

Airport still seeking carrier service

- By TERRI HARBER The Daily News
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Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport

BULLHEAD CITY — The Mohave County Airport Authority is continuing efforts to attract another carrier to provide passenger service to and from Laughlin-Bullhead International Airport.

The MCAA Board of Directors met on Tuesday, approved a \$2.4 million budget for the upcoming fiscal year and heard that cash flow was fairly consistent.

Among the various agenda items was a presentation about air service development. The MCAA has a committee that focuses on that topic.

American Airlines offered scheduled flights between here and Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport for about a year. The service was terminated because the number of flyers was below expectations.

Negotiations with two companies that could potentially provide service are occurring. Both approached the airport with proposals that would use smaller-sized aircraft than American Airlines did.

Information presented at the meeting indicated LBIA should be able to support service between it and at least one large airport.

Lance Ross, who heads the committee, reported that data from ticket pulls showed that more than 2,000 people flew daily to or from the LBIA catchment area — the geographic region for which the airport attracts travelers. However, most of them continued to use McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix and other Phoenix area airports instead of LBIA while scheduled air service was available, according to the research conducted by consultant Jack Penning, managing partner of Voltaire Aviation, Inc.

“Even a small fraction combining business and leisure travelers would exceed the necessary load factor for profitable scheduled service here,” Ross explained. “This was the first true local market ticket pull traffic data since previously scheduled service ended in 2001.”

Both of the unnamed companies propose using aircraft that would seat fewer than 10 passengers. One proposal is to fly to and from Los Angeles International Airport. The other proposition would be to fly to and from Phoenix.

A past flight service with similarly small aircraft served the airport and its “load factors were good,” Ross also noted.

Jeremy Keating, LBIA director, stressed that discussions with both companies are ongoing so their identities aren’t being made public.

The process of securing a new flight service also requires a significant amount of money for the company should usage be lower than anticipated.

Sign replacement

Plans for a new sign to be displayed outside the main terminal building at LBIA are in the works. The sign with red and black lettering has been on the building for about 30 years. Those involved with the airport decided it was time for an update so it looked like other newer airport signage, Keating said.

This terminal sign is slated to acknowledge long-time airport volunteer John R. Hastings, a former president of the LBIA’s board of directors who died last year.

A few people at the meeting didn’t want to have Hastings’ name on the sign because they didn’t like him. Others said his many years spent on various efforts to improve the airport, such as

traveling at his own expense to meet with American Airlines officials to bring them to LBIA, far outweighed any character flaws.

“John was probably not a perfect individual, but John’s heart and soul are in this airport,” said Board President Jim Zaborsky. “John was the most devoted person I ever knew.”

The board agreed and voted to move forward with the signage. Board member Arden Lauxman voted against the proposal because he didn’t see it in the new airport budget.

Some board members agreed that the airport’s name should be larger than Hasting’s name, as was suggested by board member Jena Morga.

The sign isn’t going to be a memorial but “is for John Hastings’ contributions,” said board member Steve Willett. “The man worked very hard for the airport.”

Money for the sign will come from donors, though a couple of people thought the airport should contribute a portion of the cost, which is estimated to be \$20,000. One of those people was Keating, who considered Hastings “a mentor.”

Good inspection

Keating also reported that LBIA again received a clean result from the FAA’s Part 139 certification.

“Four years in a row,” he noted. “It shows how safe of an airport we are.”