

# MINUTES

## Beaufort County Airports Board

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April 10, 2025 | 10:00 am | Meeting called to order by Chairman Chris Butler

[Video and Transcript](#)

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### ATTENDANCE

**Present:** Chris Butler, Howard Ackerman, Anne Esposito, Brian Turrisi, Thomas Sheahan, Mark Bailey, Rich Sells, Leslie Adlam Flory, Jim Starnes, and David Nelems

**Absent:** Nick Mesenburg

**County Staff:** Jon Rembold, Airports Director; Stephen Parry, Deputy Airports Director; Brian Cronin, Airports Finance Manager; Brandon Chavis, Airport Manager; and Rocio Rexrode, Airports Senior Administrative Specialist.

**Beaufort County Council Liaison:** Thomas Reitz

**Hilton Head Island Town Council Liaison:** Melinda Tunner

**Public:** Judy Elder, Talbert, Bright and Ellington, Inc., and Neah Wyatt, Signature Aviation

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### AGENDA ADOPTION

The April 10, 2025, BCAB meeting agenda was adopted with unanimous consent.

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### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

David Nelems made a motion to approve the March 13, 2025, meeting minutes. Mark Bailey seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

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### PUBLIC COMMENTS

**Thomas Reitz:** He congratulated all reappointments to the BCAB. He mentioned that he and Melinda Tunner (Town Council Liaison) are working together.

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### DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- **DEPARTMENT UPDATE:**

**Brandon Chavis:** Rembold introduced Brandon Chavis as the new Airport Manager at ARW. He joins us from Barnwell, where he served as Airport Manager for approximately eight years. He brings valuable experience with FAA grants, SCAC, and prior work with consultants Talbert, Bright and Ellington.

**RBC Heritage Presented By Boeing:** The airport is once again sponsoring the RBC Heritage and will have a presence on the 10th green at the Observation Deck. Volunteers are scheduled throughout the tournament (Thursday–Sunday) to share information, giveaways, and promote the airport's

nonstop flight options. Delta, United, and American Airlines are all back in service in time for the event, and promotional materials will be available to engage attendees.

- **TERMINAL UPDATE:**

Rembold stated that the terminal expansion work is progressing steadily. Most windows are now installed, with the exception of the high dormers, and interior work is well underway. The front canopy of the existing building is complete, all sidewalks have been installed, and a distinctive oyster shell paving has been added. Final paving of the remaining two asphalt lanes is expected soon, which will help clean up the area and improve access. A walkthrough video showed progress on the TSA screening area, gate configuration, concession spaces, and a new automated exit lane system. Everything remains on track for improved flow and readiness ahead of the busy summer travel season.

- **LEGISLATIVE TRIP:**

Rembold mentioned that a couple of weeks ago, airport leadership participated in a legislative trip to Washington, D.C., joining representatives from 13 commercial airports across South Carolina and Georgia—the largest such delegation nationwide. Meetings were held with congressional staffers, including those from Representative Joe Wilson’s and Representative Nancy Mace’s offices, to discuss critical federal aviation issues. ACI North America’s recent D+ grade for U.S. airport infrastructure provided timely context, helping emphasize the need for renewed investment and attention. Discussions focused on increasing the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC), lifting burdensome federal regulations, and protecting the DCA perimeter rule, which, if weakened, could negatively impact regional airports like HXD. Emphasis was placed on treating airports more like the businesses they are expected to be, with greater local control. Rembold stated that meetings were productive, and staff were receptive, showing strong interest in safety, funding, and regulatory reform. Follow-up efforts are underway with key legislative offices to advance these priorities.

- **AIRPORTS’ BUSINESS UPDATE:**

**SC Statehouse Legislative Trip:**

The team visited Columbia and engaged with state legislative leaders, including Senator Tom Davis, to discuss ongoing projects such as the Hilton Head terminal expansion and the St. James Baptist Church initiative. While the House was not in session, meaningful dialogue with the Senate occurred to maintain project momentum.

**Delta & United Check-ins:**

Delta and United Airlines reported strong advance bookings and continued satisfaction with current routes and operations.

**ATC Radar – Senator Graham Staff:**

A critical safety concern was raised regarding the lack of radar visualization in the control tower. Meetings with Senator Graham's and Rep. Mace's staff highlighted the issue, with follow-up efforts underway to explore a radar feed partnership with the nearby Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort.

**Projects/Bid Opportunities:**

Multiple airport projects, including an airfield drainage project and tower improvements, are currently out for bid. Contractors and vendors are encouraged to check the Beaufort County website for bid opportunities, as significant work is planned over the next few years.

**GA Apron FULL for tournament:**

Signature confirmed that the general aviation apron is at full capacity for the tournament week. Additional aircraft parking required careful coordination, underscoring the continued high demand during peak events.

**1. FY2026 Airports Department Proposed Budget (Brian Cronin):**

Rich Sell reported that he spent over an hour with Brian, Jon, and Steve reviewing the numbers line by line. He confirmed that the presentation being shared today has been thoroughly reviewed in detail. A few adjustments were made during the review, and no further changes were needed.

Brian Cronin presented the proposed budget, highlighting key revenue and expense variances. He noted an increase in Charges for Services due to anticipated cost recovery fees. Personnel figures are still preliminary, with a general increase not yet included. A notable reduction in Purchases reflects the removal of a one-time FAA compliance item, while Supplies increased to avoid future budget transfers. Capital Equipment spending is expected to adjust once personnel costs are finalized, with a focus on HXD-specific needs.

He explained that a portion of the prior year's surplus is allocated for facility renovations and FAA compliance-related projects, supporting flexibility and alignment with federal expectations. Jon confirmed that the 26 Hunter Road renovation will create a permanent administrative space outside the secure area, improving access and operations. Federal and state grant budgets were also reviewed.

For Beaufort Executive (ARW), Cronin noted revenue adjustments due to prior overestimates and explained how staffing and purchasing lines were refined using historical data. The capital line will serve as a contingency buffer. The discussion concluded with clarification on how depreciation and fund balances are managed within the county's accounting framework.

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**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

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There was no Unfinished Business.

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**NEW BUSINESS – ACTION ITEMS**

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**1. ELECTION OF OFFICERS: CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

**CHAIR:** Rich Sells nominated Chris Butler as the BCAB Chair. Leslie Adlam Flory seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

**VICE-CHAIR:** Howard Ackerman made a motion to nominate Jim Starnes as the BCAB Vice-chair. Brian Turrisi seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

**2. FY2026 BUDGET - RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE AIRPORTS DEPARTMENT FY2026 PROPOSED BUDGET**

Mark Bailey made a motion to approve the recommendation to approve the Airports Department FY2026 Proposed Budget. James Starnes seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

**3. CONTRACT AWARD - RECOMMENDATION OF CONTRACT AWARD FOR PARKING MANAGEMENT SERVICES AT HILTON HEAD ISLAND AIRPORT TO ELITE PARKING SERVICES OF AMERICA**

Mark Bailey made a motion to approve a recommendation of contract award for parking management services at Hilton Head Island Airport to Elite Parking Services of America. Rich Sells seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

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**CHAIRMAN UPDATE**

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**1. Finance Committee**

Members: Howard Ackerman (Chair), Chris Butler, Tom Sheahan, and Brian Turrisi.

The Finance Committee did not provide a formal report, though relevant updates were covered during the budget discussion

**2. Passenger Service Committee**

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

The Passenger Service Committee did not provide a specific report. However, increased air service anticipated for the coming months highlights the importance of the Ambassador Program's success.

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

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

The ARW Airfield Improvement project is progressing. While a firm start date for site preparation work has not yet been confirmed, coordination between the contractor, airport staff, and the county is underway. A preliminary coordination meeting ("pre-notice to proceed") is scheduled to ensure all parties are aligned.

Regarding vertical construction, funding discussions with the county remain ongoing. Progress on this component is dependent on those outcomes.

**4. HXD Airport Improvement Committee**

Members: Brian Turrisi (Chair), Howard Ackerman, Rich Sells, Chris Butler, and Anne Esposito

The Committee had nothing new to report this month. They will keep the board informed of any new developments.

**5. Government Affair Committee**

Members: Rich Sells (Chair)

The Committee had nothing new to report this month. They will keep the board informed of any new developments.

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**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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There were no Public Comments.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

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The motion to adjourn was made at 11:17 a.m. It passed unanimously.

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**NEXT MEETING**

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May 8, 2025 | 10:00 am

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