

MINUTES

Beaufort County Airports Board

August 13, 2026 | 10:00 am | Meeting called to order by Chairman Rich Sells
[Video and Transcript](#)

ATTENDANCE

Present: Rich Sells, Thomas Sheahan, Chris Butler, Jim Starnes, Mark Bailey, David Nelems, Dr. Eli Roth, and Mike Szczechowski.

Absent: Leslie Adlam Flory

County Staff: Jon Rembold, Airports Director; Stephen Parry, Deputy Airports Director; Jeremy Mathes, ARFF Chief; Brandon Chavis, ARW Airport Manager; Marlene Myers, Airports Business Manager; and Rocio Rexrode, Airports Senior Administrative Specialist.

Hilton Head Island Town Council Liaison: Melinda Tunner

Beaufort County Council Liaison: Thomas Reitz

Public: Judy Elder, Talbert, Bright and Ellington, Inc.

AGENDA ADOPTION

The August 13, 2026, BCAB meeting agenda was adopted with unanimous consent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mark Bailey made a motion to approve the June 11, 2026, meeting minutes. Jim Starnes seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no Public Comments.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBER

The Chairman introduced Andy Meers, a new member (*pending confirmation*) of the Airports Board. Mr. Meers introduced himself and shared that he moved to Hilton Head Island from Massachusetts in 2022. He owns a Piper Dakota based at Hilton Head Island Airport and is a member of a local flying club. He also identified himself as a small business owner with a lifelong interest in aviation and expressed his desire to contribute to the Board.

The Board welcomed Mr. Meers.

- **HILTON HEAD ISLAND AIRPORT (HXD):**

Airport Website Update: The new Hilton Head Island Airport website is live and provides the Airports Department with more immediate access to make updates. The previous website was more difficult to update in a timely manner, which was a concern because airport information, including

weather and flight information, can change quickly. The Department will continue updating the website, including the parking section. A media section is also being considered to showcase airport photographs and short videos, including photographs of aircraft visiting the Airport.

Airfield Marking: Airfield and parking lot marking is now being performed in-house using the Airport's new paint striping machine. The Operations team has calibrated the machine and is gaining experience operating it. The team has been working at night while the airfield was closed for drainage work, providing an opportunity to complete the painting. The work was described as turning out very well and includes updating the taxiway and runway centerlines. Areas where crack sealing had been completed were also painted and treated with beads to improve visibility. Performing the work in-house provides significant cost savings and eliminates the need to subcontract the work or wait for outside contractors to schedule the Airport. The capability also supports the Airport's Part 139 certification and compliance requirements.

Airfield Drainage Improvements: The \$1.2 million airfield drainage improvement project, executed by Quality Enterprises, aimed to upgrade drainage structures within the Runway Safety Area. When the airfield classification changed from C-II to C-III, the Runway Safety Area widened, placing some drainage structures that had previously been outside the area within it. The structures, therefore, had to be upgraded to support vehicles and the heaviest aircraft expected to operate on the airfield. The drainage structures were constructed off-site and brought to the Airport for installation during scheduled airfield closures. Installation took only a few days. The project is substantially complete, with only a few punch-list items remaining, and the work progressed smoothly.

Airport Master Plan: The Hilton Head Island Airport Master Plan process is continuing. It was emphasized that the process is intended to be deliberate and intentional because the Master Plan will help guide future airport projects and development. The Airport is approaching the process as a comprehensive plan because of its role as an important part of the community.

Airport Staff met with the project team the previous week to discuss the process and next steps. Additional stakeholder coordination meetings are planned, with the goal of holding another before Thanksgiving.

Pedestrian Walkway and Bridge: The proposed pedestrian walkway and bridge will connect Airport property at 32 Hunter Road with the terminal property. The project is being procured under a design-build delivery method and is expected to be a relatively straightforward design-and-construction project. The connection will initially serve as an employee parking area, allowing employees to walk to the terminal. In the future, the property is planned to support customer parking as part of the Airport's long-term parking program. The property is approximately 0.7 acres and is expected to provide approximately 50 to 60 parking spaces initially. The existing building will eventually be demolished, allowing the area to be restriped to maximize parking.

Parking Improvements: Elite Parking has installed temporary parking gates at the Airport, which are now operational. Gates on the general aviation side are also active. Elite personnel are monitoring the gates and documenting issues for resolution. The Airport is continuing to evaluate parking operations and customer use.

The Airport is also promoting the 30-minute free parking period to encourage customers to use the parking lots rather than wait along the terminal loop road. The parking system uses license plate recognition to track parking time and calculate applicable fees.

Operation Patriots FOB Check Presentation: In April, Operation Patriots FOB was selected as the recipient of funds raised through the event at Beaufort Executive Airport. The Airport presented a \$5,000 check during the July County Council meeting. The Airport expressed its support for the organization and noted the strong connection to the Airport because of the number of veterans on the Airports Department team.

Pause and Relax Program: The Airports Department has established the “Pause and Relax” program to bring comfort and therapy dogs into the Airport terminal. Therapy dogs have previously been well received by pilots, passengers, and others at the Airport. The program includes a vetting process for the therapy dog teams, with staff coordinating to ensure the visits run smoothly.

Twelve teams have volunteered to participate, allowing the Airport to establish a regular rotation of therapy dogs. The Department also discussed the upcoming pet relief area and the possibility of having the therapy dogs participate when it opens, potentially providing a publicity opportunity for the Airport.

FAA Part 139 Inspection: The Airport’s FAA Part 139 inspection was conducted in July, ahead of the originally anticipated August schedule. The approximately two-day inspection was described as very successful, with the Operations team, led by Dan Neeson, and the ARFF team performing exceptionally well, including in the area of recordkeeping. A few minor administrative items were identified, including faded fuel truck placards, and were being addressed by the Department. The Department emphasized its goal of maintaining readiness for an inspection at any time.

TSA Commendation: The Airport received a commendation from TSA following an unannounced inspection. TSA observed Airport personnel managing traffic in front of the terminal to maintain an orderly flow and prevent congestion. During the inspection, a TSA inspector walking through the terminal was stopped by an Airport security officer and asked to present credentials to verify his authorization to be in the area.

TSA subsequently issued a commendation letter from its Charleston office recognizing the Airport security team for properly following security procedures. The Airports Department noted that the team was “caught doing good things” and expressed its appreciation for the security personnel's work.

TSA PreCheck Enrollment Event: The event is scheduled for the following week at 26 Hunter Road. The event will have more than 200 appointment slots, with more than half already filled as of the meeting. Walk-ins will also be accepted.

Participants who complete the required paperwork and fees online in advance can streamline the in-person screening process. The event is being conducted by a private company on behalf of TSA, with the Airport providing the location.

Wings for All: Wings for All is a program designed to make the air travel experience more comfortable for individuals on the autism spectrum and others with developmental needs who may experience anxiety in busy airports. The program partners with an airport, airlines, and TSA to provide a simulated travel experience that may include ticketing, TSA screening, boarding an aircraft, finding a seat, receiving safety instructions, deplaning, and returning to baggage claim. The program is intended to help participants and their parents or caregivers become more comfortable and prepared for air travel.

Pockets Full of Sunshine: Pockets Full of Sunshine is a local Hilton Head Island organization serving individuals with developmental needs. The organization provides opportunities for participants to engage in community activities, contribute positively, and develop a sense of purpose and worth. The Airport noted that one of the organization's members, Chase, works at the terminal and is actively involved with Pockets Full of Sunshine. The organization also assists participants with employment opportunities.

The Airports Department hopes to bring Wings for All and Pockets Full of Sunshine together to support individuals and families in the Hilton Head Island community.

- **BEAUFORT EXECUTIVE AIRPORT (ARW):**

Hangar Project Update: Site work is underway for the ARW hangar complex. The project includes multiple new hangar facilities, including transient, T-hangar, and small box hangar space. The weather has delayed final site compaction, with asphalt taxi lane installation to follow.

Edison Foard has been selected for the hangar projects. The Department is using a design-build approach to expedite the work and utilize remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding before its December 31 expiration. It was noted that the site work is progressing and that additional hangar capacity will help address the Airport's waiting list and support increased activity. State funding covers 70 percent of the site work, with Beaufort County providing the remaining 30 percent.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS – ACTION ITEMS

For efficiency, Chairman Sells recommended considering Action Items 1 and 2 together, given their similar nature. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously approved the motion to approve both items in one motion.

1. **GRANT ACCEPTANCE – RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE A RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT AN FAA AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (AIP) GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,819,044 TO REIMBURSE BEAUFORT COUNTY FOR THE PURCHASE OF 26 HUNTER ROAD, CONTINGENT UPON RECEIPT OF THE FINAL FAA GRANT OFFER**
2. **GRANT ACCEPTANCE – RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE A RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT AN FAA AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT (AIG) IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,358,322.00 TO REIMBURSE BEAUFORT COUNTY FOR THE PURCHASE OF 28 HUNTER ROAD, CONTINGENT UPON RECEIPT OF THE FINAL FAA GRANT OFFER**

Action Items 1 and 2 (VOTE):

David Nelems made a motion to approve a recommendation to approve a resolution authorizing the acceptance of an FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant in the amount of \$1,819,044 to reimburse Beaufort County for the purchase of 26 Hunter Road; and a resolution authorizing the acceptance of an FAA Airport Infrastructure (AIG) grant in the amount of \$1,358,322 to reimburse Beaufort County for the purchase of 28 Hunter Road. Chris Butler seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

3. **CONTRACT AWARD (ARW) - RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE A CONTRACT AWARD TO EDISON FOARD FOR THE DESIGN-BUILD OF AN EIGHT-BAY T-HANGAR AND 50' X 50' BOX HANGAR, CONTINGENT UPON EXECUTION OF ORDINANCE 2026/40 AUTHORIZING THE REALLOCATION OF THE REMAINING AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDS**

David Nelems made a motion to approve a recommendation to approve a contract award to Edison Foard for the design-build of an eight-bay T-hangar and 50' x 50' box hangar. Mark Bailey seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed

CHAIRMAN UPDATE

Chairman Sells reported that he and the Airports Director had discussed and resolved a couple of outstanding issues.

1. Finance Committee

Members: Chris Butler (Chair), Rich Sells, and Tom Sheahan.

The Committee had nothing new to report this month.

2. Passenger Service Committee

Members: Leslie Adlam Flory (Chair), David Nelems, Jim Starnes, and Tom Sheahan

It was mentioned that Ambassadors identified several items in the new terminal, most of which are already being addressed. It was noted that feedback from Ambassadors and passengers is valuable in identifying issues following the terminal opening, and that the continued submission of concerns for review and follow-up is encouraged.

3. ARW Facilities Use and Improvement Committee

Members: Chris Butler (Chair), Mark Bailey, David Nelems, and Jim Starnes.

The Committee had nothing new to report this month.

4. Government Affairs Committee

Members: Rich Sells (Chair)

The Committee had nothing new to report this month.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no Public Comments.

ADJOURNMENT

The motion to adjourn was made at 10:43 a.m. It passed unanimously.

NEXT MEETING

September 17, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.

Town of Hilton Head Island, 1 Town Center Ct., Hilton Head Island, SC 29928