



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**AVIATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FORT LAUDERDALE EXECUTIVE AIRPORT
RED TAILS CONFERENCE ROOM
6000 NW 21 AVENUE, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026 – 1:30 P.M.**

Board Members	Attendance	Cumulative Attendance 7/2025 - 6/2026	
		Present	Absent
William Gilbert, Chair	P	5	0
David Cooper, Vice Chair	P	3	2
Olivia Anderson	P	1	2
David Ash	P	3	2
Louis Gavin	P	4	1
Kelly Gordon	P	4	1
Dr. Jeff Johnson	P	4	1
Robert Laughlin	P	4	1
John Vratsinas	P	3	2
Barry Zimmerman	P	2	0
Non-Voting			
Commissioner Marlon Bolton, City of Tamarac (<i>Arrived 1:43 p.m.</i>)	P	4	1
Narciso Cherson, City of Oakland Park	P	5	0

Airport/City Staff

John C. Herbst, Vice Mayor/Commissioner
 Rickelle Williams, City Manager
 Christopher Cooper, Deputy City Manager
 Shari McCartney, City Attorney (*Via Zoom*)
 Peter Kirsch, Kaplan Kirsch LLP (*Via Zoom*)
 Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
 Marco Hausy, Senior Assistant City Auditor
 Jeffrey Modarelli, Commission Assistant Coordinator - District 1
 Rufus A. James, Airport Director
 Carlton M. Harrison, Assistant Airport Director
 Chelsea Jones Finley, Division Manager – Airport Administration
 Patrick Donnelly, Division Manager – Airport Operations
 Khant Myat, Airport Engineer
 Angelia Basto, Senior Financial Administrator
 Miguel Laca, Financial Administrator
 Linda Blanco, Senior Administrative Assistant
 Katharine Lee, Airport Projects Support

Others

Sabina Chaudhry, American Infrastructure Development
 Stephen Martin, AOPA
 Thomas Rowe, Atlantic Aviation

Nicholas Leone, Atkins Réalis
Don Champion, Banyan Air
Jose Blanco, CHA Consulting
Stephanie Lopez, CHA Consulting
Pat Frawley, Cordella Court
Marc Fermanian, CRJ & Associates
Annya Grom, Garver
Cody Parham, Garver
Dean Koggan, KEITH
Kevin Scott, Kimley-Horn and Associates
Suzanne Jacob, Lofts of Palm Aire
Deb Puia, Lofts of Palm Aire
Anne van den Berg, Marchena & Graham
Cecelia Linley, Milestone Reporting
Nina Perez, Sheltair Aviation
Tony Sherbert, Sheltair Aviation
Francisco Gonzalez, Sky Harbour
Neil Szymczak, Sky Harbour
Judith Stern, Stern Consulting
Alejandro Assor, W Aviation
Hugo Cortes, W Aviation
Ignacio Martinez, W Aviation
Steven Wherry, Wherry Law
Karen Cruitt, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to City Commission

Motion by Chair Gilbert, seconded by Mr. Zimmerman, for this Board to vote on communicating to the City Commission that transaction fees should not be part of the lease policy. In a roll vote, the Motion passed unanimously. (10-0)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gilbert called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Roll was called, and a quorum was determined to be present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

• January 22, 2026 Minutes

Motion made by Mr. Zimmerman, seconded by Vice Chair Cooper, to approve the minutes of the January 22, 2026, meeting as presented. In a voice vote, the **Motion** passed unanimously. (10-0)

VOTING ITEMS

1. FDOT PTGA for Construction of Runway 9 Parallel Taxiways Extension - \$3,000,000

Mr. Khant Myat, Airport Engineer, provided the project overview. He noted that the estimated construction cost is \$6,108,100 and recommended approving the amendment and accepting \$3,000,000 in grant funding from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

Motion made by Mr. Gavin, seconded by Mr. Ash, to approve the Public Transportation Grant Agreement Amendment and accept \$3,000,000 in grant funding from the Florida Department of Transportation for construction of the Runway 9 Parallel Taxiways Extension Project. In a voice vote, the **Motion** passed unanimously. (10-0)

2. FDOT PTGA for Construction of Runway 27 Bypass Taxiway and Run-Up Area Relocation Project - \$113,362

Mr. Myat provided the project overview. He noted that the estimated construction cost is \$4,534,466 and recommended accepting FDOT grant funding in the amount of \$113,362.

Motion made by Vice Chair Cooper, seconded by Mr. Ash, to approve the Public Transportation Grant Agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation in the amount of \$113,362 for construction of the Runway 27 Bypass Taxiway and Run-up Area Relocation Project. In a voice vote, the **Motion** passed unanimously. (10-0)

3. Renaming of FXE Administration Building to “William H. Crouch Airport Administration Building.”

Mr. Rufus James, Airport Director, presented the proposal and recommended approval to honor the extraordinary service, visionary leadership and lifelong dedication to public service of Mr. William H. Crouch, who was under hospice care at the time.

Motion made by Mr. Vratsinas, seconded by Mr. Gordon, to approve the renaming the Airport Administration Building the “William H. Crouch Airport Administration Building” in recognition of Mr. William H. Crouch’s exceptional service and contributions to the Airport and the aviation community. In a voice vote, the **Motion** passed unanimously. (10-0)

Mr. James clarified that the proposal would be presented to the Parks and Recreation Department prior to going before the City Commission.

UPDATE ITEMS

A. Noise Compatibility Program

Mr. Patrick Donnelly, Division Manager - Airport Operations, shared the January 2026 report. In January, there were 1,759 jet departures, with 915 of those from Runway 9. Three departures

were recorded over the 80-decibel threshold at Noise Monitor 2, none of which generated a noise submission. There were a total of 31 noise inquiries from 10 households.

B. Development and Construction

I. FXE Project Status Update

Mr. Donnelly reported that the master permit for the Aviation Equipment & Service (AES) Facility Expansion Project had been issued; he anticipated that work would commence March 2, 2026.

Mr. Donnelly noted that the Runway 13-31 Pavement Sealing Project was delayed due to weather; he anticipated that work would begin on March 6, 2026.

C. Arrearages

Mr. James advised there were no arrearages to report.

D. Communications to the City Commission

None

E. Other Items

Chair Gilbert introduced Olivia Anderson as the newest member of the Board.

I. Presentation of the Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport's (FXE) History, Economic Impact, Revenue, Capital Improvement Plan, and Leasing Policy

Motion by Mr. Zimmerman, seconded by Mr. Gordon, for the City Attorney, Shari McCartney, and Outside Counsel, Peter Kirsch of Kaplan Kirsch, to participate in the meeting via Zoom. In a voice vote, the **Motion** passed unanimously. (10-0)

Mr. Carlton Harrison, Assistant Airport Director, provided the presentation. Key points included the following: The Airport administers 37 leases [17 aviation and 20 non-aviation] that are expected to contribute approximately \$11.5 million in revenue towards the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget of \$13.8 million. Airport expenses were estimated at \$10.3 million. The Capital expenditure is budgeted at \$15.8 million, of which \$12.3 million is grant funding. The Five-Year Community Investment Plan (CIP) projected \$45 million for Airport projects, with an estimated \$36 million to \$37 million funded through grants. The Airport would need to match just under \$9 million to achieve those grant obligations.

Mr. Harrison presented transaction or opportunity fees charged by other Florida airports to their tenants. He then opened the topic for discussion to obtain recommendations and feedback from the Board.

In his capacity as Outside Counsel, Mr. Peter Kirsch of Kaplan Kirsch provided national context; he stated that while leasing policies are not required, they were strongly encouraged as a best practice at all airports because they would ensure tenant equity as required by the grant assurances. He also stated that transfer fees are an industry standard and noted that the proposed amount is modest.

Motion by Mr. Vratsinas that a formal stakeholder group be established to study the lease policy development and transaction fees that we have been discussing, and that any final decisions or policy adoptions are presented to the City Commission. The group should include members of this Advisory Board, prime aviation tenants on the field, and sub-tenants on the field of aviation, prime non-aviation tenants, and FXE staff. The **Motion** failed for lack of a second.

City Attorney Shari McCartney noted that the role of the Board was to make recommendations, subject to the approval of the City Commission.

Mr. Vratsinas further explained the rationale for his motion. At the suggestion of Chair Gilbert, he and several members agreed to “table” his Motion for discussion later in the meeting.

Mr. Harrison clarified that while the fund balance was just over \$20 million, the Airport would need to pursue grant funding to sustain the present strong position documented in the recent Stantec study. He highlighted that the study was based on the expectation that grant funding would continue at current levels. He clarified that the study was projected through 2035 and did not include the proposed fees.

Vice Mayor John Herbst stated that the issue was before this Board at his request after he learned a transaction fee was included in two leases and the City Commission had not been apprised. He emphasized that new revenue streams are policy decisions under the purview of the City Commission and expressed concerns about the financial justification and apparent lack of involvement in the decision by Airport tenants. Vice Mayor Herbst stressed the importance of treating everyone equitably “across the board,” and that it was important to look at this from a policy perspective. He was in favor of a stakeholder group and did not agree that the proposed fee was ‘modest.’ Vice Mayor Herbst emphasized that it was “critical” to engage all the stakeholders and requested that Members take the time for due diligence to ensure success for all parties prior to providing their feedback to the Commission.

Rickelle Williams, City Manager, acknowledged that while tenant transactions were pending and a timely response was needed, the Stantec report had just been released. She encouraged Members to take the time to review and incorporate the stakeholder feedback prior to sending their recommendation to the Commission. Chair Gilbert was in favor of Ms. Williams suggestion and asked the Board to have their recommendations within the next 90 days.

Vice Chair Cooper seconded the **Motion** made earlier by Mr. Vratsinas to facilitate additional discussion.

Mr. Vratsinas distributed and then read a printed statement addressed to Mayor Dean Trantalis, the City Commission, the Aviation Advisory Board (AAB), and executive staff at FXE. Mr. Vratsinas stated that he had written the statement as a sub-tenant operating an aviation-related business at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, and a current member of the AAB. In the statement, which is part of the public record, he expressed concern that the proposed lease fees and related policies at FXE would impose a substantial financial burden on Airport tenants and their sub-tenants and referenced his Motion that the AAB establish a stakeholder group for inclusive collaboration prior to communicating with the City Commission.

Mr. Laughlin noted that, unrelated to the Motion, he had concerns that transaction fees would not offset a potential reduction in future grant funding. In his opinion, charging more for leases would be a more predictable source of revenue; he was opposed to charging a percentage of the transaction, or revenue of the company involved.

Mr. Gavin questioned the urgency of making a decision on this matter. During the discussion that followed, Mr. James clarified that FXE was in lease negotiation with one tenant with multiple leases; that prime tenant was Sheltair. He shared that subsequent to presenting the 2023 draft leasing policy, through engagement with outside counsel and other airports, it was evident that more should be incorporated into the policy. Feedback from Airport tenants had been solicited then provided to inside counsel, who engaged with outside counsel, for consideration regarding those fees and verbiage. Mr. James reiterated that Member feedback on the general leasing policy was needed and clarified that ground rent for aeronautical and non-aeronautical would be at fair market value.

The motion tabled earlier in the meeting was restated by Mr. Vratsinas:

Motion by Mr. Vratsinas, seconded by Vice Chair Cooper, to create a formal stakeholder group to study the leasing policy detail and make recommendations to this Board that can be recommended to the City Commission. In a roll vote, the **Motion** passed with nine votes in favor; Mr. Zimmerman abstained. (9-0-1)

Motion by Chair Gilbert, seconded by Mr. Zimmerman, for this Board to vote on communicating to the City Commission that transaction fees should not be part of the lease policy. In a roll vote, the **Motion** passed unanimously. (10-0)

The need for both motions was debated. City Attorney McCartney offered that the Motion to create a committee to review all aspects of the policy was independent of the second Motion which would communicate that the Board did not like the fee.

Vice Mayor Herbst indicated this would now go the City Commission for action, and suggested that the Board await the outcome to determine next steps.

II. Public Comments

Don Campion, Banyan Air, stated that he had been at this Airport for 47 years and noted that the policy changes being discussed had not been brought before the tenants that built and invested heavily in Airport infrastructure. He highlighted the breadth of services and important

contributions made by Banyan in partnership with Sheltair, and that the Banyan-Sheltair complex was ranked number one in the country by the Professional Pilot Survey; it was consistently in the top five of 3,000 airports nationwide. Mr. Campion emphasized that they accounted for over 1,000 jobs; spend over \$500,000 per year to attract customers and said a fee would be very prohibitive. He cited their \$35 million investment, and felt this issue needed much more discussion.

Neil Szymczak, Senior Vice President of Development, Sky Harbour Group, indicated that his company has had an interest in developing at FXE for several years. He acknowledged direct negotiations with existing tenants that wished to extend their leases and expressed an interest in seeing the new leasing policy include an RFP process so that other “non-income” entities can have an opportunity to bid and develop at the Airport. He highlighted the unique aspects of their home-based operation which was publicly traded and ready to deploy over \$400 million in cash. He expressed a desire to be at FXE.

Steven Wherry, Wherry Law, acknowledged that the 2023 draft leasing policy was a very dense and complicated document with a lot of subtleties which required careful consideration. He suggested the Board consider forming a subcommittee to continually evaluate it as Airport needs change. In his view, a transfer fee for new leases would not be a fair policy as that would be uneven in its application. Mr. Wherry stated that he did not represent Sheltair but felt that more than three years to get their lease renewed was a long time. It was his hope that the process implemented would not force other Airport users to continue waiting to have certainty.

Tony Sherbert, Sheltair Aviation, stated his appreciation for the conversation so far. He highlighted that Sheltair, one of the largest family-owned and operated FBO networks in the country, had been developing real estate at the Airport for decades and was embedded in the community. He noted that they are the longest standing, continuously operated prime lessee, and had invested tens of millions of dollars in developing hangars, FBO terminals, office buildings in addition to contributing countless dollars to the Fort Lauderdale economy. Mr. Sherbert noted that they started the process three years ago; if the transaction fee issue had been resolved two years ago, some of the revenue discussed would already have been flowing to the Airport given their investment of “tens of millions of dollars” in additional square footage and terms already agreed to. He was hopeful for an expedient resolution, as funds are ready to be invested.

Ignacio Martinez, W Aviation, stated that they were one of the FBO tenants looking to expand their lease by investing another \$8 million to \$9 million in the Airport. He felt that additional taxes would hinder efforts to continue expanding here on existing property, given that no more land was available.

Suzanne Jacob, Lofts of Palm Aire Village, acknowledged that this will be problematic in many ways. She did not think the Board should do it, and felt it was necessary to protect the existing tenants that have invested for decades in the Airport. Ms. Jacob stated that it would be an unfair tax, and the leases have been problematic for 30 years. She was opposed to Sky Harbour over

allowing existing tenants to expand. She referenced the runway expansion and their HOA meeting on March 12, 2026, and encouraged Members to protect current tenants.

Chair Gilbert expressed appreciation to the business owners present for their investment in the Airport and time taken to attend the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING DATE: Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours before the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached.