

WEEKEND WAVE

8-21-15



Friday Economic Roundup

Airport Authority talks expansion and improvements

By AL HEMINGWAY Sun Correspondent

PUNTA GORDA - At this week's Charlotte County Airport Authority meeting, the members and staff discussed expansion plans and the opening of a new terminal annex, the terminal itself, four new hold rooms where passengers can relax while awaiting their flight, and a new instrument landing system, or ILS.

Currently, workers at Punta Gorda Airport are doing the final site work, which includes power, equipment installation, and restriping runway for precision markings, flight check and commissioning, of the new ILS.

An ILS transmits a radio beam and when approaching planes tune their receiver to that frequency it will provide precision guidance by using lateral and vertical signals. As the plane slowly descends, the ILS will bring the plane down a glide path, or the center line of the runway. All of this is done while the aircraft is on auto pilot. The system is used worldwide to land planes when it is extremely foggy, there is heavy rain, or blowing snow.

James Parrish, assistant director of the airport and director of engineering and development, said the system is expected to be up and running by Aug. 18.

Parrish said the final electrical, plumbing, cabinetry, ceiling tiles, and carpet installation

should be completed by Aug. 31 for the terminal annex to open. On Sept. 10, the Transportation Security Administration trailer will be relocated.

The big event is the opening of the terminal on Sept. 14 with terrazzo flooring, flight information display systems, furniture, TSA equipment, and security.

"There's a lot of moving parts right now," Parrish added. "Quite a bit is happening. We are trying to get these projects completed barring anything unforeseen. The rain is killing us though. We can deal with afternoon showers but not all day showers."

Last April the Charlotte County Airport Authority gave the green light to Parrish to enter into an agreement with the Jacksonville-based URS Corporation to design a new 60,000-square-foot terminal for the airport. The new terminal opening on Sept. 14 is about 15,000 square feet and the expansion project will add another 45,000 square feet of space.

The cost for the company's architectural fees will run about \$605,000. The estimated overall price tag for the terminal, expected to be completed by next summer, will be \$8.5 million. Parrish said that the first three phases of the work have been completed.

Brian Witaconis, project manager for transportation and aviation for the Tampa-based AECOM Technology Corporation, gave a slide presentation explaining the various options from which the board had to select.

Witaconis said they could not expand north because of the Sheriff's Office and the hangars, east because of wetlands, and the southwest had only an estimated 40 acres. He recommended Site A, Option I, which includes 70-plus acres, as the best way to go. "The south is the only way to go," he said. "We can enlarge the Western Michigan University flight school and there is plenty of room for growth."

Parrish said the future of runway 9-27 has to be addressed because it is a complicated intersection.

"There are limited federal funds available to repair it," he said. "It's not my goal to close it but it may happen. We will preserve it as long as possible."

"There is quite a bit of flexibility with this option," said airport director Gary Quill. "I agree there is plenty of room for expansion."

In other business, the CCAA also passed by a 5-0 vote to convert office space in the expanded terminal to four hold rooms and increase the gates from four to six. The cost will include new ceiling, upgrading the air-conditioning system, a new terrazzo floor and carpeting. The price tag is an estimated \$221,936 with 50 percent of that coming from the Florida Department of Transportation in grant money.

"The passenger peak has gone from 450 to 620," Parrish said. "We do have some minor credits to apply to the cost. The most expensive items are \$82,000 for the AC upgrade and \$32,000 for the ceiling and carpeting."

Parrish said it would be a three-phase project and additional parking will be added over time - 130 spots in phase I, 300 in phase II, and another 300 in the final phase.

"This will come in handy," he continued. "As you know, we run out of parking almost every weekend."

Moore to talk economic development with region reps

By MADISON HEID Sun Staff Writer

NORTH PORT - A group of leaders from both the public and private sectors in the region will be meeting to discuss the economic development of the city of North Port next month, with community involvement thrown into the mix.

City Commissioner Jacqueline Moore, who is the current vice mayor, set up the "community conversation" for Sept. 19 to collaborate with representatives from both Sarasota and Charlotte counties regarding economic development, and how the region can contribute.

"When I think about economic development, it is an area focus that requires dynamic, multilayered relationships," Moore said. "I'm grateful and humbled by those who have agreed to participate."

Those on the panel include Sarasota County Commissioner Christine Robinson, Charlotte County Commissioner Bill Truex, North Port Economic Development Corp. Chairman David Dignam, North Port Area Chamber of Commerce President Jill Luke, Charlotte County Business Recruitment Supervisor Lucienne Pears, Sarasota Economic Development Corporation President Mark Huey and vice president of Gilbane Inc. construction company, Tim Hensley.

In addition, the conversation will be moderated by state Sen. Nancy Detert, R-Venice.

"It takes everybody in a region and an area working collaboratively together," Moore said. "We all have common interests, and we all are interconnected."

Up to 200 people are expected to attend the meeting at the Morgan Family Community

Center in North Port, and there will be questions fielded from Detert, those in attendance and through social media.

Twitter and Instagram social media platforms can be used by sending a question with the hashtag #UniteNorthPort in the post. Questions from that medium will be peppered in throughout the meeting.

From a Charlotte County perspective, Pears plans to focus on educating the public on what economic development is.

"(North Port) is very close to our Administration Center (on) Murdock Circle - the things that happen in North Port are going to affect a large portion of our Charlotte County residents," Pears said. "We want to make sure we plan, recruit and work together for a more sustainable future."

Robinson is looking forward to the collaboration.

"I think it's important for North Port residents to understand that the region views North Port as an important economic driver," Robinson said. "I'm very excited for these conversations."

Moore personally is paying for the planning, marketing and all other aspects of this meeting, saying she is following through on what she promised to do when she was elected to the City Commission last year.

"This is all of us in a conversation, in person or virtually, having a shared conversation about economic development - what it is, what it can be and what it means to us as a city."

The community conversation will take place from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 19 at the Morgan Center, 6207 W. Price Blvd., North Port. The public is invited.

For more information, visit www.moorefornorthport.com, or email jamoore@cityofnorthport.com.

BLUE CHIP COMMUNITY BUSINESS AWARD NOMINATIONS

The annual Blue Chip Award program recognizes successful, small business owners who have overcome adversity to achieve success. Charlotte, Collier and Lee County for-profit businesses that have been in operation for at least three years under the same ownership and employ five to 400 people are eligible for the Blue Chip Award. Applications must be submitted no later than Sept. 7, 2015 and independent judges will select the winning entry.

The 21st annual Southwest Florida Blue Chip Community Business Award, coordinated and sponsored by BB&T-Oswald Trippe and Company and BB&T Bank will take place Thursday, Nov. 5 at Harborside Event Center, located at 1375 Monroe Street in Fort Myers. For information on attending the Blue Chip Award program or for submitting an application, please contact Stacey Mercado at (239) 433-7189 or SMercado@BBandT.com.

Enterprise Zone

To encourage economic development in economically distressed areas of the state, in 1982 Florida launched an Enterprise Zone program by providing incentives to induce private investment. At the 2015 legislative session, extension of the Enterprise Zone program was not authorized, and the program will sunset on Dec. 31, 2015.

Incentives include business machinery and equipment sales tax refund, building materials sales tax refund, job tax credit, and property tax credit for Florida corporations. To qualify for the incentives, a business or home must be within the Enterprise Zone, and further specific eligibility criteria must be met. The Charlotte County Enterprise Zone was approved by the state in 2013. The zone includes portions of the Punta Gorda Interstate Airport Park, Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), Parkside CRA, and Punta Gorda, totaling approximately 16 square miles.

Visit http://FloridasInnovationCoast.com/index.php/site_selection/enterprise_zone for more information.

Applications must be approved by the Florida Department of Revenue before the sunset date.

For more information contact Debrah Forester, Redevelopment Manager with the Charlotte County Economic Development Department, at 941-764-4943 or Debrah.Forester@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.

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