

A special meeting of the Gallatin Airport Authority was held April 17, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. in the Airport Conference Room. Board members present were Richard Roehm, John McKenna, Kevin Kelleher and Greg Metzger. Also present were Brian Sprenger, Assistant Airport Director and Cherie Ferguson, Office Manager. Board member Steve Williamson was unable to attend the meeting, as was Airport Director Ted Mathis.

Chair Richard Roehm said he wished to review the actions leading to calling this Special Meeting of the Gallatin Airport Authority.

He said that, as has been reported, our Board has conducted a national search for a replacement of our current Airport Director, Ted Mathis, who is retiring on May 31st of this year. That national search produced four finalists, who were publicly interviewed at our regular Board meeting on April 9th.

Following these interviews, the Board entered into Executive Session to deliberate and weigh the candidates' various personal and performance issues. Since these discussions clearly related to matters of individual privacy, the presiding officer closed the meeting having found that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceeded the merits of public disclosure.

At the termination of the Executive Session, the Board directed the Search Committee to offer employment with various terms to Mr. Brian Sprenger, which was done late in the afternoon of April 10. Mr. Sprenger tentatively agreed, subject to review by legal counsel.

Mr. Roehm said the review is now complete and was complete on Wednesday, when the Board decided to have this meeting. He said that three Board members requested the Special Meeting to conclude this process, and this meeting was scheduled and publicly noticed according to statutory requirements.

He said we are assembled now and have as an agenda item a proposed contract, which hires Mr. Sprenger as the Airport Director with a start date beginning on June 1st. Mr. Roehm said the Board could ratify the contract, modify the contract or reject the contract. If they reject the contract, they would be essentially saying they want to go back and find four other candidates. He said it's all open at this point what they do and it's up to the Board to vote, amend or decide what to do at this point.

He said there were two people who signed up to make public comments and he asked them to make their comments at this time. Doug Chapman spoke first and read his comments, which are on the included sheet. Mr. Roehm thanked Mr. Chapman.

Tom Nagorski spoke next. He said he wanted to voice agreement with what Mr. Chapman said. He said he wanted to go on record with his thoughts and concerns, particularly about the selection process of the Airport Director. He said he is very process oriented because government is process driven for the people and maintaining control by the people. He said the public has been divorced from any direct participation in the standards or the screening of these applicants and there have been many activities which are contrary to Montana law. He said starting back in July 2008 when the Board established this search committee, this search committee was established without any reference to the public agenda. This came out of the blue. He said when this search committee was selected, it was selected specifically comprised of two individuals to circumvent Montana law to avoid the public meeting notice requirements. That circumvention of Montana law is not accepted and any committee has a quorum and has its own public noticing responsibilities. Where have been the public notices for the selection committee, where have been the notes of the selection committee? He said they were totally divorced of any of your activities there. On August of 2008, a quorum of the Board met up in Missoula to discuss hiring practices with

the Board up there, whether decisions were made up there or not, you were conducting business on behalf of the public. That should have been an open meeting. It was closed. It was unannounced. He said that was an illegal activity and that it taints this whole selection process in his mind. The meeting and greeting session of April 8th of this year was the first opportunity for the public to even view the individuals that you have been dealing with and this was just a “meet and greet” session with no formal question and answer session for the opportunity to dig deeper into the philosophies of these individuals. He said it’s certainly leaving him, and he’s sure a lot of other individuals, in the dark as to the underlying philosophy and overall experiences behind these individuals. As disturbingly is that in the March 12th minutes of this year, the minutes state that the process would be the Board would interview the individual four applicants in open meeting, the Board would retire to the Executive Session to consider the candidates as you’ve stated and then clearly in the minutes, following these deliberations, the Board would again reconvene in public session to nominate and vote for the new director, not rubber stamp a contract that has already been negotiated but come up with a decision as to who would be sitting in that chair right now. He asked where the announcement of that public session is, where are the minutes what the vote is and how the Board went with each of those four applicants? He agreed that the discussion on the individuals’ performance was regarding privacy. He said the actual vote, the performance, the background of the individuals, that was public knowledge and should have been in a public meeting. He said there was no reason for the whole voting process to have been closed in the Executive Session. In his mind the applicant chosen to fill this position is tainted by the process, and frankly, it is unfair to Mr. Sprenger to be put in this type of position. He said it diminishes the respect for him, his position and the Board in its overall authority is compromised. He said Montana Code 2-3-201 states that the people of the state

do not wish to abdicate their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them and that the Board seems to operate as if we have. He has not, and as a result, respectfully recommends this appointment be postponed pending an investigation made up of locals to bless the process before continuing. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to address this issue. Mr. Roehm thanked Mr. Nagorski.

Bert Hopeman said he isn't a lawyer. He said he has served on several Boards downtown, worked with the City Commission, was on a commission to try to figure what to do with downtown, the original commission that created the IDD and VID and he served also as chair of those commissions, which are all public entities, and he has watched a lot and he has served in other states. Not being a lawyer and not knowing Montana law, he just wanted, for the record, to say that he thought that what the Board did was very open. He thought the Board gave ample opportunity. He was pleased to be able to meet the candidates, to ask them questions. There was a piece of paper there with their names on it that he could write down what he saw as pros and cons or other considerations. He was allowed to come and listen to the discussion. He could have easily had input after the discussions or at the break times if he thought of anything. He thought the whole operation was very open and he thinks the public had good chance to give their input. What bothers him is the no public process of this nature. He was pleased to see the turnout because typically, in these types of matters, the public doesn't take the initiative. He thought that many members of the public took the initiative to come out and voice their opinion and he wanted to state that. He doesn't feel this process was tainted by secrecy. Mr. Roehm thanked Mr. Hopeman.

Sue Leigland, who owns Montana Travel and is a former Board member here, said she was asked to come out today and she wants to think positive. She knows there has been some negative things talked about today and from a personal perspective, she believes that

doesn't get you anywhere. She said we have to go forward, we have to be positive. She felt the meetings were positive. Although she was out of town, she still felt very informed. She said she has sat on many search committees and, while listening to the criteria of the search committees before, she hadn't heard some of those rules. She has been on search committees for presidents of the universities, coaches, deans, so she feels very positive about how this was handled.

She wanted to congratulate a very fine young man that is so professional and has shared his thoughts with the community and is very well respected. As an airport Board member, she knows how important it is to know all the ins and outs of the Board and what they do here. But she said we also have to remember that a lot of our revenues come from our traveling public and our community and it's important to keep this community all attached. She thanked Brian and said she appreciates what he's done. Mr. Roehm thanked Ms. Leigland.

Mr. Roehm said she was a very valuable member of this Board while she was on it and we all enjoy the way this terminal looks because of her efforts. He said we're all reaping the benefits of her years at the airport. He thanked her again.

Mike Connell of Karst Stage spoke next. He said he didn't come to give a formal presentation. However, as the onsite manager for the Karst Stage shuttle operation for nine years, he had the pleasure of working with Brian and found him to always be professional, his communication skills to be great, and he was always timely in getting back if they had requests or concerns about their relationship with the airport. He has complete trust and confidence in the Board and the process by which they chose the new airport director. He suspects that they are more qualified than the general public we keep speaking about. He thinks everybody in the general public had the opportunity to contact a Board member if they

had concerns. He said they are all accessible, they are easy to get a hold of, it is public knowledge who they are and shame on those who didn't get in touch with one of them if they had a problem. He would hope that he's not hearing from the earlier testimony that the gentlemen who spoke are unhappy with the selection; however, he wonders why they would be here if it was just process. Mr. Roehm thanked Mr. Connell.

Mr. Roehm asked if anyone else had input to the Board. There wasn't anyone else, so Mr. Roehm asked for a motion or discussion from the Board members.

John McKenna thanked all those who made public comments, including those who probably don't agree with either the product or the process at times. He said he has never been involved in a more sincere, interested Board or a more sincere, interested group of people than this and like Mr. Hopeman, has been involved in a number of Board situations, and can honestly say he's proud to be part of a Board that has taken the interest and the time that this one has. In sixteen years, he said, if the majority of the comments were negative, he wouldn't still be here. He thinks if you look around, you see a fine terminal, you don't find a better general aviation facility and in his mind, a better run airport. He is proud of it and he is proud of his part in it, whatever that has been. He made a motion to appoint Brian as our new Airport Director and ratify the contract that is in draft form in front of us. Kevin Kelleher seconded the motion.

Greg Metzger said he thinks the process has been extensive and has been thorough. He congratulated Brian on being the appointee, and thanked the Search Committee for the efforts they have made and how much they have kept us informed through the process. Mr. Roehm thanked Mr. Metzger.

Mr. Kelleher congratulated Brian. He said he has served on some of the most contentious Boards in Gallatin County. He served fourteen years on planning and zoning,

writing zoning ordinances, where consensus and agreement was often difficult to achieve. On this Board, he's seen nothing but rolled up sleeves, hard work, diligent care for all facets of aviation, a respect by the employees of the facility for staff and management, and he is proud to be associated with the gentlemen who led the Search Committee, devoted hundreds of hours of their time, then brought that information to the other Board members and to the public in a very open, upfront process. He also added that he owned a newspaper for eighteen years. He doesn't see a newspaper reporter in this room. The public in many of the instances where he served on boards seldom showed up until the last twilight to either approve of or disapprove of a particular issue. Ample notice has been made. He feels this board has diligently followed protocol and he is pleased to be serving with these fellows, and he thanked the Chairman. Mr. Roehm thanked Mr. Kelleher.

There was no further discussion so the question was called. Chair Roehm said all in favor of the motion to appoint Brian Sprenger as our Airport Director effective the 1st of June and to ratify the draft contract that is in front of us say aye. All the Board members present voted aye. It was a unanimous decision from the assembled Board members.

Mr. Roehm asked if there was any other issue to come before the Board for the good of the airport at this time. Hearing none, the meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

Richard R. Roehm, Chair

Attachment