



# DULUTH AIRPORT AUTHORITY

## Duluth Airport Authority

### Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2026

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

**DIRECTORS PRESENT:** Michael Henderson, President  
Jason Crawford, Vice President  
Elissa Hansen, Secretary (virtual and then arrived in person at 8:08 a.m.)  
Gary Black  
Sandy Hoff  
Briana Johnson  
Kevin O'Brien

**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  
Jenny Delnay, DAA Finance Technician  
Aimee Bone, DAA Administrative Coordinator  
Shawn McMahon, SEH  
Kaci Nowick, SEH  
Rob Missinne, Vantage Air

**OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIA ELECTRONIC MEANS:**  
Kathy Leon, DAA Senior Staff Accountant  
Eric Monson, Ascent Aviation/Lake Superior Helicopters  
Dante Tomassoni, Cirrus  
Horeya Czaplewski, EXP  
Paul Huston, HNTB

**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 down about 12%. Delta is down 4%, and United is up 5% compared to February 2025. Enplanements were down 10% compared to February 2025.
  - Load factors remain strong; Delta at 87% and United at about 90%.
  - Delta capacity is down 3% compared to February 2025 and United increased 1%. Year-to-date, Delta is down 2% and United down 4%.
  - Market share data shows United with about 31% of total seats in the market and Delta around 69-70%.
- Mr. Werner shared graphics and started with oil prices and the impact on airfares on a national basis and historical data; the current overall effect is small and varies in



different markets. Next, Mr. Werner shared data with a look forward to seat count and flights. The continuous goal for DLH is to maintain high capacity for flights. Delta flights to MSP remain consistent with single digit growth in flights and seats year-to-date. United flights to ORD are increasing, with 115% in April alone.

- Mr. Werner also shared 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2025 benchmarks for DLH and other regional airports with data that included average fares. Mr. Werner also shared Top O&D Markets for 3Q25. Denver may be a future market that United is interested in for expansion, but that will be down the road. Passenger data also shows flights to Denver may challenge profitability necessary to support a future route. It has been previously discussed that an aircraft larger than a 76-seat jet is needed to ensure profitability and the numbers may not be strong enough. Mr. Werner then shared the Top 30 U.S. Airports seat capacity change; ORD seat count is up 17%, with strong competition between United and American for capacity in that location. Comparatively, MSP is down 1% for seats and heavy Delta market.
- Mr. Werner followed up on a question at a previous board meeting about airline performance. Mr. Werner shared that DOT is updating the type of data that they have. Latest data available is second quarter of 2025, which includes Sun Country's revenue per available seat mile (one way to gauge performance of a route). The data shows that the DLH to Fort Myers route is above the curve line, which indicates that it's doing well compared to other routes to Fort Myers.
- Mr. Werner then shared an update on Breeze and which routes to advocate for. Breeze has established a new crew base in Raleigh, NC. Since entering that market in 2023, Breeze has grown exponentially with 37 current destinations out of Raleigh. Several of those markets are crew-based and include hotspots for DLH, including Fort Myers, Orlando, and Tampa. A year-round product versus seasonal is of great interest to DLH.
- On the local front, United will increase to five daily flights out of DLH to ORD beginning in early April.
- Mr. Werner recapped his meeting with Breeze last month, and shared that it went very well. Mr. Werner gave them an update on DLH numbers and also mentioned that the market incentive package to service out of DLH is just over \$2.5 million (which includes several sources of funding). Breeze is reviewing the proposal.
- Mr. Werner also recapped his meeting with United. The airline is doing well overall in our market and with the added flight at DLH they are growing the hub. They are also working on incorporating some aircraft with a dual-class cabin aircraft for our market versus the current 50-seat aircraft (no first-class option). Additionally, the FAA has asked both United and American to reduce their flights at ORD over the summer due to the strong competition between the airlines for that market. It is unknown at this time if it will affect DLH.
- Mr. Werner also shared that he has a meeting with Sun Country later this week to discuss a return of the seasonal flights to Fort Myers.
  - Dir. Hoff asked that since the low-cost carrier is softening the market, if it's affecting DLH with the 12% decrease? Mr. Werner shared that it hasn't affected DLH since we have the two network carriers (United and Delta), and because of that we are a little bit insulated at this time without a low-cost carrier. Dir. Hoff also asked if jet fuel costs are as volatile as regular gasoline. Mr. Werner shared that most airlines buy in bulk and lock in a price for a period of time. However, if the conflict in the Middle East goes on long enough, it will inevitably affect jet fuel prices. Dir. O'Brien asked if a percentage of the ticket price that includes fuel costs, and Mr. Werner shared that he has a slide with data that breaks down the



percentage for a 100-seat aircraft that he may share at a future meeting for insight.

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

- Fuel System Replacement: Mr. Welch is working with SEH on the fuel system replacement bulk for DLH and DYT; there will be a bid plan set sometime in May with a target of a vote at the June board meeting for a decision on construction.
- Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) Update:
  - Mr. Welch shared that H+U is fully invested in the process, and plans are in review for the permitting phase. H+U has issued all contracts for the work scope packages to their subcontractors and is also working on the project labor agreement with the building trades. Additionally, they have published the preliminary construction schedule, as well as working on the groundbreaking schedule, and bonding and insurance applications have been submitted. Various pre-con meetings have started taking place. Road restrictions are in, and once able to, will start to move utilities and then break ground.
- Phase 6 Alpha Taxi:
  - Mr. Welch shared that the initial kickoff meeting with tenants is on April 16<sup>th</sup>, and a pre-construction meeting with all the stakeholders and construction partners on April 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Magnet:
  - Mr. Welch shared that there had been a search for a better solution to pick up wire bristle FOD (foreign object debris) from the runway. The metal bristles used in conjunction with the nylon bristles increased the friction on the runway, and the F-16s are particularly susceptible to sucking in the particles to their intake. The initial solution was to pull a magnet with a truck, and it was very time consuming. To find a better solution, a prototype was created several years ago for a solution to create a magnet to pick up the bristles. The prototype was created in partnership with Lantha Tech to create a magnet that can travel at higher speeds (60-80 MPH but noted that DLH operates it at the lower end of that range) versus the 10 MPH that the pullable one had that was previously used.

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

- Ms. Kayser shared that the development RFP was posted for the public on January 21<sup>st</sup> and closed at the beginning of March. The DAA received four proposals and are in the process of scoring them. Ms. Kayser will share an update at the next board meeting.
- LifeLink III Project Update: Ms. Kayser shared that the project is coming along and weather has impacted the schedule and a June 2026 completion is now anticipated. Ms. Kayser shared images of the construction progress and said that LifeLink continues to attend biweekly meetings.
- Sky Harbor Development RFP: Ms. Kayser shared that there is renewed interest in developing the small space of land that is left for development. Originally in the ALP, it was considered to be developed as a taxi lane with small T hangars on either side. The site has now shifted towards development that doesn't involve an airport funded taxi lane. Whoever develops it will just add a small apron on the end of the ramp to access their hangar. Ms. Kayser hopes to have the RFP published this week and will be available for 21 days. It would be a land lease without airport funding. There is excitement in the renewed interest in this development opportunity.



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- Mr. Werner shared that upon completion of the last development at Sky Harbor, upon completion it will be deemed “ultimate condition,” meaning that it will be about maintaining and not expanding at Sky Harbor.
- Dir. Hoff shared that it should be noted that the development is also a reflection of the DAA’s investment in Sky Harbor, and renewed confidence that it’ll be maintained and an asset. Mr. Hoff shared that there is sentiment from others in the community expressing this.
- 2026 DAA Airport Management Internship: Ms. Kayser shared that a candidate has been selected and reminded everyone that there were 50 applicants from across the country and many strong candidates. The 2026 intern is Mr. Carter Pettit, a student at UW Superior and also a member of the Air Guard. Mr. Pettit will start in mid-May and Ms. Kayser will introduce him to everyone at that time.

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

- Paid Leave: Ms. Bodin shared that there was a recent draft and hopes to bring it to the board next month for vote.
- The accounting position was posted for Ms. Kathy Leon’s replacement when she retires later this year and have been working through interviews. Ms. Bodin also met with Robert Half about the possibility of temporary staffing assistance also, and also a CFO who takes temporary/part-time (with several maternity leaves in the coming months in addition to Ms. Leon’s retirement).
- Financial Audit: Ms. Bodin shared that the auditors were on site March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Bodin is working on completing items for the auditors.
- Annual Concessionaire Audit: Ms. Bodin shared that Ms. Delnay has made a great deal of progress on this year’s audit with the various entities. A final result will be shared once they are complete. Also, will be including the TNCs since they had an agreement approved at the February board meeting.

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

- Ms. Baker shared that this week is the Duluth and St. Louis County Days event in St. Paul and thanked the staff and board members who will be attending. Lobbying schedules are being finalized, and Ms. Baker will send those out once they are confirmed.
- City Council Tours: Ms. Baker and Mr. Werner hosted two different events with council members at the airport for an orientation meeting, which included a briefing on what the DAA does, as well as a tour of the airfield to highlight infrastructure and opportunities to talk to tenants and operators at DLH.
- The Commercial Lane Vehicle Policy: Ms. Baker shared that implementation for the new policy is complete, in the process of getting it rolled out, and all commercial vehicle operators must be permitted by March 16<sup>th</sup>. There have been a number of operators permitted already and still have some to get permitted.
- Snow Pile Contest: There were four different competitors and now it’s down to DLH and the mall competing.
- United DLH to ORD Increased Capacity: A press release went out yesterday to share the news that United will have an added flight out of DLH, and add the news to our social media sites, encouraging the public to book the seats, and educate them on the process of how airlines make their decisions of where to fly to.

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



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- Mr. Werner shared that we are still pushing for total funding on the ATCT. Mr. Werner was at the capitol last week and re-engaged with our local delegation on the tower and feels confident that key committee members are knowledgeable about the project. The DAA has submitted the ATP funding grant and hopes to hear about an award announcement in April. It's also possible that a cash appropriation is possible this year in lieu of bonding.
- Mr. Werner shared that they will have the lobby team schedule shortly for Duluth & St. Louis County Days. Mr. Werner is also still trying to schedule an appointment with Chair Koznick of the Transportation Committee.
- Next week Mr. Werner will be out in D.C. talking with a congressional delegation about the project.
- Rules and Standards Review: going to start with a public engagement & comment period that will start on April 15<sup>th</sup> at 8 AM through May 29<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM. There has also been a custom email address set up for the period, and there will be an announcement with a new call out button on the website to click on it and get access to submit their comments. Tomorrow there will be a mass distribution list to all aviation stakeholders and tenants with information about the review and submitting comments. The Consultant team will review and incorporate all items that make good business sense for the DAA in the initial draft to present to the group.

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

- None.

### H. Other:

- None.
  
- 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 February 17, 2026 Meeting Minutes

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

### B. Approval of February 3, 2026 Special Board Meeting Minutes

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

### C. Approval of October 3, 2025 Board Retreat Minutes

- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.



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- Motion: Dir. Johnson
- Second: Dir. Hansen
- Abstain: None
- Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously.

### III. \*DAA CASH DISBURSEMENTS

- A. Operating Check Registers #4-5, 2026; Operating ACH Payment Registers #4-5, 2026; Construction ACH Register #3, 2026.

### IV. \*CORRESPONDENCE

- A. February 19, 2026: Letter from DAA to Commercial Vehicle Operators RE: Duluth International Airport - New Commercial Vehicle Program.
- B. February 20, 2026. Letter to GA Tenants RE: Fuel Discount and FBO Fee Waiver for Airport Tenants from DAA.

### V. OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONS TO BE HEARD

- A. None.

### VI. OLD BUSINESS

None.

### VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Resolution to Approved the Revised 2026 DAA Organizational Priorities.
  - Mr. Werner shared that the DAA has a significant part of the organization that will be in flux due to staffing and the organization also has several large projects underway. The DAA reviewed items that had been determined to do this year and make sure items in the DAA Strategic Plan were managed in a reasonable way. One item that was struck was the plan to scope a governance study and get approval from the board during that period of time before bringing on a consultant to conduct that study. The decision was to pick that back up next year due to a couple of key staff members being gone this year. With a five-year plan, certainly can do that without affecting the process.
  - Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
    - Motion: Dir. Johnson
    - Second: Dir. Black
    - Abstain: None.
    - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously.
- B. Resolution to Approve Agreement to Insurance Certain Duluth Airport Authority Property and Equipment Under the City of Duluth's Property and Boiler Insurance Policies.
  - Ms. Bodin shared that for the past ten years, the DAA has been on the City of Duluth's property insurance policy. There have been beneficial elements of that in terms of amount of coverage and pricing. Right now, the agreement is set up with a maximum price of \$110,000 and still waiting on the final pricing, but estimated price at this time is \$108,000. If the agreement increases from that, Ms. Bodin will come back to the board. The agreement is straightforward, that the DAA will be added to the insurance policy, that DAA pays its premium and responsible for any deductibles on claims.

- Motion: Dir. Crawford
- Second: Dir. Black
- Abstain: None.
- Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously.

C. Resolution to Approve Amendment 3 (\$103,200) to SEH Work Order 2024-06 for Construction Administration of Taxiway Alpha Phase 5.

- Mr. Welch shared that construction service support was required beyond the original planned scope. That work included additional electrical and water main changes. This work extended the construction duration and required additional construction observation, administration, and coordination. This is a change order to SEH work order 2024-46 for construction administration Taxiway Alpha Phase 5. The total fee is \$103,200 and that is FAA eligible at \$92,880 and DAA \$10,320.
  - Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
  - Motion: Dir. O'Brien
  - Second: Dir. Johnson
  - Abstain: None.Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously.

D. Resolution to Approve SEH Main Professional Services Agreement Amendment #1 (\$0) for Inclusion of the Updated Federal Provisions for Contracts at the Duluth International and Sky Harbor Airports.

- Mr. Welch shared that federal funding requires that the sponsor, the DAA, to ensure all of our construction and professional service agreement contracts comply with all applicable federal and contract provision clauses. The inclusion of the required Federal Contract Provisions, current as of December 29, 2025, will comply with this requirement. The contract amendment adds \$0.00 of cost and clarifies the requirement of federal provisions.
- Dir. Henderson entertained questions or a motion.
  - Motion: Dir. Hoff
  - Second: Dir. O'Brien
  - Abstain: None.
  - Result: This resolution was adopted unanimously.

E. \*January 2026 Financial Reports

F. \*March 2026 Accounts Receivable

G. \*February 2026 Airline Statistics, Landline Statistic

## VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

**ADJOURN:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



# DULUTH AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Aimee Bone  
Administrative Coordinator

Tom  
Werner

Digitally signed by  
Tom Werner  
Date: 2026.04.13  
11:15:34 -05'00'

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
DAA Executive Director