



**Meeting Notes**

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

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

**Subject:** Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

**In Attendance**

- Deborah Hase – Mayor, St. Marys
- Bobby Marr – St. Marys
- Bill Shanahan – St. Marys
- Max Tinsley – St. Marys
- David Smith – KBAY 106 Radio
- Paul Smith – CGRDC
- Walt Natzic – Camden Partnership
- Jeff Stanford – St. Marys Aviation
- Greg Moore – St. Marys Airport Authority
- Richard Russell – St. Marys Airport Authority
- Len Scullion – CH2M Hill, Vice President
- L J Williams – St. Marys Council
- Gwen Mungin – Kingsland, City Manager
- Michael Moore – RS&H
- Tim Deuerling – RS&H
- Bill Sandifer – RS&H
- Russ Owen – RS&H

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The meeting began at 4:20 PM on Wednesday February 16, 2005. The following is a summary of the meeting that took place with the members of the Technical Advisory Committee for the Airport Feasibility & Site Selection Study for the City of St. Marys. The primary purpose of the meeting was to review in detail the analysis conducted for the final three sites, and discuss with each committee a recommendation for a replacement site. In addition, the meeting was also intended to solicit input from each committee concerning comments on the Draft Report.

Mr. Sandifer gave a brief summary of the three final sites. He explained the process of narrowing the study area to the final three sites and summarized the amount of land that would need to be acquired for the replacement airport. Mr. Sandifer then discussed each site on its own merits. Site 1 had the most environmental challenges; excellent access to both US 17 and I-95; good potential for future rail access; future noise impacts would be contained entirely with the proposed airport boundary; 95% wind coverage was possible with a single runway in a 5/23 orientation, and this site has the potential to be donated by the current property owner. Due to the potential environmental impacts

associated with this Site, two separate configurations were developed for airfield development. Configuration "A" is a single runway configuration (as discussed above) and would allow for future expansion of the runway/taxiway system to the southwest. Configuration "B" is a two-runway configuration, with a different runway orientation to minimize environmental impacts, and is located further south on the Site. The reason for two runways under Configuration "B" is to provide for the appropriate wind coverage. Configuration "B" requires an increase in the land needed for the airport, but decreases the mitigation necessary due to potential environmental impacts. Noise impacts for this configuration will also be predominantly on airport property. A discussion ensued about access roads to the airport, and Mr. Sandifer suggested that access roads to either airport configuration can be developed from US 17 or Billyville Rd. and that this could propel a future interchange with I-95 at Billyville Rd.

Site 3 was discussed and was shown to have good ground access and utility access, no rail access and residential neighborhoods around the airport. Mr. Sandifer explained that there are fewer environmental impacts on this site, but in regards to all sites, there will have to be negotiations for mitigations with all the appropriate agencies (Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR), US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE), Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS)).

Site 9 had the least amount of environmental impacts, but had airspace constraints due to the height of the radio tower(s) located 2-3 miles north/northwest of the site. It was pointed out that all three sites have potential airspace issues with cell/radio towers, which would need further analysis by FAA, but Site 9 had potential significant impacts. It was asked by the Committee if the location of the tower in relation to Site 9 would make development of this site infeasible. Mr. Sandifer agreed with the committee that these tower(s) would all but eliminate Site 9 from consideration, unless the tower can be relocated.

After further discussion concerning the three sites, the committee recommended that Site 1 be identified as the preferred alternative for the relocation of St. Marys Airport. It is important to note that neither configuration has been recommended for the Site at this time, and will be made after discussions with the appropriate environmental agencies.

Mr. Sandifer discussed with the Committee that the value of the land for Site 1, if the donation occurs, can be used for an "in-kind cost" and be considered the local contribution to the project. Many committee members suggested that Site 1 offers the least money needed locally to proceed with the project. Mr. Scullion stated that Site 1 offers the best site for future commercial and industrial development with airport development for the county. Mr. Scullion also stated that land use and zoning must be accounted for and that the county and RS&H should start looking at the land planning and land uses around the airport in order to protect and develop the area around the site accordingly. Mayor Hase echoed those sentiments and also stated that more government entities must be involved in this project and to look for possible land uses around the airport for generating revenues.

There was a discussion about self-sustainability of the airport. Mr. Sandifer explained that many GA airports receive a government subsidy, mostly by the local city or county government. This airport will probably not be able to be self-sustaining for some time in the future. It was explained that at the current airport location, the City of St. Marys provides services such as mowing, periodic maintenance, and other small projects. Mr.

Russell stated that for any Capital Improvement Project the Airport Authority relies on the City for funds or grants through the federal or state funding systems. Mr. Sandifer stated, that in all likelihood the future location of the airport will need to be backed by some local government and it would probably not be feasible that the City of St. Marys to continue to provide in-kind services if the airport is constructed at Site 1.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Sandifer discussed briefly the DRI (Development of Regional Impact) process in Georgia. It was agreed that the threshold for compliance with the DRI will be more than likely the approval of the Airport Master Plan and Environmental Assessment. The DRI process will include a 30-day public forum and a public workshop discussing the project.

The next steps in the process will include preparation of the final draft report of the Site Selection and Feasibility Study. RS&H will then present the final draft report and recommendations to the St. Marys City Council for discussion, consideration and eventual approval. After the City Council has had a chance to review the draft report, a public workshop will be conducted. Mr. Sandifer also discussed the fact that a Public Information Workshop would 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 report. This workshop will help inform and educate the public about the airport and will add validity to the review process. A final report will then be prepared and submitted to FAA/GDOT. After this process has been completed and assuming the project continues, the formal planning process will begin with development of an Airport Master Plan/Airport Layout Plan and an Environmental Assessment. Finally, if Site 1 is the final selection, a formalized agreement with the property owner should be considered to ensure future donation of the property, and to allow the project to continue. Mayor Hase as well as Mr. Sandifer explained that the funding for the development of the airport has been submitted to FAA and federal elected officials, and that no one will know about the future of the project until the City accepts the grants to continue with the project. Furthermore the Mayor stated that she feels that there is very little downside to moving the airport and that everyone should continue to sell the project and to keep the project moving. Mr. Sandifer mentioned that he would like to visit the FAA/GDOT in Atlanta to seek their input on the draft report, and the Mayor indicated she would like to be included in the meetings.

Comments about the Draft Report were taken from the committee and it was suggested that an executive summary 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 6:30 PM.