

New Air Board supports airport-speedway project

Written by

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The newly appointed Board of Aviation Commissioners (BOAC) for the Salem Municipal Airport met in regular session on Monday, April 27 with all members present. Minutes of previous meetings and all claims were approved unanimously.

As the first item of business, BOAC Attorney Larry Medlock informed the members that they must elect officers, the results of which were: President, Ronny Floyd; Vice-President, Bob Woodward; Secretary/Treasurer, Blaine Shrum. The other two members are Marc Dewees and Danny Habermel. Once the meeting was turned over to Floyd, the BOAC appointed Medlock as its attorney.

Salem Mayor David Bower addressed the BOAC and the audience by saying that a meeting took place between Federal Aviation Administration representatives, himself, representatives of the Salem Common Council and two members of the BOAC in Chicago on Friday April 17. According to Bower, an understanding now exists that will slow down the process of building the new airport facility. Bower also introduced Owen Thompson, owner of the Salem Speedway, saying that a verbal agreement has been worked out between the two for Thompson to lease the existing airport facility for drag racing and the revenue to be used as the local matching funds (estimated at \$800,000) for the new airport construction. Thompson confirmed Bower's comments and acknowledged that a meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 30, to develop the written agreement for the lease and option-to-purchase.

Admitting that they were still attempting to "get up to speed" on the new airport-speedway project, all the members of the BOAC voiced their support for the project and touting its positive economic impact on Salem and Washington County. Floyd emphasized the importance of this project by saying that the construction of the new airport and the increased activities of the speedway will mean jobs for Washington County.

After dealing with routine business matters, Floyd opened up the meeting to public questions and comments. One comment called into question potential conflict-of-interest issues concerning the appointment of Marc Dewees and Danny Habermel. Habermel owns property directly impacted by the construction plans for the new airport facility as well as do Dewees' in-laws. Bower said he would have City Attorney Drew Wright look into the issue.

Another question dealt with the timetable that property owners can expect the appraisals and property acquisition phases of the project to begin. Karla Price of R. W. Armstrong, Project Manager, indicated that it should be in early fall of this year.

With no further business to conduct, the BOAC adjourned until their next regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, May 20.