

Small Business Advocacy Council

Draft Meeting minutes—July 16, 2009

Lt. Governor Roberts called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. and welcomed the members of the Small Business Advocacy Council (SBAC) and guests.

Lt. Governor Roberts asked for approval of the meeting minutes for the last SBAC meeting that were circulated electronically and in hard copy at the meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Lt. Governor Roberts stated that the goal of this meeting was to talk about the future of T.F Green Airport and Rhode Island's regional airports in the context of the state's small businesses. She noted that Rhode Island's airports are a key small business driver in the state. However, our airports are also facing new challenges in a down economy, which is why this meeting is particularly timely.

Lt. Governor Roberts introduced Kevin Dillon, President & CEO, Rhode Island Airport Corporation.

Kevin Dillon stated that the airline industry across the country is in

turmoil due to an eroding business and leisure market. T.F. Green is down from a year ago, but the airport is doing well compared to the pure leisure markets that are down 20-30%. T.F. Green airport typically sees a 50/50 business/leisure split. Southwest currently accounts for about 50% of airport traffic at T.F. Green, but RIAC is actively pursuing Jet Blue and Air Tran for increased competition, even though Southwest has been a great partner.

Kevin Dillon said is a firm believer that to be competitive in the future the airport must improve and expand the runway. The City of Warwick and the airport share the goal of bringing expansion to a conclusion and are trying to work through their differences. The environmental impact statement (EIS) is a federal process and the final outcome will be a federal decision. RIAC can advocate a position on expansion, but not decide. The current hope is that a final EIS will be issued in the Spring of 2010 so that construction, a 3 year project, can begin in the Summer of 2010.

Kevin Dillon stated that great progress is being made on the intermodal station and that it will likely meet the September 2010 opening date. RI DOT is working on an agreement for 8 rail trips/day with a hope for more growth in the future. The rail line will be especially useful for attracting international flights once the airport expansion is also completed.

Kevin Dillon mentioned some additional improvements at regional

airports including a new terminal at Block Island, stimulus money to resurface the airport in Newport and a new hangar within a year for the Northwest airport to encourage corporate development in the area.

Kevin Dillon also stated that a new terminal/hangar in Quonset had the possibility of taking on some additional cargo flights from T.G Green which is somewhat hampered by a voluntary midnight-6:00 a.m no flight ban due to noise concerns. The cargo business is not a major revenue generator for RIAC, but it is a major employer. If the new hangar at Quonset can be successfully marketed with the recent road and rail improvements, there is the possibility of increased cargo traffic and hence increased employment in the cargo business for Rhode Island.

The Providence Chamber of Commerce stated that they were a big supporter of the airport expansion and wanted to know if expansion would mean non-stop west coast flights.

Kevin Dillon stated that current plans would allow for 91% of long distance flights to be accommodated and that expansion would help bring non-stop flights into T.F. Green from Denver and the California market.

Richard Langseth asked a question about the EIS data and whether a shift to small regional airliners necessitated the expansion of the

runway.

Kevin Dillon stated that he believed expansion was necessary for T.F. Green to remain competitive.

Susan Santoro asked a question about small businesses bidding for airport contracts and how that process works.

Kevin Dillon and Patty Doyle answered that RIAC is governed by the same purchasing rules as other state agencies and that you can follow the links for Rhode Island Airport Corporation and Procurement from the main airport website, www.pvdairport.com, to find out about all vendor and bid opportunities with RIAC.

Lt. Governor Roberts adjourned the meeting at 11:30 and Kevin Dillon invited the meeting attendees to view the charts and maps of the proposed runway expansion and the intermodal station up close and ask any additional questions they might have.

Attendees: Tracy Baran, Steve Bartlett, Robert Boisselle, Gib Cabral, Kelly Carello, Sherri Carrera, Mike Clarkin, John Cronin, Barbara Cullen, Mark Deion, Kevin Dillon, Patty Doyle, Arthur Dwyer, Conni Harding, Mark Hayward, Paula Hopkins, Richard Langseth, Dennis McCarthy, Laura McNamara, Jerry Meyer, Don Nokes, Elizabeth Perry, Janet Raymond, Miriam Ross, Susan Santoro, Christine Smith, Judy Sullivan, Caroline Wells