

Regular Meeting Minutes for September 30, 2025

- CALL TO ORDER** Commissioner Arndt called meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.
- ROLL CALL** Commission Members Arndt, Marsh, Williams, DiMartino, Miller, Thompson and Stooksbury were present.
- PUBLIC COMMENT** Chair Arndt opened the floor for public comment:
- Rick Turley, representing Fort Collins FNL Pilot Association:
He thanked the Commission for their service, time, and willingness to listen.
He acknowledged Director Kinney's follow-up confirming that Runway 06/24 is not eligible for Legacy Crosswind designation or FAA funding. While disappointed, he appreciated the clarification.
Turley reiterated his proposal to reconsider reopening Runway 06/24 without FAA funding, noting it has historically been included in master plans. He suggested the runway could be used at lower cost if specifications were relaxed, citing existing agreements with Triad for surface maintenance as a potential funding source.
He expressed concern with dissolving the Commission prematurely, stressing the importance of continued stakeholder input. Turley noted the lack of recent stakeholder meetings (none since April) despite prior commitments for bimonthly sessions. He noted the hassle it would be for input at city council meetings.
He recommended the Commission remain in place until a new Airport Authority Board is formally established.
 - Trell Kinnett, Fire Protection Pilot:
He emphasized the critical importance of Runway 06/24 for firefighting operations, citing its crosswind capabilities. Without it, strong crosswinds have already limited the ability to land and potentially hampering fire response.
Kinnett recalled verbal assurances made during the closure of the Fort Collins Downtown Airport over 20 years ago that Runway 06/24 would be preserved or extended, noting the state's significant investment in the Northern Colorado Regional Airport since then.
He stressed the airport's role as the only tanker base in this quadrant of the state, underscoring the runway's importance for protecting structures and enabling timely wildfire suppression.



PUBLIC COMMENT FOLLOW-UP

- Commissioner Williams discussed the status of Runway 06/24 following public comments regarding its potential use for firefighting and crosswind operations. He raised questions regarding FAA crosswind requirements, particularly whether the presence of firefighting operations creates a higher operational need beyond the standard 95% wind coverage provided by the primary runway. Director Kinney clarified that FAA criteria are based on 95% annual wind coverage, and that the FAA is aware that we do have fire tankers on site. Staff proposed a possible letter of agreement with hold-harmless provisions to allow limited emergency use of Runway 06/24 by Fire Fighting crews, but no response to date has been received.
- Commissioner Williams asked about reclassification of Runway 06/24 as a taxiway and how that affects safety standards. Staff reported a recent consultant review (approx. six weeks ago) identified 7 to 9 deficiencies related to safety area, clearance, grading, and safety area. The FAA Airport district staff and airport engineers have advised the runway does not meet FAA design standards and is unsafe for operational landings.
- Commissioner Williams noted the 2020 Master Plan table 4-1 appeared to show compliance with requirements, creating a discrepancy with the recent assessment. Director Kinney will follow up with clarification to the Commission.
- Commissioner Williams also covered potential impacts during the upcoming Runway 15/33 widening project, when operations will be limited to one-directional use. Commissioners suggested Runway 06/24 could serve as a backup during those periods. Staff responded that equipment would penetrate Part 77 airspace during construction phases, preventing safe concurrent use.
- Director Kinney emphasized staff's strong recommendation against reopening Runway 06/24, citing it was originally built as a taxiway, and does not meet safety standards, and according to FNL's Control Tower Manager- "Even if both runways are open and operational we would only use the main runway no matter what" to avoid conflicts between runway traffic.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Marsh moved to approve the consent agenda with Staff's edits to page 10, 2nd paragraph 4th row down changing understaffing to current staffing. The motion, seconded by Commissioner Miller, carried with all present Commissioners voting in favor thereof.

Pulled Items:

- None



- Consent Follow up:
- Yes
 - Yes
- Public Comment:
- AIRPORT DIRECTOR'S
REPORT**
- None

REGULAR AGENDA

4. Air Service Development Presentation

- Director Kinney introduced Ms. Sally Covington as a subject matter expert in aviation, communications, and air service development. She has over 20 years of experience with Denver International Airport and Pittsburgh International Airport, specializing in air service development, branding, communications, and airline relations.
- Ms. Covington provided a comprehensive overview of air service development and the critical role of community involvement. Key points included:

Industry Dynamics:

- The aviation industry is highly dynamic and competitive.
- Airports have evolved from simple transportation hubs into full business enterprises that significantly influence local economic development and community branding.

Airport Branding:

- Airports represent both the first and last impression of a community.
- Positive branding examples (e.g., Savannah Airport's local experience) versus negative branding (e.g., Santa Fe's lack of wayfinding and poor customer experience).

Competitive Environment:

- Airline deregulation forced markets to compete for service.
- Aircraft availability is limited due to manufacturer backlogs, making each new service opportunity highly valuable.



- New air service is equivalent in economic impact to attracting a mid-sized corporate headquarters.

Expectations from Airlines:

- Strong safety, security, and operational reliability are minimum requirements.
- Airlines also expect capable airport leadership, business acumen, and demonstrated financial performance.
- Community involvement is essential—airlines value local market data (housing growth, business starts, conventions, etc.) beyond federal statistics.
- Incentives (marketing funds, operational considerations) are standard components of attracting carriers.

Market Opportunity:

- Northern Colorado presents strong demographics (approx. 900,000 residents in the catchment, high household incomes, student population, and balanced business/leisure demand).
- Denver International Airport is over capacity, creating opportunities for regional airports like FNL to relieve pressure and provide alternatives for carriers.
- The greatest risk identified is **failure to act within the current market window.**

Recommended Next Steps:

1. Engage a national air service development consultant to prepare a strategic plan and facilitate airline introductions.
2. Build a unified airport narrative and brand that complements regional efforts while focusing on FNL's unique strengths.
3. Develop incentive strategies and secure resources to ensure competitiveness.
4. Leverage community engagement and local business data to strengthen the case to airlines.



- Commissioner Williams asked how marketing and outreach differ between legacy carriers and low-cost carriers. Ms. Covington explained that each carrier requires tailored messaging aligned to their network strategies and business models. Data sources such as DOT passenger statistics and local leakage studies were discussed as ways to understand market demand.
- Commissioner DiMartino emphasized the importance of community branding and aligning with regional initiatives. Ms. Covington noted the airport should complement, but not duplicate, regional branding efforts

5. Airport Authority Formation Status Update

- Ms. Ginny Sawyer provided an update on progress toward forming an Airport Authority.
Background: A Governance Committee, comprised of both city mayors and council members, recommended transitioning from the current Airport Commission structure to an authority model. Both councils passed resolutions supporting this recommendation. In 2025, staff and leadership began working on a new Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). While originally expected to be completed by January 1, 2026, the timeline has been extended to allow for a more measured approach.
A Transitional IGA has been drafted to:
 - Shift certain decision-making authority.
 - Align the sunset of the Commission with the start of the new governance model.
 - Clarify city support roles, insurance responsibilities, procurement processes, and financial contributions.The Transitional IGA will be presented to both city councils on October 21, 2025.
- **Commissioner Williams**
Asked for clarification on the timeline for the Commission's sunset, including formal notice procedures.
Ms. Sawyer noted that there isn't a specific date set yet and once it goes through the City Council Meetings it will be determined. She also noted there are no pending agenda items for November and that December's meeting had been canceled due to holidays.
Mr. Williams Questioned why the Commission could not continue until the Authority is established, expressing concern over the loss of institutional knowledge and aviation expertise.
- **Commissioner Stooksbury**
Stated opposition to ending the Commission before the Authority is in place.



Referenced the 2015 IGA, which directed the Commission to provide oversight and direction to the Airport Director, rather than serving only as an advisory body.

Recommended that the Commission provide interim support, including subcommittees, to assist airport staff during the transition. Highlighted his past contributions, including advocating for airport participation in the remote tower project and cautioning against allocating all CARES Act funds to a terminal project.

Emphasized that the Commission should remain empowered until the Authority is operational.

Stated that the Commission was originally designed to supplement city capacity on airport matters.

Suggested that aligning Commission functions more closely with the anticipated Authority could ease the eventual transition.

- **Commissioner Arndt**

Asked if there was a more updated IGA. Ms. Dianne Criswell, City of Fort Collins Attorney clarified that the 2015 IGA was amended in 2016, refining Commission roles while reserving policymaking and appropriations authority to City Councils.

She stated that the transitional IGA aims to streamline governance by assigning clear roles to the Airport Director, City Managers, and Councils.

Commissioner Arndt stated that we have gotten off track and caused inefficiencies. Both cities have helped with economic development and budgets won't stop as it goes to the City Managers, and this is an interim step that will streamline the processes. Moving toward authority would be best for FNL. Airport Commission has never had oversight over the airport, both cities have had that decision making.

- **Commissioner Marsh**

Asked for clarification that the new IGA would be handled by both City Managers and the Airport Director. Ms. Sawyer discussed the roles based on last month's presentation. Commissioner DiMartino read through what was shared at the governance meeting, during the transitional governance daily operations goes under Director, budget and fee continue to be under City Council, leases depending on scale come to Director and City Manager and sometimes City Council, procurement- City Managers, air service- City Manager, business agreements- Director, IGA and land acquisition goes to City Council.

- **Commissioner Miller**

Supported concerns raised by Commissioner Williams and Stooksbury.



- **Commissioner DiMartino**

I still have a little bit of mixed feelings, and we need to focus our resources to moving forward toward a shared vision. Need more frequent Stakeholder meetings and engagement in any way is needed.

- **Commissioner Thompson**

Shared that he attended the September 8 governance meeting and sought clarity on the roles of the Commission, Councils, City Managers, and staff.

Expressed support for moving toward the Authority model, noting inefficiencies under the current system.

He pointed out that with Commission turnover once the new City Council takes over, staff resources may be better dedicated to establishing the Authority rather than onboarding new members. Also, he recommended regular stakeholder meetings, with minutes distributed through City Managers to keep both Councils informed.

**6. BUSINESS FROM
MEMBERS**

- None

ADJOURNMENT

- Chair Arndt adjourned the meeting at 4:28 p.m.

Respectfully
Submitted,

Airport Commission Chair, Jeni Arndt