

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WHITESIDE COUNTY AIRPORT BOARD

A Special Meeting of the Whiteside County Airport Board was held on September 14, 2019 in the Terminal Building at the Whiteside County Airport, Rock Falls, Illinois at 10:02 a.m.

Present were Board members: President Drew Wilkens, Dave Koster, Monte VanKooten, Chris King and Drew Wilkens. Also present was Megan Horsman – Rock Falls Tourism, Dan Gryder, Steven Siefken, Jim Wise and Darin Heffelfinger.

President Wilkens stated the reason for the meeting was because there was a quorum of board members which is a formality. Wilkens requested to move public comment to the end of the meeting, all members agreed.

Wilkens then asked for Dan Gryder to explain his thoughts on the one more time event. Dan Gryder said the DC 3 was done 9 years ago and he has been involved with it for 20 years. Gryder said he is connected with the older airplanes owners. Gryder said the airport is ideally situated and also has 2 runways. The event 9 years ago was remembered since the pilots were noted as special and received dinner. Recurring annual event to put Sterling-Rock Falls on the map for what it should be. Gryder said the uniqueness of the aircraft will bring people in. Gryder said he and Darin work well together to pull this event off. Gryder said he is open to doing this and going forward to it. Gryder said the main thing would be money. He said this is a public event and no one is going to profit off it. It should be an event that can be afforded with public help. Gryder said one thing would be a managed account so that money can come in, but he nor Darin can take any money out. It is a non-profit event and any money left over goes back to the betterment of the event. The main idea is to make this an annual event and all volunteers, including himself, needs to make it a good stop for these warbirds. Gryder said sponsorship from companies and fundraisers so when pilots come here it can pay for food and beverages and help take care of them. The availability to do this is at the airport, just need the ability to make the decision to do it along with the volunteer basis. Gryder said he can get the airplanes and the guys to bring the planes, but the rest would be the Board. Gryder's proposal is that he can bring the planes and tell the Board how to set it up. Gryder said there is no one south of Oshkosh that has the capability for the set up that Whiteside is.

King asked the dates and Koster said he was looking at Oshkosh and this would be the weekend before Oshkosh which is July 17, 18 and 19. Gryder said most would leave early Monday morning. Koster asked if they all take off and fly in the group. Gryder said most arrivals are Thursday – Saturday morning. Koster asked with the 40 planes, how many people would accommodate with those. Gryder said 300. Gryder said some DC-3s brought 10 people, but not all will be that big. Wilkens asked if some of the planes would give rides and Gryder said yes, it is called Ride Hopper. Gryder said a few have contacted him asking for a time slot if this is going to be an event. Gryder said B-17, DC-3 and B-25 and maybe a B-24 are a few that would be possible doing it and this is one way they keep in existence for paying for rides. Koster asked if they take care of their own accommodations. Gryder said yes, they take care of that, but the chamber got a group discount for the pilots. Gryder said the hotels were sold out and extras were staying in Dixon. Darin asked about doing it as an annual event and Gryder said once you have it set up and the infrastructure, it would be all set up. After a few years, Gryder said he won't be needed either. Each pilot pays for their own gas and

they take care of the own expenses, they just want to be taken care of while they are at Whiteside County Airport, including gathering them to/from the hotel to the airport. Gryder said Darin should not be giving away gas out of his own pocket. Gryder said the last event was within \$1,000.00 of the budget and he thinks the total budget was around \$50,000.00 and they spent \$50,000.00. Gryder said attendees paid for parking but there was no fee to enter the event. Gryder said he has three (3) national organizations that are willing to be sponsors if the event is a go. Larry Williams asked about donation buckets once they enter the event for those that would like to make a donation. Gryder said the last event they sold vendor spots for \$500.00 to sell their food or items. King asked if there was enough time to pull this event off. Gryder said yes he thought there was plenty of time and he isn't worried about getting the airplanes. VanKooten asked if he was looking at 40 planes for the event, Gryder said he would like to cap off at that with it being the first event. Wilkens asked about the planes flying low over the riverfront like a parade. Gryder said that is okay, but that takes away from the airport and you could do the same thing at the airport and bring people to the airport instead of the riverfront.

Koster asked the planes congregate anywhere before Oshkosh currently. Gryder said they don't have a support airport on the way to Oshkosh currently. VanKooten asked if he wants a commitment from the Board for \$50,000.00 and Gryder said yes. VanKooten asked what Gryder's request was from the Board. Gryder said he would like the Board to think about it and figure out how to underwrite it so Darin isn't giving away the fuel. Gryder said the Warbirds of Legends Facebook page is still up if anyone wanted to take a look at that event. King asked when he needs to know an answer by. Gryder said if the chamber and Board want to get together to see if enough people can come together to make this event. Gryder thought 2-3 weeks to talk to other members of the community and then give him a call. Wilkens asked if the he had a name for the event. Gryder said it will need a name which he hasn't thought of one yet and he will set it up online and working on sponsors and lining up planes. The key is that the general public needs to attend the event.

Steven Siefken wanted to donate some photos that were taken at the airport in the past. Steven said he feels this is a great way to bring attention back into aircrafts and aviation instead of pushing people out. These kinds of events draw interest from little kids who once they grow up want a career in aviation. Wilkens asked if the Board wanted to take any action.

Public Comments. Jim Wise from the Sterling City Council asked to talk about the event. He felt this is a great economic event to bring in military aircraft. He thanked Gyder for bringing this event forward. Megan Horsman from Rock Falls Tourism asked if there are any new items they are bringing for this event and Gryder said there are a few new things. Megan said she believed the decision should be made sooner than later with big events coming up in the next weekend and getting the logo out there and flyers distributed with the other big events in the area.

Wilkens said there is a lot of potential for the event and thanked Dan Gryder for speaking today and the public for coming out to discuss the event. Wilkens said going back to the agenda, he asked the Board if they wanted to make any action at the meeting.

King made a motion that the Whiteside County Airport Board offer financial support up to a maximum \$50,000 for the event to the named in the near future on July 17-20,

2020. VanKooten asked what the purpose was to make the motion now instead of waiting until the October 10 meeting. VanKooten said he isn't against it but just waiting a few weeks to make sure we have enough discussion about it. King said she just thinks October 10 is pushing it out and she would rather get hotels booked and logo out there and flyers out. Koster said he also agrees on waiting for a few weeks and his concern is if the airport isn't putting money out there for the event, why is there a financial support for it. King said it was up to \$50,000.00 if it is needed only. King said Gryder needs a commitment to go forward with getting people lined up for the event. Gryder said he can start working behind the scenes without a formal motion. Koster said he is in favor of it but getting other municipalities to help with the cost of it and volunteerism will probably come together over time. Koster believes it can be done. After discussion, it was a general coconscious to move forward with the event but with no financial commitment from the board. King said tourism can contact the local hotels to see about availability and price. King's motion was lost for lack of a second.

| There being no further business to come before the meeting was adjourned by VanKooten, seconded by Koster at 11:19 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary