

**Meeting Notes**

Reynolds, Smith and Hills, Inc.

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**Date of Meeting:** February 16, 2005

**Location:** City Hall, Council Chamber St. Marys, Georgia

**Subject:** Community Advisory Committee Meeting

**In Attendance**

- Deborah Hase, Mayor, St. Marys
- Bill Shanahan, City Manager, St. Marys
- Mark McAnaw – Woodbine City Council
- W. Burford Clark – Woodbine, Mayor
- Walt Yourstone – Camden Partnership
- Ed Ratigan - GDOT
- Mike McKinnon – CO, Kings Bay Naval Base
- Bob Noble – Executive Director (Joint Development Authority)
- Greg Moore – St. Mary Airport Authority
- Richard Russell – St. Marys Airport Authority
- Greg Bird – Bird Aviation
- Michael Moore – RS&H
- Tim Deuerling – RS&H
- Bill Sandifer – RS&H
- Russ Owen – RS&H

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The meeting began at 6:05 PM on Wednesday February 16, 2005. The following is a summary of the meeting that took place with the members of the Community Advisory Committee for the Airport Feasibility & Site Selection Study for the City of St. Marys. The primary purpose of the meeting was to review and discuss the Site recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee as the preferred alternative, and also to discuss possible governance issues for the relocated airport. Furthermore, this meeting was intended to receive comments from the Committee on the Draft Report.

The meeting began with an introduction by all Committee members in attendance. Mr. Sandifer gave a brief overview of Technical Advisory's Committee's recommendation for the preferred alternative (i.e., Site 1) and the reasoning behind their recommendation. Mr. Sandifer explained that there are potential negative environmental impacts associated with the Site, but the positive impacts include proximity to interstate highway access, potential rail access, future expansion possibility, proximity to future population centers, compatibility with surrounding land uses, and the potential for a property donation from the landowner. Due to the possible environmental constraints, RS&H examined two different runway configurations for development. There was considerable discussion involving the differences in the two runway configurations for Site 1. Mr. Sandifer explained that these different configurations were examined with the intent of

minimizing the environmental impacts as much as possible. However, the minimization of environmental impacts may necessitate increased construction costs, due to the potential for a two-runway configuration (to meet wind coverage recommendations). Mr. Sandifer also explained the difference in cost between the two configurations. It was discussed that the land area surrounding the Site was currently compatible with the proposed use as an airport, but that the opportunity exists to re-examine the long-term zoning/land use of the entire area to ensure that as the airport grows, it remains compatible with the community. Finally, Mr. Sandifer suggested that RS&H will need to talk to the appropriate state and federal agencies to discuss the mitigation strategies that will need to be used in order to develop an airport on Site 1.

As it related to overall governance, Mr. Sandifer explained that the St. Marys City Attorney, as well as analysis conducted by RS&H, revealed that that JDA could own and develop the airport, but it would be required to lease the airport to a different operating entity. Mr. Noble agreed with that finding. This led to discussions about the other possibilities of governance for the relocated airport. Mr. Sandifer explained the advantages/disadvantages of all forms of airport governance (city, county, city/county, independent authority, private). It was agreed that the independent authority model, whether created as a regional authority, or a local authority, is the governance option of choice. Mayor Clark stated that he believes that the county must be involved with this project, due to the tax base, the zoning, and the resources available to the County. Mr. Sandifer stated that it would take a long time before the airport would potentially be self-sustaining. Mr. Russell also suggested that an independent authority should be governing the airport. Furthermore, he stated that this process, either an independent authority, city/county, county governance must be established immediately, due to the long process of getting approval by the local governments for creation of said airport government.

Mr. Noble discussed the concept of a "Regional" airport and questioned what that entailed from a legal perspective. Mr. Ratigan answered that really it is just a designator and that there are no clear standards for designating an airport as a "regional airport." Mayor Hase stated that she had been contacted as early as a month ago by a bordering county about the concept of a Regional Airport. All agreed that if other counties would like to contribute to the process of relocating the airport they would need a voice in the airport governance and other airport issues. It is believed that currently the airport will remain a local (not regionalized) entity.

Captain McKinnon brought up the issue of expansion of Site 1 with regard to possible military missions being conducted at the airport. He also questioned the expansion of the airport if need be, for military purposes. Mr. Sandifer explained that for the most part in Configuration "A", the airport can be expanded to the southwest and would more than likely need to relocate a portion of US 17. With regard to airport facilities, in order for the airport to serve any military capabilities (transport planes, fuelers, etc.), the airport would potentially need added runway length, width, strength, taxiway separation as well as other improvements. Currently, the airport will be able to handle most corporate aircraft. Configuration "B" will allow for airport (runway) expansion without having to relocate US 17.

Mr. Yourstone, explained that the Site Selection and Feasibility Study has 3 parts: Economic, Financial and Technical. In regards to Economic, Site 1 is recommended due to access, expandability, and zoning/land use compatibility. Financial, Site 1 is

recommended due to land donation, and Technical is a wash between all three sites. So, in Mr. Yourstone's estimation, Site 1 is the realistic and logical choice for the relocation of the airport. Mr. Sandifer noted that a configuration has not been selected due to the upcoming meetings with the appropriate environmental agencies.

Mr. Sandifer explained that the next steps in the process will include the finalizing the Draft Report, and conducting various follow-up meetings with certain agencies. Following completion of the final draft report, RS&H will present the report and recommendations to the St. Marys City Council for approval. Mr. Sandifer also discussed the fact that a Public Information Workshop needed to be scheduled to allow the public at large the opportunity to review/comment on project efforts, but the time and date for this meeting should be scheduled after the City Council has an opportunity to review the Draft Report. This workshop will help inform and educate the public about the airport and will add validity for the project to the appropriate agencies. After that has been completed, and a decision is made to move forward with the project, the formal planning process will begin with preparation of an Airport Master Plan/Airport Layout Plan and an Environmental Assessment. Mr. Sandifer also explained that since there is not a governance body set up for the future airport, the City of St. Marys will most likely need to continue to act as sponsor for the next series of FAA/GDOT grants in order to produce the Master Plan and Environmental assessment documentation. Once the formal planning process is completed, it is expected that the airport governance body will be created and in a position to act as airport sponsor and execute the future grants in regards to the construction of the airport. Finally, there will need to be a formalized agreement with the property owner of the Site for the potential donation, in order for the project to continue.

Mr. Sandifer asked for comments about the Draft Report within a week in order to incorporate the comments and provide a comprehensive Final Draft before the first City Council meeting in March. Some comments were taken from the Committee and it was suggested that an executive summary will need to be provided as well as a matrix for the three sites for comparison purposes. Also, the Mayor would like an economic impact table to be created for easy reference. Mayor Hase also suggested that she would like to receive an executive summary before her meetings in Washington D.C. with Representative. Kingston.

Mr. Sandifer thanked everyone for attending the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Meeting Notes by Owen