



# DULUTH AIRPORT AUTHORITY

## Duluth Airport Authority

### Meeting Minutes

December 16, 2025

**MEETING LOCATION:** Amatuzio Conference Room, Duluth International Airport

**DIRECTORS PRESENT:** Michael Henderson, President  
Jason Crawford, Vice President  
Gary Black  
Sandy Hoff (arrived at 8:40 a.m.)  
Briana Johnson  
Kevin O'Brien

**DIRECTORS PRESENT VIA ELECTRONIC MEANS:** Elissa Hansen, Secretary (arrived at 8:02 a.m.)

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Tom Werner, DAA Executive Director  
Ryan Welch, DAA Dir. of Operations, Planning, and Construction  
Jana Kayser, DAA Dir. of Business Development  
Joelle Bodin, DAA Dir. of Finance and Administration  
Natalie Baker, DAA Dir. of Communications and Marketing  
Tristan Durfee, DAA Airside Manager  
Jenny Delnay, DAA Finance Technician  
Aimee Bone, DAA Administrative Coordinator  
Paul Sinnott, DAA  
Derek Anderson, DAA  
Barry Sinex  
Shawn McMahon, SEH  
Kaci Nowicki, SEH  
Rob Missinne, Vantage Aviation

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIA ELECTRONIC MEANS:**

Kathy Leon, DAA Senior Staff Accountant  
Horeya Czaplewski, EXP  
Nate Niemann, H&U  
Paul Huston, HNTB  
Eric Monson, Lake Superior Helicopters/Ascent Aviation

**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.
- Year-to-date enplanements are up 8%. Delta up 4%, and United down 33% compared to same month in 2024. November enplanements were down 11% compared to same month last year.



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- Load factors in the low 80% for both Delta and United. There were some weather events that impacted hubs such as ORD, and impacts of government shutdown that factored into the numbers.
- Delta capacity is up 7% compared to November 2024 and United down 21%. Year-to-date, Delta is up 15% and United is down 5%.
- Mr. Werner shared a new slide to display what United is proposing for the DLH market in terms of capacity in 2026 to 2025 side-by-side for Q1 2026. United proposes a massive seat increase for each month in Q1 2026 at this time. For example, February 2026 is projecting an 83% seat increase compared to February 2025.

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

- Planning:
  - New Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) Update:
    - Mr. Welch shared that plans continue to move forward on the ATCT. H&U is currently meeting with prospective bidders during the pre-qualification process, EXP is expected to issue the permit and bid documents on January 9<sup>th</sup>, and then H&U takes the documents and issues their bid packages on January 12<sup>th</sup> and opening with H&U by February 3<sup>rd</sup>. H&U then issues a GMP (Guaranteed Maximum Price) to the staff for board review on February 12<sup>th</sup> for a board vote on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Continuing to work with the FAA on the reimbursable agreement, and different methods of funding that have already been announced. The final ATP grant must be applied to by January 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Operations:
  - Mr. Welch shared that there have been a lot of staff changes over the past six months, most recently with Mr. Cole Venberg as the new manager of DYT. There is also a new airside team member starting soon to fill Mr. Venberg's vacancy in his previous role.

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

- Ms. Kayser shared an update on the RFI/RFP process and recapped that the RFI was published on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, closed on October 30<sup>th</sup>, and four responses were received. Ms. Kayser is pleased with the responses that were received, and they are being reviewed to help draft the next RFP and should be published the first week of January and open for a minimum of 30 days. The FAA will review the RFP first and then it'll be on the DLH website. Ms. Kayser has been communicating with tenants to ensure they are informed of the process.
- LifeLink III Project Update: Ms. Kayser shared hangar construction photo updates of the hangar shell being erected. All utilities have been completed and the project continues to move forward.
- Airline Agreement Update: The airlines are reviewing the agreement and will have the review completed and ready by end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter and will backdate the agreement to January 1<sup>st</sup>. This agreement has been in the works for a number of years, as renewals were not being updated during the pandemic.

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

- Stormwater Update: Ms. Bodin shared that Kaplan and Kirsch was able to meet with the city and will be following up, hopefully more information at the next board meeting.
- The 2026 Annual Budget was approved on December 8<sup>th</sup> at the city council meeting.



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- Paid Leave: This will begin on January 1<sup>st</sup> and the DAA will be partnering with the City of Duluth to join the self-insured pool to be memorialized via joint powers agreement and expected to present to the board likely in January.
- The 2026-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement: The agreement is in review and is anticipated to be at the January board meeting for approval.

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

- Marshall School is a new advertiser, Allele is renewing their contract, and Giants Ridge is renewing as well.
- Duluth and St. Louis County Days are coming up in St. Paul on March 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>.
- There will be a new message playing throughout the terminal with Mayor Reinert will be welcoming passengers to the Duluth area, and is expected to be recorded in January.

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

- Mr. Werner is in the process of securing meetings with several committee chairs to discuss capital investment asks for this session, keep the ATCT project front of mind for all, and the DAA continues to stay engaged with the regional delegation and in a good spot going into the session.

**G. Presentations/Tours/Travel Recap:**

- Mr. Werner shared a recap of recent FEMA 400-level course on emergency management that he took recently in the Twin Cities.

**H. Other:**

N/A

- 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 November 18, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
  - Motion: Dir. Crawford
  - Second: Dir. O'Brien
  - Abstain: None
  - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.

**III. \*DAA CASH DISBURSEMENTS**

- A. Operating Check Registers #27-29, 2025; Operating ACH Payment Registers #30-32, 2025; Construction ACH Register #14, 2025.**

**IV. \*CORRESPONDENCE**

- A. December 5, 2025. DLH Construction Newsletter.**
- B. November 17, 2025. Press Release from DAA RE: DAA Receives Over \$20 Million in Federal Grant Award for Air Traffic Control Tower Replacement.**



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- C. November 17, 2025. \$20 Million in Federal Funds Announced for Duluth Air Traffic Control Tower Replacement. WDIO.com.
- D. November 17, 2025. Duluth International Airport Receives \$20 Million in Federal Funding for a New Air Traffic Control Tower. NNN.
- E. November 17, 2025. Feds Pledge \$20 Million to Help Replace Aged Duluth Air Tower. DNT.
- F. November 18, 2025. Allegiant Air Coming to La Crosse. WIZM News.
- G. November 24, 2025. Letter to DYT Tenants Announcing Cole Venberg as New Sky Harbor Airport Manager.
- H. December 4, 2025: Minnesota Electric Aviation Network Study, Executive Summary August 2025. MnDOT. PDF.

### V. OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONS TO BE HEARD

- Mr. Barry Sinex stated that he is here to confirm that he is still considering the minimum standards and wanted to know if there has been any movement on the issue.
  - Dir. Henderson shared that it'll be on the 2026 work plan. Mr. Sinex asked if it would be open to public comment and Mr. Werner confirmed yes.

### VI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

### VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Resolution to Approve the Duluth Airport Authority's Strategic Plan 2026-2030.
  - Mr. Werner shared that at the November board meeting, he gave a brief presentation about the strategic plan, and it was included in the board packet for this month's meeting for the board to consider.
  - Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
    - Motion: Dir. Johnson
    - Second: Dir. Black
    - Abstain: None.
    - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.
- B. Resolution to Approve the Duluth Airport Authority's Air Carrier Incentive Program 2026-2027 for the Duluth International Airport.
  - Mr. Werner shared that in 2024, he asked the board to approve a new air carrier incentive program that was consistent with changes to the FAA's Air Carrier Incentive Program guidance. The request was to formalize a program similar to what other airports around the country were doing, including a public-facing document with details about destinations and types of air carrier incentives. The document has been posted on the website, and the initial program was for two years and expires in December 2025 and this is a renewal of the program.
  - Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
    - Motion: Dir. Johnson
    - Second: Dir. O'Brien
    - Abstain: None.
    - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.
- C. Resolution to Approve Line of Credit Note Agreement between the City of Duluth and Duluth Airport Authority.



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- Ms. Bodin shared that this is the \$10 million line of credit from the City of Duluth that has been previously discussed. The purpose is to provide cashflow for construction projects, including the ATCT, and will assist with the cashflow while awaiting reimbursement from federal and state resources. Mr. Werner added that the DAA has traditionally only used the line of credit for cashflow purposes when there are large capital projects, such as the ATCT, taxiway renewal continues, as well as hangar construction. Documents indicate that the DAA is in a solid financial position.
- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion. Ms. Bodin added that the DAA hasn't drawn on a line of credit since 2019, but it'll be an available option if needed during the large projects.
  - Motion: Dir. Black
  - Second: Dir. O'Brien
  - Abstain: None.
  - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.

### D. Resolution to Approve Payment in the Amount of \$142,600 to the City of Duluth for the 2026 Cost Allocation Fee.

- Ms. Bodin shared that the cost allocation fee includes services that the city provides such as HR benefits, payroll processing, legal, purchasing, and others as they arise. A review was completed in the prior year to ensure that the amount being charged is consistent with benefits receiving and the same process was completed this year.
  - Dir. Henderson confirmed that the numbers were in line with previous years, and Ms. Bodin stated that the increase of 7% increase from year to year is understood to be consistent with the city's cost increases.
- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
  - Motion: Dir. Crawford
  - Second: Dir. Black
  - Abstain: None.
  - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.

### E. Resolution to Approve an Employee Incentive Award to Tristan Durfee, Paul Sinnott, and Derek Anderson.

- Mr. Welch shared that the staff members have kept the operations running smoothly during the time of staff changes, and other large events such as the Air Show and ongoing construction.
- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
  - Motion: Dir. Crawford
  - Second: Dir. O'Brien
  - Abstain: None.
  - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.

### F. Award Contract Between the Duluth Airport Authority and Johnson Wilson Constructor for Hangar 103 Canopy.

- Mr. Welch shared that due to the slope and of the roof and its orientation, a large amount of snow accumulates on it and causes a potential safety hazard for entrance to the building. In a typical year, thousands of dollars and countless hours of labor were made in an effort to remove the snow and ice buildup over the doorway and solutions that haven't worked effectively. This is a design to eliminate the issue and ensure safety for individuals entering and exiting the building, and the door is the main entrance, and



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approximate cost of \$144,350 after competitive bidding was completed. Additionally, an emergency grant of \$70,000 was issued in 2025 to cover part of a \$100,000 deductible that was paid to repair damage that the roof sustained earlier in the year. Ms. Kayser reiterated that this is an important project to ensure safety for the LSC students and the process was planned in the most affordable way possible to maintain safety.

- Dir. O'Brien asked if the \$70,000 went towards the repairs already completed. Mr. Welch confirmed that the DOT grant funds helped with 70% of the \$100,000 deductible. Ms. Kayser added that it is important to repair the roof to mitigate snow and ice buildup for the safety of LSC students and the project was budgeted at the lowest cost possible .
  - Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
    - Motion: Dir. Black
    - Second: Dir. Johnson
    - Abstain: None.
    - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.
- G. The Meeting Will Now Close to the Public Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05 Subd.3 (a) to Evaluate the Performance of Executive Director, Tom Werner. The Meeting Will Reopen to the Public at the Time Announced Upon Completion of the Evaluation. Members of the Public Will Need to Log Out or Be Removed During the Closed Meeting and Will Need to Log Back into the Meeting When it Reopens to the Public.
- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
    - Motion: Dir. Johnson
    - Second: Dir. Crawford
    - Abstain: None.
    - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.
      - The meeting was closed at 8:35 a.m.
- H. Regular Meeting Reopened to the Public Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13D.
- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
    - Motion: Dir. O'Brien
    - Second: Dir. Hoff
    - Abstain: None.
    - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.
      - The Meeting was reopened to the public at 9:02 a.m.
- I. Summary of Year 2025 Performance Evaluation of Executive Director.
- Dir. Henderson shared that the board thanks Mr. Werner for a phenomenal job leading the DAA and also to the staff for excellent work.
- J. Resolution Authorizing an Annual Salary Compensation of \$192,055, Effective January 1, 2026, a Car Allowance of \$5,000, and a One-Time Incentive Payment of \$15,000 to Executive Director Thomas J. Werner Pursuant to Employment Contract.
- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
    - Motion: Dir. Johnson
    - Second: Dir. Black
    - Abstain: None.
    - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.



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### K. Resolution to Approve Executive Director's 2026 Work Plan.

- Mr. Werner shared that the DAA has made efforts to remain consistent with the Strategic Plan adopted today and to capture what the first steps are for the upcoming five-year effort.
- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
  - Motion: Dir. Crawford
  - Second: Dir. Hoff
  - Abstain: None.
  - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously by roll call.

L. \*October 2025 Financial Reports

M. \*December 2025 Accounts Receivable

N. \*November 2025 Airline Statistics, Landline Statistic

## VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

**ADJOURN:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Aimee Bone  
Administrative Coordinator

Tom Werner

Digitally signed by  
Tom Werner  
Date: 2026.01.12  
13:28:17 -06'00'

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

DAA Executive Director