

SEC JOURNAL

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <i>Ted Soliday Vindicated</i> | 1 |
| <i>Kent George goes to Lauderdale</i> | 2 |
| <i>Hutchinson Promoted</i> | 3 |
| <i>Asheville Arts</i> | 3 |
| <i>Million Air Breaks Ground</i> | 4 |
| <i>Allegiant Air Adds Service</i> | 4 |
| <i>Savannah Shows Off</i> | 4 |

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AIRPORT AUTHORITY UNANIMOUS IN CLEARING DIRECTOR OF WRONGDOING

Naples Airport Authority commissioners unanimously cleared airport director Ted Soliday of any wrongdoing at a recent special call meeting.

Even Commissioner Jim Lennane, who has had a rocky relationship with Soliday, accepted a report issued by former state Rep. Dudley Goodlette. Airport commissioners hired Goodlette to investigate allegations about Soliday's professional behavior, an allegation prompted by Naples Councilman Bill Willkomm.

Appearing before the Airport Authority, Goodlette said he interviewed at least 18 individuals surrounding charges that Soliday intimidated airline ticket agents in Tallahassee and Naples and walked away with additional frequent flyer miles. Goodlette found the allegations

baseless.

It was also noted that Soliday never passed a pocket knife off to an employee on the sterile side of the screening checkpoint so he could carry it aboard a flight.

In an email sent after the hearing, Airport Authority spokeswoman AnneElena Foster wrote, "This is the outcome we expected. It has been an exhausting experience, and a needless distraction from the mission of the airport. We appreciate the effort Mr. Goodlette made to be thorough and to consider all the information made available to him, as it further underscores Mr. Soliday's vindication. But there could have been no other outcome. However, Mr. Soliday is gratified that the Board has recognized the tremendous strain this

has placed on not only him, but his staff, and he appreciates the Board acknowledging this. His main focus now is to consider how to move forward in a way that will restore the confidence and esprit de corps Naples Airport Authority employees once enjoyed, and to get back to running the best little airport in the country."

Before the 4 to 0 vote, Naples residents turned out to verbally support Soliday and remind commissioners that they do not answer to the Naples City Council. Scott Cameron, an airport user for thirty years, called the \$30,000 investigation a "waste of money," and expressed how "incredibly fortunate" Naples was to have Mr. Ted Soliday as its airport director.

FT. LAUDERDALE SELECTS NEW AIRPORT DIRECTOR

It was about three weeks ago that Kent George, director of the Allegheny County Airport Authority, got the call asking if he was interested in running the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

Other airports had called before with similar offers, but none "as attractive as this," says George.

So, on August 28, commissioners in Broward County unanimously approved the hiring of the longtime Pittsburgh International Airport chief as the new director of the fast-growing Fort Lauderdale airport and offered him a five-year contract.

Commissioners agreed to pay the 60-year old aviation executive a base salary of \$250,000 and guarantee as much as \$440,000 in severance pay if the county chooses to fire him during his first or second year on the job. His annual pay package could top \$292,000, counting deferred compensation, health insurance subsidies and sick leave.

The commissioners were enthusiastic about the pick, but before voting, several balked at the higher severance package of \$600,000—the equivalent of two years' pay—originally offered for the first year of George's five-year con-

tract.

Commissioner Ken Keech said, "It looks awfully rich," and Commissioner John Rodstrom called it "a lot of money."

Those concerns led to a late-day compromise of a \$440,000 severance plan if anything were to happen during years one and two of the contract and the equivalent of one year's pay during years three, four and five.

As executive director of the Allegheny County Airport Authority, George currently makes an annual salary of \$215,000. He has been at the Pittsburgh airport since 1988 and also oversees the county airport in West Mifflin.

Mr. George expects to start his new job in October.

Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato said, "Kent George has been a great asset. Kent successfully led the transition of Pittsburgh International Airport from a hub dominated by US Airways to a facility served by several low-cost carriers. Today, thanks in large part to Kent's efforts, our region's business and leisure travelers enjoy low airfares and Pittsburgh Inter-

national is experiencing the highest level [of passengers beginning or ending their trips in Pittsburgh] since it opened in 1992."

Fort Lauderdale International Airport has been without a permanent airport director since October of last year. Before Mr. George was tapped, three other candidates did not work out. According to the Miami Herald, two of the previous candidates withdrew from the competition and the third was dropped from consideration after emails critical of Broward County officials found on a previous work account were obtained by the Miami Herald and turned over to the officials in the middle of the interview. (See SEC-AAAE Journal, May-June 2007).

New construction and alleviating airside and landside congestion will be among the biggest challenges facing Mr. George in his new post. A runway extension is currently on the planning table for 2012 along with a \$1.2 billion capital improvement program.

The airport expects to exceed 22 million passengers this year and it is currently home to nearly every low-fare carrier in the airline business.

Barbara Hutchinson Chosen to Run Charlottesville-Albemarle County Airport

The Charlottesville-Albemarle County Airport Authority recently announced the promotion of long-time Southeast Chapter member Barbara Hutchinson to Executive Director. Hutchinson will serve as the Airport Authority's Chief Administrative Official, managing and directing the operations and affairs of the Airport Authority and the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport. Ms. Hutchinson has been with the airport since 1985, having most recently served as its Director of Finance and Administration.

"Barbara has served as a key member of the Airport's management team and her promotion will ensure a smooth transition for the airport," said Kurt Goodwin, Airport Authority Board Chairman. "As the airport continues to grow and respond to challenges, we will require strong leadership and I am confident that we will receive this

from Barbara," said Mr. Goodwin.

Ms. Hutchinson graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree from the College of William & Mary. She is a member of the American Association of Airport Executive and has received her Certified Member (C.M.) designation. She is also a past president of the Virginia Airport Operators Council. On the local level, Barbara has served as the previous Chair of the Board of the Central Virginia Chapter of the American Red Cross and in various board capacities for the Leadership Charlottesville Alumni Association, the Albemarle-Charlottesville Human Resource Association and Altrusa International of Charlottesville.

Hutchinson says she sees a strong future for the airport as it deals with the many rigors of

a small airport competing with larger facilities within driving distance.

Hutchinson says she plans to implement a frequent parker program where regular customers can park closer to the airport terminal, and she plans to make the Charlottesville facility one of the best customer service-oriented airports around. Her air service goals include direct flights to Boston and Chicago and she plans to promote the airport's accessibility to the local community.

Hutchinson is off to a good start considering that airport enplanements have increased 5.4 percent over the last fiscal year and the airport is currently serving over 183,000 passengers annually.

Asheville Airport Joins Growing Art Movement

Most art galleries show eye-catching art in their windows to lure walk-ins. One of Asheville's newest and nicest galleries targets fly-ins.

And you don't need an airplane to visit the spiffy new space for art in the Asheville Regional Airport. The gallery is located in a high-profile area of the terminal's main lobby and it opened

this summer to showcase ten regional artists in rotating exhibitions each quarter.

The debut exhibition features paintings, sculpture and crafts by advanced University of North Carolina-Asheville undergraduates. The gallery has been such a hit that airport officials are already making plans to expand art displays to other

areas of the terminal building.

Asheville is joining a nationwide trend in artistic display. In the Carolinas, the arts get a spot and recognition at the Greenville-Spartanburg, SC; Charleston, SC; Raleigh-Durham, NC; and Charlotte, NC airports.

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Allegiant Air Adds Flights from Knoxville to Fort Lauderdale

WVLT-TV, Channel 8 in Knoxville reports that it will soon be a lot easier for Knoxville residents to get to the sunny beaches of Fort Lauderdale, Miami and West Palm Beach.

Aviation industry sources have told the TV news channel that Allegiant Air will begin service in Knoxville by the end of the year and the company plans to offer special low introductory fares on the route shortly after the announcement of service.

Allegiant Air currently serves Tampa-St. Petersburg, Orlando and Las Vegas direct from Knoxville.

In June of this year, Allegiant flights were running 95% load factors out of Knoxville.

Million Air Breaks Ground in Lafayette

The first step in construction of the controversial Million Air Terminal at Lafayette Regional Airport (LA) was taken earlier this August when officials ceremonially broke ground for the new facility.

“Any pilot in the USA flying into Lafayette for recreation or business will be coming into a state-of-the-art facility which the airport is going to be very proud of,” according to Addie Fanguy, Million Air regional vice president and general manager.

“I think it’s going to do a lot of good for general aviation,” said Airport Commission Chairman Carroll Robichaux. “It’s going to be a first-class facility.”

Three phases of construction are planned by Million Air. The first is the terminal building, the second is the remodeling of an existing hangar followed by the renovation of the Paul Fournet Air Service hangar. All three phases are expected to represent an investment of \$3 million to \$4 million, according to Fanguy.

The original proposal of \$5 million to \$6 million in improvements was scaled back following exclusive negotiations with the company.

Million Air recently opened a fabulous new facility in Charleston, SC, as well.

SAVANNAH EXPANDS TERMINAL

The Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport recently unveiled its new \$14.2 million terminal expansion that adds five new gates and 10,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space to the 10-gate terminal built in 1994.

The expansion is designed to accommodate area growth as well as the larger regional jets that are beginning to fly to Savannah.

The airport currently serves about 42 flights daily carrying an average of 6,200 daily passengers.

The airport passed the one million mark in arriving and departing passengers for the first time in 2005.

But according to Patrick Graham, A.A.E., the airport’s long-time executive director, “...the demand has always been there. And it’s growing.” According to Robert Uhrich,

director of air service development for the airport, “This couldn’t have come at a better time. We were at a point where we had no more available gate space. Part of trying to woo new airlines and air service is having the ability to accommodate their needs. You can’t bring in JetBlue or Southwest if you can’t assure them they’ll have the gate space they need.” Uhrich believes he will see JetBlue in Savannah next year.