter in your mind."

Pella's Mayor James Muller officially called the meeting to order, and turned it over to the group, who did formal introductions.

After introductions, the group set out to officially organize its structure by appointing a chair and vice chair, along with a secretary/treasurer. Each entity will then be represented with Pella and Oskaloosa alternating chair and vice-chair positions and the Mahaska County representative being the secretary/treasurer on the board. Each position will be one year in length, with the chair position then alternating between Pella and Oskaloosa.



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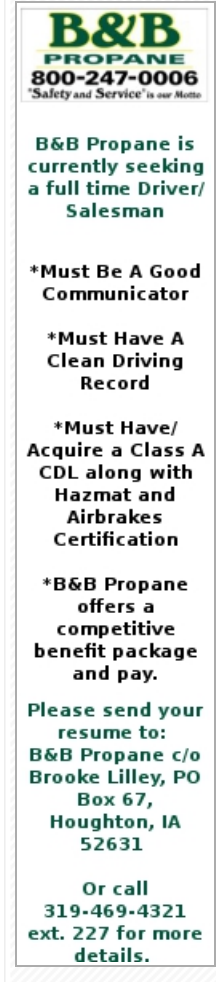
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Oskaloosa representative Jim Hansen is the first chairperson of the board, with David Barnes filling the position of vice-chair. Joe Warrick will hold the position of secretary/treasurer.

The board then asked the city administrators where the project is currently. Pella City Administrator Mike Nardini gave a history of the project that started for Pella in the late '90's by the FAA over safety concerns at their airport. The main concern of the federal agency was Pella's ability to accommodate Class C aircraft. (an aircraft that requires an approach speed of 120 knots or greater)

Currently the Pella Airport is a Class B airport and is unable to attain a Class C status because they are unable to have 1000 feet of clear zone space at each end of the runway. Currently, they have 300 feet of space, and because of roads such as Highway 163, they will be unable to attain that needed space.

Nardini said the next step in this process will be the selection of consultants to assist in the project. "What the Federal Aviation Administration has told us is once we have a consultant on board to assist us with the required studies, aviation studies for them, the very first study that we will be required to do is a site selection study for the new regional airport."

A master plan will also be required. A master plan is the operational plan for the airport. An environmental review for the airport will also be required before any construction is to begin. Nardini said that the environmental study will be the most lengthy one, taking approximately 18 months to complete. Nardini said the goal is to have the required studies done in 24 months.

Oskaloosa City Manager Michael Schrock pointed out that Oskaloosa's City Airport is 12 miles from town and is used mainly for recreational aircraft, with the exception of some use for agricultural purposes. "We say the ability to combine facilities (Pella and Oskaloosa) as a tremendous opportunity for us to upgrade."

Schrock said that if the FAA allows the City of Oskaloosa to sell the land of the current airport, with its appraised value of near six million dollars, it will help finance the project for Oskaloosa.

Currently there are 32 aircraft at the Pella Airport. 5 of those aircraft are jet aircraft with one of them being a Category C. The airport performs about sixteen thousand operations a year. The airport services up to 500 Category C flights a year on a temporary permit from the FAA. Pella is concerned that the permit could be pulled at any time, especially if an event were to happen at the airport. "They've made it very clear that it's a temporary solution."

Oskaloosa's airport currently has 34 citizen aircraft at the airport.

The two cities, prior to the board, had worked with Snyder & Associates to help guide the cities in the engineer portions up to this point. The board will now advertise to hire a consulting firm, which could be a 6 week process.

During the process, the City of Pella will be the 'sponsor' city, and Oskaloosa will reimburse Pella after monies from grants and the FAA entitlement funds are used, helping to cover 90% of the costs for the studies, effectively splitting the costs between the two cities 50/50. Mahaska County, itself, is not responsible for any funding of the project during the construction phase.

Once a consultant is on board, site selection would be around 60 days. The board will then submit 3 possible sites to the FAA for airspace analysis. That analysis could take anywhere from 3 months to 9 months to complete. The FAA will see about fast tracking the airspace analysis for the project, according to Nardini.

The regional airport will be in a certain geographical area. That area being within 4 miles of Highway 163 to minimize the amount of money spent on road construction that would be approximately 1 million dollars per mile to the facility. Another parameter is also to be within 10 miles of each community, and as near an equal distance as possible.

In the end, the FAA will require that each city's respective airports then be eliminated and their current boards be closed, with the new board being the representative of the regional airport.


The board approved to solicit consultants and this process will be the main focus of their next meeting. Also noted was that the spot currently filled by Joe Warrick, who was appointed by the Mahaska County Board of Supervisors, could possibly change if the gender balance requirement mandates a change.

The board will next meet in Pella, as they decided upon alternating locations in order to be fair for all members of the board.

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