



## LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

**LTC No: 26-151**

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission  
**FROM:** Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*  
**DATE:** May 15, 2026  
**SUBJECT: Retirement of Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport Director**

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The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to inform the City Commission of the retirement of Fort Lauderdale Executive (FXE) Airport Director Rufus James, effective August 10, 2026.

Rufus James began his nearly twenty-seven (27)-year career with the City as FXE's Airport Operations Aide in August 1999. During his time with FXE, he has served as Airport Operations Supervisor (2007 – 2012), Assistant Airport Manager (2012 – 2014), Acting Airport Manager (2014 – 2015), Airport Manager (2015 – 2021), and Airport Director (2021 – Present). James holds a Master of Business Administration from Florida Atlantic University and a bachelor's degree in aviation management from the University of New Haven.

As Airport Director, Rufus James has been responsible for the operations and management of FXE, which has an economic impact of nearly 4 billion dollars making FXE the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) ranked airport in terms of economic impact in Florida.

During his tenure as Airport Director, James has been instrumental in introducing and leading several projects, initiatives, and improvements that elevate the safety and enhance the marketability of FXE including, but not limited to:

- Updated and completed the Airport Master Plan that outlines long-term development for the airport and provides a twenty (20)-year outlook that considers the needs of airport tenants, aviation professionals, and residents;
- Completed construction of the Western Perimeter Loop Road project to enhance safety for the airport;
- Renovated and expanded the Airport Administration Building;
- Received more than sixty-three (63) million dollars in state and federal grants to support the airport;
- Completed the Runway 9-27 pavement rehabilitation project and furthered the Runway 9-27 extension project;

- Led the Uptown 5K on the Runway event that has raised more than \$500,000 since 2019 for Trustbridge Hospice; and
- Furthered aviation education efforts through Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Broward College, Fort Lauderdale High School, Atlantic Technical College, and the Barrington Irving Technical Training School.

Rufus James has also been recognized for his contributions to the aviation industry and service to the community with the following awards:

- Airport Executive of the Year by the Southeast Chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives (SEC-AAAE);
- Fort Lauderdale Alliance Leadership Award;
- Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Champion Award for Leadership and Community Service; and
- Black Excellence Award Florida Panthers Honoree.

James is a proud veteran of the United States Army. He earned a Master of Business Administration from Florida Atlantic University and a bachelor's degree in Aviation Management from the University of New Haven. In addition to his track record of public service, Rufus is extremely proud of his family including his wife and two (2) sons, who attended the United States Military Academy and serve as Officers in the United States Army.

As James transitions into retirement, the Airport Director position will be evaluated, and a path forward will be determined. Further details will be shared with the City Commission and staff as they become available.

Please join me in thanking Rufus James for his service and congratulating him on his upcoming next chapter.

c: Shari L. McCartney, City Attorney  
David R. Soloman, City Clerk  
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor  
City Manager's Office  
Department Directors