Naples Airport Authority: Special Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 30, 2026

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cavanaugh at 8:30 a.m. in the Airport Office Building at 200 Aviation Drive North, Naples.

Chair Terrence W. Cavanaugh called the Special Meeting of the City of Naples Airport Authority Board to order at approximately 8:30 a.m. Chair Cavanaugh presided and reviewed standard meeting announcements regarding public comment procedures, Sunshine Law requirements, live streaming and recording of the meeting, and the public record nature of all materials distributed.

A. Roll Call

Board Members Terrence W. Cavanaugh (Chair), John Crees (Vice Chair), Robert P. Burns, Michelle Arnold, and Ralph Alberto were present. Also present were Executive Director Christopher A. Rozansky and Authority Attorneys William L. Owens and Peter Kirsch, Mr. Lobb, Mr. Warriner, Mr. Gray, Mr. Fagan, Ms. Zadorecky, Mr. Brown, Ms. Wiggins, Ms. Acosta, and Ms. Jaramillo.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Cavanaugh led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Agenda (Add, delete or re-sequence items)

Mr. Rozansky advised the Board there were no changes, additions, or resequencing of the agenda.

D. Public Comments (5-minute limit)

1. Keith West, Airport Tenants Council, stated that he was speaking on behalf of the Airport Tenants Council and expressed support for the Airport Authority. He indicated that tenants believe the Board should take appropriate action to uphold the law and maintain proper governance of the airport. Mr. West referenced concerns regarding actions by the City of Naples, stating that uncertainty surrounding governance has created challenges for tenants operating at the airport. He emphasized that airport authorities are intended to provide specialized management and oversight, and he urged the Board to continue operating the airport in accordance with its established authority and responsibilities.

2. Bruce Byerly, Naples Jet Center and a long-term airport tenant, described his company's nearly two-decade presence at the airport and recent substantial investment in facility improvements, including construction of a new hangar and renovations exceeding $17 million. He stated that the project had received appropriate approvals but was later subject to increased scrutiny by the City, which introduced uncertainty during development. Mr. Byerly explained that delays or disruptions to airport operations could result in significant financial exposure, noting prior estimates exceeding $30 million in potential losses. He emphasized that the 1969 ground lease between the City and the Airport Authority serves as the foundation for airport operations and tenant investment decisions. He expressed concern that challenges to the validity of the lease could undermine business confidence, disrupt financing and insurance arrangements, and impact tenant operations. He further stated that if the lease were invalidated, the City could be required to assume operational control of the airport, which he indicated could result in operational disruption and significant financial consequences for tenants and the broader community. Mr. Byerly encouraged the Board to consider the impact on airport businesses and the importance of maintaining a stable operating environment.

3. Jennifer Hollander, Friends of the Airport, stated that she was speaking on behalf of Friends of the Airport and addressed legal and regulatory implications associated with the City's position regarding House Bill 4005 and the airport ground lease. She stated that, in her view, the legislation does not invalidate the lease and that the City had not identified a clear legal theory supporting such a claim. She explained that raising questions about the lease could create uncertainty regarding the Airport Authority's ability to certify compliance with federal and state grant requirements, including FAA and FDOT obligations. Ms. Hollander noted that such certifications are necessary for federally funded projects and require confirmation of the Authority's legal control over the airport. She further advised that federal obligations associated with the airport would continue regardless of any changes to lease structure, and that uncertainty regarding sponsorship could expose the City to potential liability. Ms. Hollander also discussed prior City actions, including resolutions and proposed ordinances, stating that these efforts raised concerns related to federal preemption and state law limitations on local regulatory authority. She concluded by emphasizing the economic importance of the airport to the community and the risks associated with continued legal and regulatory conflict.

4. Rick Ruppert, Naples Resident, stated that he was speaking as a Naples resident and addressed the conflict resolution process under Chapter 164, Florida Statutes. He expressed support for the Airport Authority taking necessary steps to protect its ability to operate the airport, including participation in the conflict resolution process. He discussed the broader context of the dispute, characterizing it as relating to issues of control and governance between the City and the Airport Authority. Mr. Ruppert referenced the history and structure of the Authority and noted that House Bill 4005 altered aspects of board appointments. He stated that the current situation reflects differing perspectives between the City and the Authority and compared the dispute to a broader governance disagreement. Mr. Ruppert encouraged the Board to pursue its obligations related to safety, financial responsibility, and airport operations while also remaining open to a potential resolution path. He expressed hope that the parties could identify an opportunity for collaboration or resolution as the process moves forward.

E. Action Items

(Public comments accepted for each item; 5-minute limit)

1. Resolution 2026-2. A resolution of the City of Naples Airport Authority responding to conflict resolution procedures initiated by the City of Naples pursuant to Chapter 164, Florida Statutes, the Florida Governmental Conflict Resolution Act, regarding a conflict between the City of Naples and the City of Naples Airport Authority; authorizing the Executive Director to take all necessary actions relating to the conflict resolution procedures and litigation, including, but not limited to, engaging counsel, participating in conflict assessment meetings, and filing and pursuing answers, affirmative defenses, motions to intervene, counterclaims, crossclaims, and other responsive pleadings, motions, and filings in litigation; and providing for scrivener's errors and an effective date. ~~Authority Attorney William L. Owens~~ Authority Attorney William L. Owens provided opening remarks regarding the City of Naples initiating conflict resolution procedures under Chapter 164, Florida Statutes, following its April 16, 2026, letter raising concerns about House Bill 4005. Mr. Owens stated that the Airport Authority did not request or advocate for the legislation and lacks authority to modify or challenge state law. He further advised that the City's position includes challenges to the validity of the Authority's long-term land lease, which he indicated could impact the Authority's ability to fulfill its operational responsibilities. Mr. Owens noted that the Authority is pursuing two resolutions to protect its interests, including responding to the City-initiated proceedings and initiating its own conflict resolution process related to aeronautical land use and

operational authority. He emphasized that the Authority intends to participate in the process in good faith with the goal of avoiding litigation. Following discussion, a motion was made by Vice Chair Crees and seconded by Board Member Arnold to approve Resolution 2026-2. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Resolution 2026-3. A Resolution of the City of Naples Airport Authority Initiating Conflict Resolution Procedures Pursuant to Chapter 164, Florida Statutes, the Florida Governmental Conflict Resolution Act, Regarding a Conflict Between the City of Naples Airport Authority and the City of Naples; Authorizing the Executive Director to Take All Necessary Actions Related to the Conflict Resolution Process and Litigation, Including, but Not Limited to, Engaging Counsel, Participating in the Conflict Assessment Meeting, and Filing and Pursuing Complaints, Motions to Intervene, Claims, and Other Pleadings, Motions, and Filings in Litigation; Providing for Scrivener's Errors; and Providing an Effective Date. A motion was made by Vice Chair Crees and seconded by Board Member Alberto to approve Resolution 2026-3. The motion passed unanimously.

F. New Business

1. Joint letter - Attorney Certification for FAA AIP and FDOT Grants. Executive Director Christopher A. Rozansky presented a joint attorney certification letter related to FAA and FDOT grants. He explained that such certifications confirm the Authority's legal ability to fulfill grant obligations, including holding proper title. Mr. Rozansky noted that the Authority proceeded with execution of a previously approved FAA grant for the airfield lighting and vault replacement project. No Board action was required.

G. Public Comments (5-minute limit)

No additional public comments were received.

H. Correspondence / Member Comments & Requests / Meetings

No comments were provided by Board members.

I. Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:59 a.m.

Christopher A. Rozansky
Secretary

NOTE: These minutes were prepared by Microsoft Copilot using a verbatim transcript. Printed copies of all visual presentations, transcripts and handouts are on file at the NAA's offices. The video of all meetings can be found online at www.naplesgov.com.