

RICHMOND HILL – BRYAN COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Unofficial Minutes

August 18, 2025

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Trip Addison called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

- II. **ROLL CALL AND WELCOME GUESTS:** The following authority nominees were present and established a quorum – Ben Taylor (Post 1), Chris Lovell (Post 2), Gene Wallace (Post 3), Christian Rushing (Post 4), Marvin Daniel (Post 5), Russ Carpenter (Post 6), Glen Willard (Post 7), John Seckinger (Post 8), Eric Rice (Post 9), Ryan Purvis (Post 10) and Trip Addison (Post 11).

Bryan County Probate Judge Billy Reynolds was welcomed. Others in attendance were DABC Attorney Leamon Holliday, Bryan County Attorney Aaron Kappler, DABC Operations Manager Myra Sims, Richmond Hill City Clerk Dawnne Greene and Bryan County Clerk Lori Tyson.

- III. **OPEN MEETING COMPLIANCE:** Dawnne Greene, City Clerk for Richmond Hill, and Lori Tyson, County Clerk for Bryan County, both confirmed that all open meeting requirements had been met.

- IV. **INVOCATION:** Ryan Purvis gave the invocation.

- V. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** was led by Trip Addison.

- VI. **SWEARING IN OF AIRPORT AUTHORITY BOARD MEMBERS:** Bryan County Probate Judge Reynolds called the Authority Board Members to stand and repeat the oath of office after him:

Richmond Hill-Bryan County Airport Authority Oath of Office

I, _____, being recently appointed to serve on the Richmond Hill-Bryan County Airport Authority, do hereby solemnly swear or affirm that I am not the holder of any public money due this State or any of its political subdivisions or authority which has not been accounted for; nor am I the holder of an office of trust under the government of the United States, nor any State, nor any foreign State which I am by the laws of the state of Georgia prohibited from holding; I will support the Constitution of the United States and of this state; I am otherwise qualified to hold this office according to the Constitution and the laws of Georgia, and I will well and truly perform my duties as a member of the Richmond Hill-Bryan County Airport Authority.

VII. APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING AUGUST 18, 2025, PROPOSED AGENDA:

Russ Carpenter made a motion to approve the proposed agenda for the board meeting on August 18, 2025. Glen Willard seconded the motion, and all carried it.

VIII. AIRPORT AUTHORITY TOPICS OF DISCUSSION (NEW BUSINESS):

- a. **OFFICER NOMINATIONS:** Trip Addison asked the board for nominations for Chair and Secretary/Treasurer. Glen Willard made a motion to nominate Trip Addison for chairman. Eric Rice seconded the motion, and all carried it. Chris Lovell made a motion to nominate Glen Willard for secretary/treasurer. Marvin Daniel seconded the motion, and all carried it.
- b. **FUTURE MEETING DATES, TIMES, LOCATION:** The board set two additional meeting dates through January 2026, when a new election of officers will occur. Mondays at 3:30 p.m. were noted as preferable, working with City and County schedules. Meetings for the remainder of 2025 were decided for October 20th and December 15th and will be held at 3:30 pm at City Hall, located at 40 Richard Davis Drive, Richmond Hill.
- c. **TIMELINE OF EVENTS:** A summary of the project timeline was provided by Chair Addison:
 - i. **Phase One:** Kicked off and funded by the City of Richmond Hill in 2022. The initial airport study (Phase One) was conducted by Holt Consulting and published in 2023. It found shortages of hangars and landing access for general aviation in the Savannah region and conditions favorable for a new general aviation airport.
 - ii. **Phase Two:** Funded by the City Council, County Commission, and Development Authority. Holt Consulting evaluated five sites and determined Site 5 (Belfast and Highway 17) as the most suitable for a 6,700-foot general aviation airport. The airport orientation meets Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements, utilizing Midway Airport's wind data. The design is strictly for a General Aviation Airport, not commercial or military aircraft.
 - iii. **Next Steps:**
 - 1. A **Financial Analysis** is being conducted by Georgia Tech to determine estimated local tax revenues for the City, County, and School Board.

2. A **Master Plan** will utilize the Phase Two prototype to plan for hangars, fixed-base operator (FBO), etc.
 3. An **Environmental Assessment** (required by the National Environmental Protection Act and FAA) will identify potential environmental impacts, look at cultural resources, and determine mitigation strategies.
 4. The **Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)** launched a regional airport study in June (expected to take about a year) to validate Holt Consulting's findings.
- iv. Funding:** GDOT has block grant authority for federal review, enabling a 90% federal match. The state traditionally funds 5%. The new Airport Authority is responsible for the remaining 5% plus any ancillary costs that may not meet the federal match requirement. The Authority was granted bonding authority via state legislation for its portion of the funding mix. The goal is to have private individuals/companies develop vertical assets (hangars, FBO, fuel farm) so they become fully taxable real property.

d. Updates and Announcements

1. A newly built high school in South Bryan is close to the site, offering an opportunity for high school students to engage with the aviation industry, the largest employment sector in the region.
2. The airport is expected to generate revenue for the City, County, and School Board with little burden on them.
3. The land owner of the selected site currently has a master plan for housing or industrial development, which would not have the same positive impact on municipal services or the area.
4. Public engagement is encouraged, including all critical comments, ideas, or questions.
5. An email address for public comments has been created: airport@bryancountyga.gov.

IX. COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC:

Stephanie Falls: High wetlands mitigation costs (potentially exceeding the \$20M budget) and the need for a timeline for the Georgia Tech tax revenue study.

Cynthia Hatala: Fix current infrastructure (flooding/drainage) before spending \$128M on an airport. Concerned about the cost versus the small number of local pilots, high costs for the Fire Department (Class B fire equipment), and potential nepotism/conflict of interest among board members who are pilots.

Corey Foreman: The airport's financial reliance on government subsidy. Lack of transparency and public opposition. Questioned locating the airport on wetlands in a resident-heavy area. Noted the very low public response to the initial survey.

Dr. Gloria Shearin: Total lack of transparency with the public. Environmental concerns that clear-cutting will increase flooding.

Meredith Gibson: Urged the board to prioritize transparency and open communication. Suggested appointing a communications expert. Stated a preference for a General Aviation Airport over more housing/warehouses and increased 18-wheeler traffic.

Teresa Timmons: Critical need for proper debate and aviation operator experts, citing the death of her pilot husband in a mid-air collision at an airport without air traffic control.

Julie Pecenka: Questioned the lack of female or person of color representation on the board. Questioned why the meeting was not being live-streamed via social media. Questioned reports that Governor Kemp believes the airport is for freight/FedEx when it is described as general aviation.

Commissioner Dr. Gene Wallace: Concerned with lack of communication with the public and if the county can afford the airport based on current figures, citing flat sales tax (SPLOST) revenues.

- X. EXECUTIVE SESSION – REAL ESTATE:** Chris Lovell made the motion to enter into an executive session to discuss real estate. Eric Rice seconded the motion, and all carried it. Executive session called to order at 4:14 p.m. Russ Carpenter made the motion to come out of executive session. Glen Willard seconded the motion, and all carried it. The executive session ended at 4:37 p.m.
- XI. ADJOURNMENT:** Chris Lovell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Gene Wallace seconded the motion, and all carried it. The meeting was adjourned at 4:46 p.m.