

Bolivar airport close to breaking even on operational expenses

Debt service, legal expenses give fund a negative balance

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When comparing revenue from the Bolivar Municipal Airport to operational expenses, the airport is close to breaking even through July 31, according to a balance sheet that was reviewed during the Airport Advisory Committee meeting Tuesday.

The balance sheet shows revenue of \$66,930 and expenses of \$101,573 in the airport fund, leaving an excess of \$34,643 in expenditures compared to revenue.

But Ron Mersch, Bolivar city administrator, said that account includes \$33,500 worth of loan payments for the former Phillips building the city purchased on property next to the airport. Mersch said the building was purchased to protect that property for the airport, which he said makes the airport fund the most logical fund from which to pay for it.

Expenses also include about \$7,000 of legal expenses plus expenses for repairing lightning damage to the runway lighting system that will be reimbursed by the city's insurance company.

"It [the airport] is not costing the city any kind of serious money," Mersch said.

Committee members Steve Marshall, Brian Burchett, Jim Shawley, Jim Walter and Andy Spear were present.

Skydiving business

Mersch asked committee members for their input regarding allowing a skydiving business to operate from the airport.

"I'm looking for guidance from you because I don't want to create any problems for you," he said.

After some discussion regarding where skydivers would be dropped and the communication that would need to take place between pilots, no committee members expressed any concerns about such a business.

"To me it's a no-brainer," Walter said. "They do it everywhere. Why not do it here?"

Submitted for review

Three items were presented for committee members to review for discussion at the September committee meeting.

- Drafts of two manuals: Minimum Standards Required for Aviation Services and Policies and Procedures at the Bolivar Airport.
- A proposal from Marshall of actions the committee could recommend to the Board of Aldermen. The proposal includes opening the airport building for organizations to meet in the common area, removing restaurant fixtures and closing the restaurant permanently, charging rent to the fixed-based operator since it is a for-profit venture, increasing the city's share of jet fuel sales from 5 percent to 15 percent, have the city set fuel prices for one year and eliminating the service contract with the FBO.

"I would like for members to go over this in the next month," Marshall said. "These are just proposals."

- A letter submitted to the committee by Kelly Grant of Morrisville. Grant says the Bolivar city leadership has caused a steady decline in aircraft operations since the fall of 2007 and the board of aldermen should vote to end the city's contract with the current FBO and allow the Airport Advisory Committee to seek a replacement.

"I would prefer we make no comment on that until the committee has a chance to review it," Marshall said after reading the letter.

The committee will meet at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 28, at Bolivar City Hall.