MINUTES

Beaufort County Airports Board

October 8, 2026 | 10:00 am | Meeting called to order by Chairman Rich Sells
Video and Transcript

ATTENDANCE

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

Absent:

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, Project and Development Coordinator.

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 October 8, 2026, BCAB meeting agenda was adopted with unanimous consent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes were amended to reflect that Mark Bailey was present (Teams). Chris Butler made a motion to approve the amended September 17, 2026, meeting minutes. Dr. Eli Roth seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Melinda Tunner: Addressed the Airport Layout Plan (ALP), noting that the stakeholder group had met once several months earlier but had not reconvened. She emphasized the importance of scheduling the next meeting so community members could receive updates and understand the planning process.

Ms. Turner reported that businesses along the Beach City Road airport fence line had been contacted by a Charleston-area attorney group offering assistance related to potential airport impacts and property values. She expressed concern that this outreach could create the impression that decisions had already been made, when, to her knowledge, no such decisions had been finalized. She requested an update on the next steps for the ALP.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

  Partial Parallel Taxiway: It was reported that the 30% design submittal had been sent to the FAA and that the 60% design submittal was scheduled for October 28, 2026. FAA comments required

revisions to the taxiway lead-in so aircraft would need to make a turn rather than proceed directly from the apron toward the runway. Once the design reviews are complete, the Airport will be able to further evaluate grant funding and the project layout. Construction funding has not yet been secured.

Runway Rehab (Closeout): The runway rehabilitation project is complete. The Airport is finalizing grant closeout documentation and ensuring that all remaining payments are processed.

AWOS: It was reported that the FAA had reviewed several potential locations for relocating the AWOS equipment. A final location acceptable to the Airport and the FAA has been identified. The Airport is awaiting engineering drawings for the equipment slab and coordinating with the State, which will install and connect the new weather equipment. The County will be responsible for the slab, power, and data lines.

Hangar Project: Sitework was reported to be approximately 99% complete, with remaining punch-list items, asphalt touch-ups, and corrections to areas where water had collected on the taxiway. The completed sitework will allow the Airport to proceed with the transient hangar, the first hangar planned for construction. The Airport continues to coordinate with Edison Foard regarding costs and funding before construction begins.

The separate project for an eight-bay T-hangar and a small box hangar remains in the design phase. Edison Foard was selected for that project, and the Airport is working to ensure the project can proceed within the required timeline for expenditure of ARPA funds by year-end.

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

  Parking Gate and Collection System: Staff reported an estimated 8–10% failure rate due to connectivity issues, QR-code scanning difficulties, and user or operator errors. Elite Aviation provides on-site assistance during business hours and 24/7 remote monitoring. Additional fiber-optic connectivity is being pursued to improve performance.

  Parking revenue has increased since activation, though comparison with the previous operator is pending. Eligible Signature Aviation and helicopter-tour customers may receive validation, while qualifying airport tenants receive complimentary parking.

  Parking Lot Improvements: The pedestrian bridge will connect the Hunter Road property to the terminal sidewalk, allowing employees to park outside the customer lot and potentially relocating rental-car returns. These changes are intended to increase customer parking capacity and improve access. A parking lot study was underway, with results expected around November, to help guide future improvements.

  Airfield Drainage: The airfield drainage project was reported as substantially complete, with one additional structure needed to address an unforeseen issue. Installation of the structure will allow the project to be closed out.

Pockets Full of Sunshine: The Director reported on a recent visit to the airport by participants from Pockets Full of Sunshine and their adult companions. The group toured the fire station, visited the air traffic control tower, viewed a privately owned aircraft in a hangar, and watched aircraft takeoffs and landings. Participants also observed ARFF team members demonstrate how quickly they could put on their protective gear during a fun "gear race." The group enjoyed lunch in the apparatus bay. The Director described the visit as a successful community outreach activity and expressed interest in continuing opportunities to connect with the organization.

- **AIRPORT UPDATE:**

  ALP Meeting: The Director explained that a date for the next ALP stakeholder meeting cannot yet be confirmed because the Airport is coordinating with the FAA to clarify mandatory compliance requirements related to airport operations and federal grant agreements. Once these requirements are clarified, the Airport can discuss alternatives and schedule the next meeting.

  He expressed concern that outreach by a Charleston-area attorney group to Beach City Road businesses was premature and creating unwarranted fear, emphasizing that no decisions have been finalized and any actual concerns would be addressed if they arise. He noted that this explanation would provide Ms. Turner with an update for her constituents.

  NAC Conference: The Director reported attending the National Airports Conference in New Orleans, where he connected with representatives from small, non-hub airports nationwide. A roundtable discussion provided an opportunity to exchange information on airport operations, funding opportunities, and common challenges. The Director noted that the conference also provided opportunities to connect with consultants, service providers, and equipment vendors.

  Tailwind Concession Project: A contractor has been identified, and the concessionaire is developing concepts for the additional concessions area. Plans will be reviewed with the terminal architect to ensure consistency with the terminal design. The proposed concept includes hot food and packaged food offerings as well as retail items. A construction schedule has not yet been established.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no Unfinished Business.

NEW BUSINESS – ACTION ITEMS

1. **CONTRACT AWARD (HXD) - RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE CONTRACT AWARD FOR DESIGN-BUILD OF THE PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY AND BRIDGE PROJECT TO NIX CONSTRUCTION**

   Chris Butler made a motion to recommend approval of a contract award to Nix Construction, Inc., for the design-build of the Pedestrian Walkway and Bridge Project at the Hilton Head Island Airport. Dr. Eli Roth seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

2. **CHANGE ORDER (ARW) – RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE CHANGE ORDER #1 AND CHANGE ORDER #2 FOR BEAUFORT EXECUTIVE AIRPORT HANGAR CONSTRUCTION PROJECT (SITE DEVELOPMENT)** Jim Starnes made a motion to recommend approval of Change Orders #1 and #2 for the ARW Hangar Construction Project (Site Development). David Nelems seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

CHAIRMAN UPDATE

Chairman Sells reported that Andy Meers had been appointed the new chair of the Hilton Head Airport committee, and Mike Szczechowski is also serving on the committee; additional Board members may participate if interested.

1. **Finance Committee**

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

   The committee anticipates meeting in January to review the budget, with a preliminary review as early as December also discussed. FY 2028 capital requests had already been submitted, and the Airport was actively preparing the budget, with the final budget due in February. The committee also discussed the possibility of periodic budget reports. Airport Finance will be consulted to coordinate and confirm a meeting date.

2. **Passenger Service Committee**

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

   The Committee had nothing new to report this month.

3. **ARW Facilities Use and Improvement Committee**

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

   The committee plans to meet in November to discuss the hangar project, including questions regarding the transient hangar.

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 10:53 a.m. It passed unanimously.

NEXT MEETING

November 12, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.

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