

**CITY OF REDLANDS**  
**AIRPORT ADVISORY BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF AUGUST 17, 2023**

**ATTENDANCE**

**MEMBER ROLL CALL:**

<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Johnny Ghazal	Jason Golembeski (excused)
Thomas Cooke	
Deborah Forthun	
Karl Grove	
Robert Pearce	
Dennis Nodine	

**STAFF:**

Tabitha Crocker (FCS)  
Don Craw (FCS)  
AJ Lawson (FCS)

COUNCIL LEASON: None

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

- Meeting called to order by Vice-Chair Cooke at 6:00 PM
- Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The following 12 public comments were made in support of Coyote Aviation:

- 1) Brad Evans, a resident, expressed concern for how the City has treated Coyote Aviation and Gil Brown. Mr. Evans spoke in support of Gil Brown and how he was an impressive middle school teacher for their son, teaching kids how to work together, how to treat people with respect, how to be honest in everything you do, and the value of hard work. Mr. Evans expressed how disappointing it is to see what the City leaders are doing to Gil. Mr. Evans said that the City found they can make more money by kicking Coyote out. Mr. Evans said the City is only as good as its people and leaders, if the people distrust their leaders, it resonates in the entire community. Mr. Evans asked the Advisory Board to please do the right thing, advise the City that what is happening is wrong. Mr. Evans concludes by saying that Gil Brown is a good man and Coyote is an honest business.
- 2) Brad Evans reads a letter from Terry Tom: In the letter, Terry writes that the City is run by an overtly corrupt City council with no regard to the community. Terry writes that the fact this dispute has lingered over 3 years in the face of overwhelming solid evidence backing Coyote Aviation's case just further supports the obvious, that the Redlands City council is morally bankrupt, and the City's legal branch is obviously in its pocket. Terry

writes that the City has been anything but covert about this, with all the facts in the open, the City council continues to insult its constituents by lying to them and rubbing their faces in the fact that the tax payers mean nothing to them. Terry writes that we will not forget that election day. Terry writes that the evidence that the City has been angling to outright steal Coyote Aviation all along is shockingly obvious - the botching of the termination lease, renegeing on negotiated lease points, removal of Coyote Aviation from the airports supervisors distribution list, the debacle with Columbia helicopters, a disgusting violation of the Brown Act. Terry writes that this is not the way to treat someone who has given so much to this community for over 50 years. Terry writes about the concern that no one will ever want to invest in Redlands airport. Terry writes that if the City succeeds in ousting Coyote Aviation, it will have terrible ramifications for the airport. In the letter, Terry asks the Board to advise City Council members to do the right thing and that it's not too late. Terry further asks the Board to please advise City Council to stop tarnishing the name of the City we love.

- 3) Cindy Gablin, with the Redlands Airport Association, reading a letter from Eric Paul (president of the Redlands Hanger Association). Eric writes that when the City finished buying the airport from private owners in 1966, the airport was assigned to the Public Works Department for supervision and development. Eric writes that Public Works was actively looking for investors to develop the airport. Many investors answered the call and by year 2000, there were 4 leases on the airport with over 130 hangers constructed. Eric writes that under Public Works leadership, there was a friendly helpful atmosphere between the City and the airport lease holders. If you missed a payment for a deadline, you got a courtesy call. Eric writes that in 2003 the City took the airport away from Public Works and gave it to Municipal Utilities and things got ugly. Instead of a courtesy call, you would be notified you were in violation of your lease with legal action to follow. Eric writes that in 2005, the City rescinded the lease of aerodynamics, evicted them and bought their buildings for about 60 cents on the dollar. Eric writes that this was all over a payment dispute. Eric writes that Aerodynamics never got a courtesy call. Eric writes that Coyote is being given the same treatment, no courtesy call, just a rescinded lease followed by legal action and an eviction notice. Eric writes that no new investors have come forward since the City took the airport management away from Public Works. Eric writes that the Airport Advisory Board needs to do a better job of protecting the rights of our airport investors.
- 4) Ted Gablin, President of the Redlands Airport Association, said that through documentation obtained by Mr. Brown through public records requests, the dispute does not appear to be about the City getting a more favorable lease for Coyote. Instead, Mr. Gablin said, it appears the lease termination is part of an effort by some City officials to acquire the Coyote Aviation hanger complex. Mr. Gablin said that City ownership of the Building would generate far more revenue for the City than the Coyote Aviation ground lease. Mr. Gablin said that Coyote built and paid for all the improvements on the parcel they leased and that they took the financial risk to invest in Redlands Airport in 2000. Mr. Gablin said that the association is glad they did along with the other private parties that have built hangers and facilities on the City's property. It's made the airport into what it is today said Gablin. Back then, City officials welcomed and encouraged

private investment at the airport. Mr. Gablin said that the City has never built any structure on the airport and that even the public lobby was built by a private party. Mr. Gablin said that the current City hanger complex, as was stated earlier, was acquired from a private individual after they got behind on a lease payment. Mr. Gablin said it's the largest revenue producer for the City at the airport. Mr. Gablin said that the association suspects some City officials would like to own the Coyote Complex for the same reason. Mr. Gablin said that the association members believe that the City's action against Coyote Aviation has had and will continue to have a detrimental effect on the airports growth and sustainability. Mr. Gablin said that going forward, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to get anybody to build anything at the airport. Mr. Gablin explained that the prospect of losing an investment because an aggressive City official scrutinizing any minor breach of a contract for the sole purpose of acquiring an asset would scare most developers away. Mr. Gablin said that, though the City received a judgment for requiring Coyote to pay the City's legal fees, it likely won't happen and will probably bankrupt Coyote. Mr. Gablin said that the legal expenses will likely get put on the airport enterprise fund and we will all have to suffer and pay them. Mr. Gablin said that the money could have been used for an aircraft wash rack, or other needed improvements at the airport. Mr. Gablin said that it's important that the same City officials be deterred from taking such actions in the future. Mr. Gablin said that the City and Coyote should cease the legal wrangling.

- 5) Carol Brown with Coyote Aviation spoke in response to Mayor Pro Tem Barich's remarks at last month's meeting about how the City did not get a lot of cooperation. Mrs. Brown said that was not true and that Coyote made many attempts to engage City staff and City Council. Mrs. Brown said that, based on phone, email, and letter records, Coyote made at least 15 attempts to engage with City staff (mainly with Chris Boatman) and the entire City Council from September 2020 to March 2021 before the lease was terminated. Mrs. Brown said that the lease was terminated without a chance to discuss the lease. Mrs. Brown said that after the lease termination, Coyote persisted at least 15 more times to engage with City staff right up to last month. Mrs. Brown said that Mr. Boatman said that the Council will not re-negotiate unless Coyote wants to discuss the fate of the hanger improvements. Mrs. Brown said that Coyote offered mediation, the City set the parameters, Coyote agreed and the City backed out without explanation. Mrs. Brown said that several times Coyote wrote to Council members and staff and received no response. Mrs. Brown said that in the Airport Advisory Board meeting last month, Mr. Barich also said "we didn't get a dam one counteroffer at the City, there was never any counter made, so we didn't have any other choice but to take the action we did". Mrs. Brown said that this was also not true and that Coyote has documented offers. Mrs. Brown said that perhaps it is true, as suggested in the Airport Advisory Board meeting last month, that the City Council has not been privy to what is really happening in City offices. Mrs. Brown said it is time for City Council to meet with Coyote to hear directly from Coyote what City staff has not shared with City Council. Mrs. Brown also responded to Mr. Barich when he said that "we are not trying to push anyone out", and yet here we are said Mrs. Brown.

- 6) Gil Brown spoke about his belief that City Council members Denise Davis, Mario Saucedo, Jenna Guzman-Lowery, Eddie Tejeda, and Paul Barich have intentionally thwarted Coyote Aviation's ability to defend its property in its land dispute with the City. Mr. Brown said that according to the Airport Advisory Board members (the group responsible for providing feedback to the Council on airport matters), they were told directly not to engage with Coyote Aviation at all. Mr. Brown said that the City Council members refused to ever have a dialogue with Coyote. No matter how many times I tried, said Mr. Brown, no council member would ever talk to Coyote Aviation. In 2021, Mr. Brown made one of many proposals to City Council to provide facts about Coyote Aviation and answer any questions they may have. Mayor Pro-Tem at the time, Eddie Tejeda, was considerate enough to tell Mr. Brown why Coyote's offers have been rejected. Mr. Brown said that Mayor Pro-Tem Eddie Tejeda responded in part by saying "to my knowledge it is not appropriate for City Council members to engage in discussions with any party during negotiations as it would result in any council member having to recuse themselves from those closed session discussions to offer insight, comments, or suggestions". Mr. Brown said that this is what thoughtful deliberations require and that recusal is done only when there is a conflict of interest or lack of impartiality. Mr. Brown talked about how for the airport to succeed, the relationship must be beneficial to both parties. For years, Coyotes relationship with the City was mutualistic and both parties benefitted. But the City's new hunger to consume Coyote Aviation is an example of parasitism, a word Mr. Brown said comes from the word parasite. Mr. Brown said that when the parasite takes everything, both organisms eventually die. Mr. Brown said that the refusal of the City Council to examine Coyote Aviation's position, a decision not based on facts, will have significant consequences.
- 7) Walt Ferrar spoke and said that the people of Redlands have been misrepresented by their leaders. Mr. Ferrar said that it is public opinion that the mayor and Paul Barich along with City manager Chris Boatman have used the power of their City positions to settle a vendetta with Coyote Aviation owner Gil Brown and that their goal from the beginning was to destroy Gil and take his hanger business. Mr. Ferrar said that the current outcome only benefits Barich and Boatman's personal goals and that they have the ability to reverse direction with respect to the court's decision and do what is fair to both the City and Coyote. Mr. Ferrar said that the members of the AAB are allowed by City charter to speak on all matters concerning the airport. Mr. Ferrar said the AAB was told they can't speak by the City attorney who got his orders from the same few corrupt City leaders that escalated the Coyote issue to its current level. Mr. Ferrar said that those same leaders have abused their City power and used their influence over the rest of the City Council to their own personal benefit. Mr. Ferrar said that the City Council and all of you know the dirty deeds that have gone on behind the scenes. Mr. Ferrar said that the AAB should be ashamed of themselves if they don't speak out about what is right and fair. Mr. Ferrar said the voice of AAB members have been muzzled by the very people that ask for their opinion.
- 8) Michael Paisner said that Coyote Aviation tells a compelling and convincing story. Mr. Paisner said that despite Coyote Aviation doing everything right, the City still tried to steal their business. Mr. Paisner acknowledges that there are two sides to every story,

- but said that the City's silence is infuriating and makes the City look like a bully. Mr. Paisner voiced frustration that there is no City Council liaison present given that this is a topic that deserves Council attention. Mr. Paisner said that there are no winners in this and that no one will want to invest or do business with the City.
- 9) Luann Benton said that the people of the City of Redlands love small business owners and support them and that it's a sin to see what is happening to Coyote Aviation. Mrs. Benton said that Coyote has worked for 20 years building this business and now the City of Redlands wants to put them out of business. The City Council are our elected officials and they should be honoring their agreements with honesty and integrity. Mrs. Benton asked if it is honorable or reasonable to raise Coyote's monthly rent from \$1,100 a month to \$22,000 a month? Mrs. Benton said that sounds like extortion. Mrs. Benton said that instead of honoring their agreements, the Council is using taxpayer money to pay for legal costs and is setting a bad precedent. Mrs. Benton said that other tenants will move out and not trust the City as good business partners. Mrs. Benton said that the City will earn a bad reputation by placing financial gain and political gain above honesty and integrity. Mrs. Benton said the Brown's and the Saliba's have spent 20 years of blood, sweat, and tears building their dream and bad decisions will destroy that all. Mrs. Brown asked to do the right thing, make the right choice, keep your promises and save Coyote Aviation.
  - 10) Barry Neumayer, a Redlands resident and investor at the airport, started by saying that he stands to lose a lot of money. Mr. Neumayer said that it's a sad day because of what the City of Redlands is trying to do. Mr. Neumayer said that he helped get Councilman Saucedo elected in his district. Mr. Neumayer said that Saucedo knows what is happening here, but he is not speaking up. Mr. Neumayer said that he and Gil both sat down and spoke with Councilman Saucedo for about an hour, so Councilman Saucedo knows exactly what is happening and is being very complicit. Mr. Neumayer said that he wished Councilman Saucedo was here at the meeting so he can look Saucedo straight in the eye and say what an evil person you are. Mr. Neumayer said that he is proud of the AAB trying to stand up for Coyote because we have been silenced and don't have a voice. Mr. Neumayer said that he stands to lose half a million dollars and it's not easy to just give up that kind of money.
  - 11) David Banix, reading a letter from Rebecca Weir: Mrs. Weir writes that Coyote Aviation is a small business that has been serving the local community for over 20 years, working tirelessly to establish their business, provide reliable flight storage solutions, inspiring youth to become aviators of tomorrow, and contribute to the local economy. Mrs. Weir writes that Coyote Aviation has given back more than they have taken. Mrs. Weir writes that the City has the authority to settle this matter in the name of preserving public good and generating community good will. Instead, writes Mrs. Weir, the City continues to use a legal technicality and the legal process to strong arm the small business into submission and explore more lucrative options. Mrs. Weir writes that the City's eviction action has taken the community by surprise and left us deeply concerned about Coyote's future and the City's ability to responsibly govern. Mrs. Weir writes that while the eviction action may or may not be legally supportable, it is undeniably morally reprehensible.

- 12) Keith Kasin spoke about how we are role models, mentors, and leaders. Mr. Kasin said that we are accountable for our actions, words, deeds, the way we uphold the positions that we have achieved. Mr. Kasin spoke positively about Gil Brown as an educator and lifelong teacher.
- Member Pearce spoke and requested that at the end of the meeting, those who have letters/written documents, to please give them to Mr. Craw for submission to the Council.

### **3. COMMUNICATIONS**

- a) Report from staff:
  - I. Operations and Administration:
  - II. Maintenance: Airport Supervisor Lawson said that the coyote gate has been fixed and that they are working on getting the central gate back up to full standards. Currently, we are using a keypad on there. Mr. Lawson said that he, City staff, and management are in discussions for a long-term plan for improving the gate operations at the airport. There are other maintenance issues with the central gate that is being worked on, more to follow at the next meeting.
  - III. Grants: Airport Supervisor Lawson said that they had some projects scheduled for FY 2023 for runway pavement, west apron pavement and striping. The bids received for the work came back higher than we expected. In discussion with the FAA, we are going to move those projects into FY 2024 along with the projects for the wash rack and helicopter parking for the west ramp.
- Member Pearce expressed concern about when the middle gate was changed and Supervisor Lawson sending the information to the FBO's for submission. Member Pearce said that he believes that every member of the Board should have been forwarded that information, which was not done. Mr. Pearce said that communication needs to improve and asked for suggestions on how communications can be improved at the airport.
- Mr. Lawson responded by indicating that he is not privy to every tenant of the FBO's and that he has asked the FBO's to ensure all information gets out.
- Director Crocker responded by saying that we will look into it.
- Vice-Chair Cooke responded by saying that the buck stops with Supervisor Lawson. Cooke said that he was stuck at the airport one time when all the gates were not working and had texted Supervisor Lawson about it. Cooke said that Supervisor Lawson responded by saying I do not work for you.
- Director Crocker requested that Supervisor Lawson leave the meeting.
- Supervisor Lawson leaves the meeting.
- Member Furthun spoke about the Vice-Chair Cooke's gate incident and said that she was told about the incident via text and learned from Cooke that the gate needed to be broken in order to get out. Member Furthun expressed her surprise concerning the City's inaction.
- Director Crocker spoke and said that she was notified the day of the gate incident and that she had sent staff out there to try and find out what happened to the gate.

- Vice-Chair Cooke and member Furthun said that it was hours after they had to break the gate that City staff arrived. Vice-Chair Cooke raised further concerns that if there was any airport incident or accident, it would have taken first responders minutes to cut through the gate, minutes that could not be afforded during an emergency.
- Member Pearce spoke again to emphasize that communication needs to be improved.
- Member Pearce spoke and brought up concerns about the fact that the City and airport are not being represented in a number of discussions within the San Bernardino airport and the FAA, which member Pearce said should be addressed. Member Pearce recommended involvement and participation with the Southern California Airspace Users Working Group (SCAUWG) and the western group of the FAA. Being able to provide input concerning safety matters is very important said Pearce.

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Discussion and possible action related to updates to the City of Redlands Municipal Code section(s) relating to the operation, function, and reach of the Airport Advisory Board. Potential to form subcommittee to recommend updates.
  - Director Crocker spoke and said that attachment A, containing the municipal code section 2.18, was included with the Board agenda for discussion.
  - Member Furthun spoke and said that the AAB used to review matters concerning administration, operations, development, improvements, maintenance. However, then it stopped. Member Furthun said that we used to receive the financials, but that stopped. Member Furthun said that as a result, the AAB has progressively become less of a tool for City Council with respect to having additional eyes on operations, administration, development, improvements, and maintenance of the airport. Member Furthun said we are meeting once a month to just stare at the people that come to the meeting.
  - Vice-Chair Cooke spoke and agreed and said that he feels the Board has no teeth and that most of the AAB's recommendations fall on deaf ears. Vice-Chair Cooke said that if we were a commission, we could affect change on the municipal code level and have more meaningful involvement. Vice-Chair Cooke said that we make recommendations and it's up to the City Council to decide if they want to hear them.
  - Member Furthun questioned whether AAB recommendations ever get shared with Council. Member Furthun said that if City Council is absent at the AAB meetings, what is getting shared with Council?
  - Vice-Chair Cooke suggested that the AAB be a commission rather than an advisory committee.
  - Member Pearce spoke and said that when Ron Mutter was utilities director, he requested twice for the AAB to become an airport commission. Member Pearce said that it was voted down twice by the City Council. Member Pearce said that he would like to see budgeting added to the AAB's responsibilities.
  - Member Grove spoke and asked Director Crocker if she knows why City Council Leason did not show up for tonight's meeting. Director Crocker responded indicating that she does not know why.

- Member Grove spoke about the overall concern with the ongoing dispute and is concerned about the image it portrays of the City. Member Grove said that it will deter businesses from investing in the airport and damage the airport long-term. Member Grove acknowledged that Supervisor Lawson is doing his best with the autonomy that he has at his disposal. Member Grove said that the City is essentially fighting the public with the public's money. Member Grove urged that we should all work together with the City to reach common ground.
- Member Pearce makes a motion recommending review by City staff and subsequent City Council approval for the word "budget" to be added to municipal code section 2.18.050.
  - Member Furthun seconds the motion.
- Vice-Chair Cooke asks for public comment.
  - Ted Gotlin said that the AAB should consider adding the role of reviewing land development/land use around the airport.
  - Vice-Chair Cooke ends public comment.
- Member Furthun agreed with the motion, however, said that we should carry the topic for the next meeting to continue discussion.
- Vice-Chair Cooke said that he finds the airport has less in common with the Facilities & Community Services Department than with the Municipal Utilities & Engineering Department (MUED) and feels that the AAB should move to be under the MUED.
- Member Furthun says that its an interesting idea and may be ideal, it may not be the right time to make the move if the MUED department is too busy.
- Member Ghazal said that it would make sense for the AAB to fall under the MUED given the type of work MUED is involved with.
- After further discussion between members Nodine, Furthun, and Pearce, it was agreed to make a motion at this time to only recommend the addition of "budget" to AAB's responsibilities. The items concerning land use, AAB moving to MUED, and City participation with SCAUWG will be tabled for further discussion in the next and future meetings.
- Member Pearce restates the motion recommending review by City staff and subsequent City Council approval for the word "budget" to be added to municipal code section 2.18.050.
  - Member Furthun seconds the motion again.
  - All six members present voted and approved.

## **5. OLD BUSINESS**

- a) Discussion and possible action related to recommendation from the Ad Hoc Sub Committee on Community Engagement and proposed November 2023 fly in event.
  - Member Nodine said that the committee's discussions are still ongoing. Member Nodine said that the date of November 4 was selected.
  - Vice-Chair Cooke said that its less than 3 months away and asked if it can be accomplished that quickly.
  - Member Grove said that we already have other events going on and that we should piggy back/join another event that is already planned.

- Director Crocker requested clarification on who will be sponsoring this event and if City support will be needed.
- Member Furthun asked Cindy Gablin to come up and provide input.
- Mrs. Gablin said that there is a City Halloween event that is planned for October 29 and having another event the next weekend will be tuff. Mrs. Gablin said that a fly-in can feasibly be added to the Halloween event.
- Vice-Chair Cooke asked that we add this item to next month's meeting agenda for continued discussion.

## **6. POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Fly In Event
- New agenda items:
  - i. Discussion and possible action related to the scope of the AAB and possible formation of a commission.
  - ii. Discussion and possible action on recommendation for AAB's move to MUED.
  - iii. Discussion and possible action on recommending to City Council to have City representation/participation at other agencies and user groups.

## **7. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

- Vice-Chair Cooke spoke in support of Coyote Aviation and Gil Brown and thanked the audience for all their comments. Cooke expressed concern with the City's course of action and said that its deeply troubling. Cooke agreed with the public comments and acknowledged that no one will ever want to come to Redlands and invest in the airport. Cooke said that he should have never listened to the City Council who told him not to talk about Coyote Aviation. Cooke said that he thinks the City is trying to take the hangers based on the emails between Chris Boatman and Coyote. Cooke said that the City should engage in meaningful conversations with Coyote Aviation to end this dispute. Cooke said that Coyote did everything they were supposed to do when they were negotiating with the airport manager, who at the time was authorized to negotiate leases. Cooke said that he disagrees with City staff that because this is in litigation, we are not allowed to talk about it. Cooke said that Gil has over 30 document efforts in trying to negotiate with the City and they never took him up on it. Cooke said that at the last meeting, mayor pro tem Barich said that if you don't like what I'm doing, vote me out. And Cooke said to the audience that you should.
- Member Pearce said that this started with the Krick hangers, which caused a lot of anger and a lot of hate. Member Pearce said that he does not think there has been a lot of recovery since then. At that time, member Pearce said, the Board was so perturbed at the City that the entire Board quite. Member Pearce said it gets discouraging when the City does not do its due-diligence in regards to keeping people happy.
- Member Furthun expressed concern as a citizen of the City about what's happening. Member Furthun said that she has not advised on the Coyote matter because we were not allowed. Member Furthun said that If I were to advise, I would ask if there is anyway that

we can come to a mutual win. Member Furthun said that as a citizen of this community, this does not look good on us.

- Vice-Chair Cooke said that the Board members all got letters/threats from the City attorney saying that if we talk about Coyote Aviation, we will be subject to Brown Act violation action. Cooke said that if he could make a motion, it would have read as follows:

Recognizing the adverse effects on Redlands Airport because of the City of Redlands and the Coyote Aviation lease dispute, I move that the preceding conclusions and recommendations be entered into the record and given to the Redlands City Council for thoughtful consideration. Those conclusions are: The City's unprincipled actions to acquire Coyote Aviation's property because of what was a contract mistake made by the City itself will doom perspective private development at the airport. The City's effort to thwart communication and internal discussion and engagement with Coyote Aviation contributed significantly to the initiation and protracted continuance of the land lease dispute. The City's actions with Coyote Aviation have run contrary to the ideals of bargaining in good faith and aware now that Coyote did not receive its negotiated 20-year first term nor its lease extension. The City Council has knowingly reneged on the promises of the City Council of 2000, vows that encouraged Coyote Aviation to originally invest in the airport.

#### **8. ADJOURNEMENT TO NEXT REGULAR MEETING**

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM