



CITY OF WINOOSKI OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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MAYOR SETH LEONARD
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WINOOSKI AIRPORT JULY 14, 2017 STATEMENT

The City of Winooski hereby states our support for the Joint Resolution on Regional Governance in relation to the Burlington International Airport. The City of Winooski recognizes the importance of the airport to the local, regional, and state economy. The city also enjoys many benefits as a result of our proximity to the airport. However, as a result of Winooski's unique geographical relationship to the airport, our community also experiences a disproportionate impact as a direct result of airport activities. Throughout several decades, Winooski has engaged the Burlington International Airport and City of Burlington through both formal and informal channels in hopes of providing our community with a meaningful platform to constructively engage in operational decisions that directly impact our community. The City has passed a number of resolutions and formal statements aimed at inspiring consequential communication between our community and the airport around the operational decisions that directly impact our community's livability and vibrancy. Additionally, the City of Winooski has sought an equitable approach to the pursuit of funding for sound mitigation that is typically only available through the airport. Most recently, a November 2016 Resolution specifically requests formal Airport Commission standing for Winooski, along with physical on-ground sound monitoring be conducted to supplement Part 150 Noise mapping that may assist in justification of funding for sound mitigation in the future. In eight months since the passage of that resolution, no formal response has come on either request. The City of Winooski could reach no other reasonable conclusion than to seek a new governance model that is more representative and responsive to the concerns of the impacted communities in our region.

It is our hope that a review of alternative governance models for a critical local, regional, and state asset will provide an opportunity for long-term stability to the Burlington International Airport to serve our state for generations to come.

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Regional Governance Burlington International Airport

Joint Resolution

Whereas;

- The Burlington International Airport (BIA) serves as a critical component of Vermont's economic development and transportation infrastructure linking our state to the nation and world for both business and personal travel; and
- Preserving and enhancing the vitality of the airport for passenger travel and air freight needs to be a high priority for the region and State of Vermont; and
- A reduction in flight schedules or the loss of service by one or more airlines would have a devastating impact on the entire Vermont economy and jobs market; and
- The State has a vital interest in ensuring the viability and continuance of major airline service into the BIA yet has no role in management or operations of the Airport, its marketing plans or its relations with major carriers; and
- The State owns, operates and maintains most of the airports located in Vermont including Rutland-Southern Vermont Regional Airport, Edward H. Knapp State Airport (Berlin), William H. Morse State Airport (Bennington), Franklin County State Airport, Caledonia County Airport, Middlebury State Airport, Morrisville-Stowe State Airport, Newport State Airport, Post Mills Airport, Hartness State Airport (Springfield), and Warren-Sugarbush Airport; and
- The Vermont Air Guard and the Vermont Army guard, both instruments of the State in their civilian mission, are the largest tenants of the Airport and therefore subject to decisions made by the City of Burlington with no direct oversight by the State; and
- The State has broad jurisdiction and responsibility over statewide economic development initiatives and the infrastructure that supports economic development and job growth yet has no role whatsoever in management of a key element of that infrastructure, namely the BIA; and
- Performance indicators (see below) at the BIA call into question its viability as an ongoing enterprise and component of our State's economic development infrastructure; and

Whereas;

- The City of Burlington holds title to the 880+/- acres and various buildings that comprise the Burlington International Airport; and

- The 880 +/- acres that comprise the BIA are wholly located within the borders of the City of South Burlington and not physically connected in any way to the City of Burlington; and
- The residents of the City of South Burlington, the City of Winooski, the Town of Williston, the Town of Colchester, the Town of Essex, the Town of Shelburne and other adjacent communities are directly affected by the general operations of the BIA particularly from a noise, safety and traffic perspective; and
- The residents of Burlington are not similarly affected by the general operations of the airport; and

Whereas;

- The Director of Aviation serves as the general manager of non-flight and non-military-related operations at the BIA and reports to and is solely accountable to the Mayor of the City of Burlington; and
- The only authoritative oversight of the management of the Airport rests with the Burlington elected officials neglecting all other municipalities affected by airport operations and Champlain Valley airspace activity ; and
- The Airport Commission is perfunctory in its role and is merely advisory as they do not exercise authority over BIA operations or the decisions of the Director of Aviation; and
- Four Members of the five Member Commission are appointed by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Burlington with one Member representing the City of South Burlington appointed by the South Burlington City Council; and
- The City of South Burlington has no meaningful role in BIA governance given the purely advisory nature of the Commission; and
- No other affected communities have a seat on the Commission even though they are directly affected by activities using airspace in the Champlain Valley; and
- According to the approved minutes of the April 24, 2017 meeting of the Airport Commission a member of the Commission stated, "It may be time for the Airport Commission and the City of Burlington to reevaluate having a member from South Burlington on the Airport Commission if this is no longer as beneficial as it once was or all parties could work on having a more understanding and constructive relationship" potentially calling into question the legitimacy and longevity of a South Burlington representative on the Commission; and
- A Winooski City Council passed resolution (November 17, 2016) requesting that Winooski be granted a Commissioner position on the Burlington Airport Commission due to the impact of operations on the City has not been responded to by the City of Burlington; and
- The citizens of the City of South Burlington, the City of Winooski, the Town of Williston, the Town of Colchester, the Town of Essex, and the Town of Shelburne and other adjacent communities are directly affected by the ongoing BIA operations on the ground and in the airspace over their communities yet have no ability to redress their concerns through shared governance in Airport decision making; and
- The lack of broad accountability embedded in the BIA governance structure combined with the existence of the BIA located wholly within another municipality with its operational affects touching other communities and not the City of Burlington is rare if not unique in the United States; and

Whereas;

- The BIA has begun the planning process to develop a Noise Compatibility Program Update that will guide the investment of potential future FAA funds in approved noise abatement remedies that should set as a priority the protection and preservation of workforce housing; and
- Under Part 150, the FAA requires that an “Advisory Committee” be established comprised of neighboring communities and other stakeholders; and
- The recommendations developed by the Advisory Committee will be provided to the Director of Aviation; and,
- The Director of Aviation alone will decide which measures he will present to the FAA as the final recommendations of the BIA for future noise abatement measures; and
- None of these measures or investments will be made in the City of Burlington as no relevant impacts fall upon the residents of the City of Burlington from airport-generated noise; and
- The communities that are actually affected by airport operation noise will have no role in actually deciding which investments will be best for or even wanted in their communities as only the Director of Aviation will have that authority to make these recommendations to the FAA and to apply for funding to support those measures; and

Whereas;

- The BIA operates as a separate Enterprise Fund within the departmental structure of the City of Burlington that is wholly self-sustaining deriving revenues from commercial carrier operations, the sale of goods and services, leases and significant funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA); and
- The financial viability of BIA is wholly dependent on revenues derived from sources other than City of Burlington taxpayers; and
- City of Burlington taxpayers have made no investments in the BIA or the property on which it sits since 1948 when the City taxpayers covered part of the cost of a runway extension; and,
- All improvements to the BIA have been funded through the enterprise itself and the FAA, its major source of federal funding; and
- The City of Burlington functions as a steward of BIA, an enterprise that is a regional asset serving a regional population and economy paid for by its own operations and FAA funding; and
- While the City of Burlington holds “title” to the BIA it does not “own” BIA in the classic sense of having paid for it through taxpayer investments (as the context of ownership reflects who actually paid for the asset, revenues were provided through the enterprise by passengers from throughout Vermont and the world who have arrived or embarked from BIA, commercial lease holders and other customers and by the largest of its funders being the FAA); and,

Whereas;

- BIA Performance indicators as most accurately expressed through passenger enplanements (the annual number of passengers boarding scheduled flights) have declined dramatically since a peak in 2008; and

- This decline in enplanements at BIA has occurred even as enplanements nationally have increased significantly; and
- BIA enplanements fell from 759,021 in 2008 to 594,034 in 2015, (Source: BIA Website, BTV Monthly Passenger Enplanements) even as nationwide enplanements rose from 820,000,000 to 895,000,000 (Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2015 U.S. Based Traffic Data); and,
- Enplanements at the BIA have fallen short of even the lowest forecasted projections by the BIA in its “Vision 2030 Airport Master Plan Update Summary Presentation” (Source: Chart - High, Medium, and Low Forecast Scenarios for Commercial Enplanements at BTV: 2008 – 2030) dated January 2011; and
- The Vision 2030 Airport Master Plan Update Summary Presentation” dated January 2011 projected that enplanements in 2016 would be at roughly 750,000 under a “low” scenario, 1,000,000 under a “medium” scenario and 1,250,000 under a “high” scenario. Actual enplanements in 2015 were 594,034, well below the lowest predicted target (Source: Vision 2030 Airport Master Plan Update Summary Presentation, Chart - High, Medium, and Low Forecast Scenarios for Commercial Enplanements at BTV: 2008 – 2030); and

Whereas;

- A Committee established by the City of Burlington to develop a Strategic Plan for the BIA issued its report to the Burlington City Council and Mayor on June 10 2013 in an appearance before the Burlington City Council and Mayor that was featured in various news articles that included recommendations regarding Finances, Air Service Development, Staffing, Economic Development and Governance; and
- As for the issue of governance, this Strategic Plan recommended the following “Action Step”—“Concurrently work with the State and other potential regional partners to create a regional authority model to be implemented ...” yet four years later, there has been no effort to pursue this “Action Step,” again calling into question whether or not any other “Action Steps” have been pursued or accomplished; and
- It is unclear as to whether or not progress has been made on any of the recommendations as there is no reference on the BIA website or on the City of Burlington website as to the matter of addressing the recommendations of the Plan; and
- As the line of authority and communication between Airport management goes only to the Mayor, and to no other body of authority over BIA operations, it is unknown whether or not any of the recommendations are being pursued as had been intended; and

Whereas;

- A vital and growing Plattsburg International Airport (PIA) creates competitive pressure on the regional landscape that has devastating implications for the entire economy of Vermont; and
- The State of New York and Clinton County have invested \$54 million in a very recently completed expansion of the PIA terminal, tripling its size (Source: Seven Days, August 26, 2016); and
- The new terminal is projected to be able to handle 300,000 enplanements a year and is on track to exceed 150,000 enplanements this year (Seven Days, August 26, 2016); and

- The new PIA terminal has five existing gates, expandable to eight, fully staffed TSA function, two baggage carousels, fully staffed rental car agencies, massive surface level parking capacity with accommodations for US customs and immigration functions to support international flights (Source: Tour of the Airport); and
- Spirit, Allegiant and PanAir currently provide service out of PIA to Boston, South Carolina, Florida, the Caribbean and Latin countries (Plattsburgh International Airport Website); and
- PIA has aggressively courted the Quebec market by branding itself “Montreal’s U.S. Airport” and catering to French speaking customers (Source: Plattsburgh International Airport Website, Seven Days, August 26, 2016); and
- The State of New York and Clinton County have also pledged \$38 million to upgrade the industrial park adjacent to the PIA focusing on air cargo and serving as a transportation hub (Source: Governor Andrew Cuomo State of the State Address, January 11, 2017); and
- It is clear that this nearly \$100 million in investment is designed to lure a full-scheduled air carrier to PIA that will compete head-to-head with carriers operating out of BIA— putting added competitive pressure on decisions regarding routes and equipment flying out of BIA; and
- Loss of routes and a change in equipment would have a significant impact on the economy of northwest Vermont and the State; and
- There is little recognition of any competitive pressures from PIA or other airports in either the 2030 Plan, the Airport Strategic Planning Committee recommendations of June 10, 2013 or any other materials relating to BIA marketing; and
- The emergence of a strong PIA calls into serious question the “Airport Vision” as presented in the Airport Strategic Planning Committee Recommendations of June 10, 2013; *“Our vision is to meet the air transportation needs of all the people and businesses of Vermont, northern New York, northern New Hampshire and southern Quebec for the duration of this century;”* and

Whereas;

- Regional governance models for larger, commercial-service airports that are county-based or authority-based is the norm in the United States which brings all affected communities to the decision making table; and
- All major airports in New York State are now governed by regional authorities with Syracuse being the most recent conversion in 2013; and
- Other airports, such as Gerald Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, Michigan have also recently converted to an “authority” structure of governance; and
- Syracuse, among others, has found great success in a regional governance model increasing its economic viability and engaging the entire region in support of the airport as an economic driver; and
- In the *Airport Strategic Planning Committee Recommendations of June 10, 2013*, the Strategic Planning Committee recognized the viability of moving toward a regional governance model for BIA by making the recommendation that it *“...work with the state and other potential regional partners to create a regional authority model to be implemented as financial goals are realized”* and in a later recommendation to *“further explore the advantages/disadvantages of conversion to a regional airport authority governance model.”* Four years later, a serious review and discussion of regional governance has yet to occur.

Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned communities and stakeholders request that:

1. The Burlington City Council consider and declare that it is in the best interest of the City of Burlington, the greater Northwest Vermont region and the State of Vermont that ownership of the Burlington International Airport be transferred to the State of Vermont and that a State/Regional governing board be established to provide oversight of the management of the Burlington International Airport that would include representation from Burlington as well as other affected communities in the region and the State; and
2. That the Mayor of Burlington cause to be formed a committee made up of representatives from Burlington, affected communities in the region appointed by their legislative bodies and the State as appointed by the Governor to prepare and implement a plan to transition Burlington International Airport ownership from the City of Burlington to the State of Vermont and to recommend that a governance structure be established that includes representatives from Burlington as well as other affected communities in the region and the State of Vermont; and
3. That should neither of the actions requested in the first two resolved clauses be initiated in a reasonable period of time as determined by the undersigned, that the Governor of the State of Vermont appoint a committee made up of representatives from affected communities in the region and the State to develop a plan to transition ownership of the Burlington International Airport from the City of Burlington to the State of Vermont to be governed by a board comprised of representatives from affected communities in the region and the State in a structure as determined by the Committee.

Approved by:

This 17th day of July, 2017.



Mayor Seth Leonard



Attest by City Clerk



Deputy Mayor Brian Corrigan



Councilor Eric Covey



Councilor Nicole Mace



Councilor Brian Sweeney