



DULUTH AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Duluth Airport Authority Meeting Minutes July 15, 2025

MEETING LOCATION: Amatuzio 3rd Floor Conference Room

DIRECTORS PRESENT: Michael Henderson, President
Jason Crawford, Vice President
Elissa Hansen, Secretary
Jeff Anderson
Sandy Hoff
Briana Johnson
Kevin O'Brien

OTHERS PRESENT: Tom Werner, DAA Executive Director
Ryan Welch, DAA Interim Dir. of Operations
Jana Kayser, DAA Dir. of Business Development
Joelle Bodin, DAA Dir. of Finance and Administration
Natalie Baker, DAA Dir. of Communications and Marketing
Jenny Delnay, DAA Finance Technician
Aimee Bone, DAA Administrative Coordinator
Dan Fanning, Ascent Aviation
Shawn McMahon, SEH

OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIA ELECTRONIC MEANS:

Horeya Czaplewski, EXP
Phillip Scott, EXP
Paul Huston, HNTB
Joseph Uhlhorn, H+U
Kaci Nowicki, SEH

CALL TO ORDER: Dir. Henderson called the DAA board meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Dir. Henderson invited Mr. Tom Werner to provide the Executive Director's Review

I. *EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REVIEW

A. **Air Service:** Mr. Werner provided an update on the current air service with a presentation.

- Mr. Werner presented year-to-date numbers:
 - Year-to-date enplanements total passengers increase of 19% compared to 2024 YTD, more seats this summer than last summer, enplanements up 9% compared to June 2024. Heading into a projected strong summer travel season. Delta passengers went up 7% compared to June 2024 and United increased by 15% compared to June 2024. Load factors for both airlines in the mid-80s for June 2025, and these are numbers that we need for growth. Delta captured 61% of the passenger May 2025 market share, United 39%. Delta seat capacity up 8%



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compared to June 2024, and United up 19% compared to June 2024. Delta seat capacity is up 29% compared to YTD and United is up 2% YTD.

- Mr. Werner shared that DAA is working with an air service consultant to ensure DLH keeps its initiative with the small community air service grant going. DAA expects to hear from the DOT in the next few weeks regarding if the grant can be repurposed; the grant was specifically intended for network service to Denver.
 - Dir. Hoff inquired about what contributed to the increase in ridership. Mr. Werner shared that DLH continues to request additional seats due to full planes and that open seats are very low. Will keep requesting more seats from the airlines. The goal for the next year is to retain 50% of the Duluth market versus passengers driving from the region to fly out of MSP.

B. Operations/Construction/Planning: Mr. Welch provided the following updates:

- Planning:
 - ATCT: Mr. Welch shared that work continues for the tower planning and he is preparing a presentation for the September board meeting. Also working with the FAA on tech ops and meeting with the city to discuss occupancy.
 - DAA is waiting for reimbursement on the equipment agreement with the FAA.
- Construction:
 - Taxiway Phase 5: The construction project is moving along well post-Airshow. Phase 5A-0 is completed and Phase 5A is ongoing. A 24-hour closure is coming up on Sunday, July 27th and 3/21 will be available during that closure. It will be followed by a 60-hour closure in early August.
 - Customs and Border Protection Federal Inspection Services Construction Update: Mr. Welch shared that the team is working on the final punch list to be completed by end of July and will meet one more time with CBP to ensure the facility meets their design standard.
 - Hangar 103 Roof: The project is moving forward, and completion is expected in the last week of July.
 - 139 Annual Inspection: Mr. Welch shared that the official closeout letter was received on June 30th.
- Airshow: Mr. Welch thanked everyone for their efforts and for being at the airshow- it was a large success despite weather challenges on Saturday and scheduled air changes to accommodate the weather were seamless. Mr. Welch also shared that there were a few parking challenges with the rain that morning, but the team made changes to accommodate. There was record attendance on Sunday.
 - Dir. Hoff inquired about attendance numbers in the record-breaking airshow attendance, and it was shared that numbers have not been released yet. Mr. Welch also shared that there was a large number of general aviation aircraft on Sunday and the largest he's seen in the decade or so that he's been involved with the event.
 - Dir. Johnson complimented Mr. Welch and team on their superb job of getting everything cleaned up and situated for the airshow.
- Sky Harbor: conducted the 11-month walk-through with SEH and Gardner Construction.

C. Business/Property Development: Ms. Kayser provided an update on the following:

- LifeLink III Project Update: Ms. Kayser shared that July 21st is likely the date to continue construction, working through a few other small items such as the fiber connection.
- Sky Harbor: Lot 8 Hangar is underway; concrete was poured last week.



- Dir. O'Brien asked what kind of oversight had to be done with the excavation? Ms. Kayser responded that yes, they had to go through all the same required city building code requirements, flood vents, etc.

D. Financial Update: Ms. Bodin provided an update on the following:

- Concessionaire Audit: the audit is almost complete, and Ms. Bodin hopes to present results at the August board meeting.
- Stormwater Update: Ms. Bodin shared that August 19th is the date to go in front of the public utilities commission to discuss.
- Line of Credit Extension: Ms. Bodin met with city staff last week, it's a "security blanket," that hasn't been used since 2019. The current one expires at the end of 2025, just trying to project what will be needed, term is 5 years on the line of credit but not restrictive on terms.
- A conciliation court summons was received for an incident in the corporate parking lot that occurred several years ago. The hearing is set for August 4th. The DAA was initially not liable, but now there is a subrogation claim against the DAA for \$8,500. Liability insurance will represent the DAA.

E. Marketing/Communications: Ms. Baker shared the following updates:

- The LifeLink groundbreaking event was very successful, with strong community partner support and media in attendance. Thanks to everyone who was able to be there.
- Commercial Vehicle Policy: Ms. Baker is working on the enforcement and citation finalization and then will have a firm go date. All internal training has been completed and have drafted email to current and prospective commercial drivers. The letter to operators has been drafted as well.

F. Legislative Update: Mr. Werner provided an update on the following:

- ATCT Funding: Mr. Werner shared the possibility of a \$38 million dollar grant application for the tower and is waiting on the notice of this federal funding opportunity. This is the last iteration of the airport terminal program, and Mr. Werner has spoken with legislators in D.C. about next steps beyond this program. Looking at both appropriations bills for FY2026 in the house and the senate, as well as what is anticipated for discussion this fall is a federal air traffic control modernization bill to address infrastructure needs across the entire system.
- There was a Passenger Facility Charge Increase bill proposal by a Pennsylvanian congressperson. The bill would allow for incremental increases of \$1 per year until 2030, and once it reaches \$8.50 per passenger it would increase by CPI. Currently capped at \$4.50/passenger, which helps with airport equipment needs as well as covering the eligible local share for federal projects as well. This rate has been in place since 2000, and an increase has long been discussed.

G. Presentations/Tours/Travel Recap: Mr. Werner provided an update on the following:

- Strategic Planning: Mr. Werner shared that Ann Glumac will facilitate the Strategic Board Retreat in late September or October. Mr. Werner anticipates it will take a whole day with more details to follow.
- Mr. Werner shared that Mr. Dante Tomassoni from Cirrus Aircraft unfortunately had to cancel his presentation at today's meeting about Cirrus updates and campus expansion plans.



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- Vantage Aviation will be giving a presentation at the August board meeting to discuss the state of aviation. Lake Superior Helicopters will also be at August's meeting to discuss growth projections for their operations. Mr. Werner shared that it's important to get stakeholders in front of the board members ahead of looking at the strategic plan.
- Mr. Werner then introduced Mr. Dan Fanning from Ascent Aviation to discuss the upcoming open house at Sky Harbor on July 31st. Mr. Fanning shared that the organization's operations includes both the tourist side and flight school side for helicopter pilots and maintenance. There was more focus on fixed wing aircraft at the previous event in April, this event will have helicopters present for attendees to get up close to and sit in. Mr. Fanning also shared that Mr. Durfee has been a great partner at Sky Harbor. He also noted that the recent summer weekends have had favorable weather which has garnered strong tourism turnout for helicopter rides. Mr. Fanning then shared that the open house will be on July 31st, from 3-6 PM. LifeLink will be there (most of their pilots are alumni), as will North Memorial (all pilots are alumni), and it will be a great opportunity for people to see the helicopters in person. Mr. Fanning stated that he and the organization are grateful for the ongoing support from DYT, DLH, and the DAA.
 - Dir. Hoff asked about the helicopter program take over the fixed wing training at LSC. Mr. Fanning shared that the school had seen record enrollment prior to the pandemic, and it was a struggle (as it was for many schools) to get back to what levels were pre-pandemic. An effort was made to make the school both a public and private partnership to create growth for the program and it has been very successful.
 - Dir. Henderson asked what else DAA/board can do to help, and Mr. Fanning stated that Ms. Baker and team have been very helpful, interest in helicopters has increased, and other factors such as successful partnerships help them attract more students outside the area (Twin Cities, Wisconsin, the Dakotas, Chicago) and prospective students to consider the 2-year program versus 4-year programs at other schools.

H. Other:

- Mr. Werner shared that four candidates have advanced for the Director of Operations, and the goal is to have someone in the position by September 1st.
- Dir. Henderson thanked everyone for their reviews and moved to item II of the agenda.

II. *APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES & OTHER CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS AS INDICATED BY *:

A. Approval of June 26, 2025 Meeting Minutes

- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
 - Motion: Dir. Crawford
 - Second: Dir. Johnson
 - Abstain: None
 - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously.



III. *DAA CASH DISBURSEMENTS

- A. Operating Check Registers #15-16, 2025; Operating ACH Payment Register #16-17, 2025; Construction ACH Register #7, 2025.

IV. *CORRESPONDENCE

- A. DLH Construction Newsletter
 - i. June 20, 2025
 - ii. June 27, 2025
 - iii. July 3, 2025
- B. June 30, 2025: DAA Letter to Duluth City Administrator Matt Staehling Regarding Sponsorship.
- C. July 1, 2025. Duluth Airport Breaking Ground for a New Hangar with LifeLink. WDIO.
- D. July 1, 2025. LifeLink Lands Permanent Home at Duluth International Airport. NNN.
- E. July 2, 2025. Letter from The Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy to All Recipients of USDOT Funding.
- F. July 2, 2025: Record-Breaking Number of Travelers This 4th of July Weekend. WDIO.
- G. July 5, 2025: Photos and Video: Thousands Flock to Opening Day of 2025 Duluth Air Show. DNT.

V. OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONS TO BE HEARD

- A. None.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

- None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. *May 2025 Financial Reports
- B. *July 2025 Accounts Receivable
- C. *June 2025 Airline Statistics, Landline Statistics

VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

- A. Dir. Johnson shared that on Sunday, the airshow broke a single day attendance record, a lot of people shifted their tickets from Saturday, attendance above 50,000, and noted that this doesn't include all of the participating attendees (performers, pilots/air crews, vendors, etc.) whose attendance doesn't get scanned. Next year's airshow will take place the weekend following the 4th of July and the Thunderbirds will be back. Dir. Hoff inquired as to how the Duluth airshow compares to others around the country. Dir. Johnson shared that the Duluth Airshow has won numerous ICAS (International Council of Air Shows) awards. Dir. Johnson also shared that in 2024 at the Snowbirds show over Lake Superior, a GPS buoy technology was implemented as a rollout that is now replicated and used elsewhere which also garnered an award. Dir. Johnson shared that the fact that the Blue Angels and the Thunderbirds choose to come to the Duluth Airshow is a testament to how well the airshow and airport are run.
- B. Dir. Henderson thanked Dir. O'Brien for his years of leadership of the DAA board and thanked Directors Crawford and Hansen for stepping into their new roles on the board.



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ADJOURN: The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Aimee Bone
Administrative Coordinator

Tom
Werner

Digitally signed
by Tom Werner
Date: 2025.08.11
13:41:58 -05'00'

Approved: _____

DAA Executive Director