

SEC JOURNAL

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GARY JACKSON LEAVING GSP

According to GSP spokeswoman Rosylin Weston, longtime SEC-AAAE member Gary Jackson, executive director of the Greenville Spartanburg International Airport (SC) is concluding 23 years of outstanding service there and David N. Edwards, Jr., former president of the SEC-AAAE, will be his successor. Edwards has 20 years of experience in airport management.

Jackson spent 23 years with GSP for a total of

44 years in the aviation industry. Jackson was in the airline industry prior to entering the airport management business. He will step down from his current post on June 30, 2009.

In a prepared statement Weston wrote, “The airport commission is indebted to him for his vision and commitment for elevating GSP to its current position in the aviation industry.”

The airport commission chose Edwards as his successor. Edwards

will begin work July 1, 2009, according to Weston.

Edwards’ experience includes business development, properties, governmental affairs, operations and international marketing. Edwards previous experience includes stints at the Asheville Regional Airport Authority, and Florida experience at the Titusville-Cocoa Airport Authority, the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority and the Dade County Aviation Department

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DECEMBER AIRLINE PASSENGER TRAFFIC UP 42% AT LYNCHBURG REGIONAL AIRPORT

The number of air travelers flying out of Lynchburg Regional Airport increased an impressive 42% in December 2008 over December 2007 according to reports issued by airport officials. Officials contribute the increase as a direct result of a return to more competitive fares at the airport that were first introduced by US Airways at the end of July 2008. The total number of passengers handled by the airport in December amounted to 11,194, a number that translates into some 3,308 more passengers using the airport than in December 2008.

“Lynchburg Regional Airport continues to benefit from a new airline fare structure that makes us very competitive with other area airports, includ-

ing those served by the low fare carriers,” said Airport Director Mark Courtney. “In fact, Lynchburg’s lowest leisure fares to our most popular destinations have now dropped an average of 74% since June 2008.”

The December load factor, or percentage of seats filled, amounted to 81% airport wide for the month, with the Delta Connection coming in at 84% and US Airways at 79%. By contrast, last December’s airport wide load factor was 53%.

“Our traffic results are particularly impressive considering the current economic environment and airline industry trends,” added Courtney. “It just underscores how

many of the 60-65% of local passengers we were losing to other airports due to our disproportionately higher fares would return once our fares were lowered to competitive levels. At the same time, it also makes clear how much our region is currently underserved, and how well local passenger demand could support additional air service.”

Lynchburg Regional Airport continues to offer a total of six daily departures most days of the week, provided by two airlines. US Airways offers four daily departures on 37-seat and 50-seat Dash-8 aircraft to Charlotte, and Delta Connection continues its all-jet service with two daily departures on 50-seat regional jets to Atlanta on most days.

GA Business Going Great at Shenandoah Valley, VA

Despite the economic slowdown, corporate air traffic is taking off from the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport in Virginia according to SEC-AAAE executive member Greg Campbell. The airport has seen double-digit growth in corporate traffic over the past decade and there is no space left in the airport’s hangars. Now, an expansion project is underway to eliminate that and other congestion problems.

Construction crews are making

way for a new corporate aviation development at the airport. A new taxiway will connect three hangar sites to the runway and corporations can lease the sites for long terms and build hangars to suit their needs.

The \$2 million project is being paid for by the state.

Campbell says there is more room to grow to meet the demands of private aircraft owners and traffic.

“It’s the beginning of something that we think is probably going to be much larger. It’s something we’re excited about. We’re just pleased that this part of our business remains pretty steady through these economic times,” said Campbell.

One of the three hangar sites is already leased. Bridgewater-based Dynamic Aviation signed the first lease because they believe it’s a wonderful place to build a business.

NW FL REGIONAL AIRPORT EXPANDING

For a facility that has been rumored to be closing soon, the Northwest Florida Regional Airport sure is expanding its business.

The airport, which has been mired in dispute with some supporters of the new Panama City airport, held a ribbon-cutting ceremony recently for its new east side development project. The airport's new rental car service facility, fuel farm and aircraft parking area are complete.

"This is a proud moment for our airport," said Greg Donovan, Okaloosa County airports director.

The rental car service facility features a new maintenance and administration building for its five rental car companies. A new pickup and drop-off parking lot has been added to the east side of the terminal building; that will open up the old rental car parking lot to the west for additional parking.

Two new above-ground fuel tanks were also added to the airport. An

80,000-gallon gasoline tank was installed for the rental car companies, and a 50,000-gallon Jet A tank was installed for the airlines.

The airport's old fuel tanks will be dismantled and removed, but with the new tanks the airport will increase its storage space by about 20,000 gallons.

A 275-by-275-foot apron was also built to the south of the new rental car facilities that will serve as an overnight parking area for aircraft and be used for a loading area for cargo services.

Construction on the new additions took about 18 months and cost \$14.7 million. The project was funded mostly through user fees the airport collects on every vehicle rented there. Additional funds came from the Florida Department of Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Okaloosa County airports. No county tax money was used.

The current airport flap with Panama City started after Okaloosa County officials learned that a delegation of supporters for the Panama City-Bay County International Airport were seeking support from Washington, D.C., lawmakers for closing the Northwest Florida Regional Airport. Some of the Panama City supporters had previously started rumors that Eglin Air Force Base would close the airport in May 2010.

Bob Arnold, chairman of the Eglin Mission Enhancement Committee, spoke at Monday's ribbon cutting about the continued partnership Eglin has with the county.

"This is such an important event. Eglin and the Air Force have had a longstanding relationship with Okaloosa County," Arnold said. "The community can know that we appreciate the beneficial relationship we have with Okaloosa County."

RIC SUFFERING FROM ECONOMIC SETBACKS

Jon Mathiasen has had to make some tough decisions in recent months.

As the top executive at Richmond International Airport, he's cut employment 10 percent to 13 percent, clamped down on overtime and restricted purchases.

He even dropped the catered rolls and coffee for the monthly airport commission meetings.

"Traffic's down," he said. "And when traffic's down, it affects all of our sources of revenue."

Richmond travelers have benefited from

the fare competition produced by RIC's low-cost carriers, AirTran Airways and JetBlue Airways. But airport officials worry that Richmond-area passengers are not buying enough tickets on those airlines, putting their service in jeopardy.

Richmond's airport traffic declined 4 percent last year

Richmond International had budgeted operating revenue of \$42.4 million for the fiscal year that ends in June.

"We're not going to meet that," Mathiasen said. "Our net income is going to be off about 7 percent."

After AirTran came to Richmond International for the second time in 2005 and JetBlue entered the Richmond market in 2006, passenger traffic increased by 46 percent while average fares fell almost by half, airport officials said.

The discount carriers' competition helps keep fares in check, Mathiasen said.

But for JetBlue and AirTran, Mathiasen said, their riderships from Richmond are among the lowest of the cities that the two low-cost carriers serve.

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*Joe Falk, P.E.
Manager of Construction Administration
Memphis - Shelby County Airport Authority*

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Judge Says Fournet Must Pay Airport

A district court judge has ruled that the owners of the now closed Paul Fournet Air Service must pay over \$60,000 to the Lafayette (LA) Airport Commission.

Last year, the commission sued the former owners for \$60,070 alleging that they failed to pay rent, insurance premiums, utilities and other fees for the months of October, November and December of 2007. Those missed payments violated the terms of Fournet's lease agreement with the airport, according to the suit.

According to court documents, a judge has ruled that Fournet must pay \$60,694 which also includes judicial interest and court costs.

Fournet does have the option of appealing the decision.

IN MEMORIUM

Toy Manget, wife of 'Doc' Manget, a long time supporter of the Southeastern Airport Managers' Association (SAMA) and the Florida Airport Managers' Association (FAMA), recently passed away at the age of 81. Doc and Toy attended many FAMA conferences until Doc's health no longer allowed them to attend. Doc was manager of Dekalb-Peachtree Airport from 1959 to 1990, and he passed away in 2004.

Richard Garrison, husband of Jean Garrison with the W.D. Schock Company, recently passed away at the age of 42. Richard accompanied Jean to most conferences held by the SEC-AAAE and had become a friend to many of its members.

WE GET LETTERS!

Well, we got an email anyway. The following was forwarded to the Board of Directors by Mr. Martin Lange, A.A.E., Senior VP and CFO of the Sarasota Manatee Airport Authority. It is published with his consent.

"I feel compelled to write to all of you in leadership positions of the SEC-AAAE concerning the article about Michael Gobb in the current newsletter. I have a deep problem with the article even being published, but specifically, I find fault in at least two areas. First, the writer obviously copied text from several issues of the Lexington Herald-Leader without even mentioning a source. That by itself is plagiarism, but even worse is the fact that it only includes the facts (as well as a lot of opinion) that the newspaper re-

porter chose to include in his/her story. I'm sure many, if not all, of you have been very close to this type of journalistic endeavor and realize full well that the reporter picks and chooses what to include in his/her story. What is published is the one that causes the most controversy and sells the most newspapers.

Secondly, I see no reason why three pages (!) were devoted to this story. I do not personally know Mr. Gobb, but I can imagine the personal torment both he and his family are going through right now. Why did the author of this piece feel compelled to add that? The story could/should have been limited to the first three sentences of the first paragraph. He has not been formally charged with any wrongdoing, much less convicted. If, after an exhaustive investigation, he

is exonerated, how can you retract what you've just spread to the entire AAAE membership (yes, this .pdf file will likely be emailed to the four corners of the world)? Should be also expect similar treatment in next month's newsletter of the four Directors at Lexington who had similar charges leveled at them?

Unless and until you change the name of this newsletter to the "SEC Enquirer" and start offering it at grocery checkout counters, keep the content to reporting just the facts."

A full report by Kentucky State Auditor Crit Luallen citing over \$500,000 in questionable spending by members of the executive staff at Blue Grass Airport may be viewed at www.auditor.ky.gov/public/home.asp.

Ed.