

**BRAINERD LAKES REGIONAL AIRPORT  
NOVEMBER 6, 2025, MEETING MINUTES**

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the regular meeting of the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission was called to order at 9:30 a.m. in the Airport Conference Room by the Airport Commission Chair.

The following Commission members were noted present: Steve Barrows, Neil Bratney; Vice Chair, Darrel Palmer; Chair, Andrew Shipe, Glen Nygard and Kevin Yeager. Also present: Neil Planzer; Interim Director, Jessica Ruehling; Assistant Manager of Administration, and Michelle Baird, Consulting Engineer Program Manager.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Approved.**

MOVED AND SECONDED BY YEAGER AND SHIPE, DULY CARRIED THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED.

**CONSENT CALENDAR – Approved.**

Discussion about meeting minutes from the October 2, 2025, meeting, referencing the allotted time for public introductions and items not on the agenda.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY SHIPE AND BARROWS, DULY CARRIED THAT THE CONSENT CALENDAR BE APPROVED WITH CHANGES.

**APPROVAL TO PAY BILLS – Approved.**

Discussion about some expenses in the bill report.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BRATNEY AND BARROWS, DULY CARRIED THAT THE PAYMENT OF ALL BILLS DISTRIBUTED AND REVIEWED WITH THE COMMISSIONERS VIA EMAIL AND DURING THE MEETING BE APPROVED.

Upon roll call, all members present voted “aye” to approve to pay the bills emailed to Commissioners prior to the meeting.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

**Introductions and Items Not on Agenda**

Michelle Baird; Mead & Hunt, Mike Petersen; Hangar Tenant Jennifer Roach, Aaron Hautala; Stratigent, Whitney Jeninga; Unifi, Zach Jackson, Walt Roberts; Hangar Tenant and Dan Thesing; ARFF/Operations.

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**REPORTS**

**A. Airport Staff & Marketing/Creative Services**

Mr. Planzer informed the Commission about an aircraft incident that occurred at the airport on November 5, 2025, in the afternoon. ARFF/Operations were quick to respond. The aircraft landed with the landing gear up; there were no injuries and no fire. FOD was cleared from the scene and NorthPoint Aviation staff assisted as well.

The Longster is now hanging in the main terminal. Hy-Tec did a great job, and the Assistant Manager of Administration got to raise the aircraft. Mr. Planzer thanked the EAA for their 5 years of hard work in building the aircraft.

The new coupler arrived on November 5, 2025, for the new loader. St. Cloud airport had been notified that they can arrange pick up of the old loader, which is scheduled for November 12, 2025.

Congressman Stauber paid a visit to the airport wanting to discuss the effects the shutdown is having on the airport. The biggest impact is on TSA. Secondly is EAS. Skywest will not discontinue flights to BRD even if funds run out for them from the government on EAS. NorthPoint is also being affected by the shutdown. They are having difficulty with getting the FAA to come and sign off on work for aircraft. A ferry permit is an authorization for a one-time flight. With the shutdown they don't have someone available to complete the sign-off.

A job description of the Assistant Manager of Operations was provided to the Commission during the meeting. And the posting will go up soon.

Patrick Nelson is our new ARFF/Operation hire and is currently in Florida for ARFF training so that when he returns, he can continue training for weather certification and then can be approved to be on watch for the airline.

Airport project discussions. Hangar update for NorthPoint Aviation. The airport has a \$3.5 million opportunity for construction. The space for this hangar has been selected and should be built next to the current maintenance hangar. The FBO would like to have a larger maintenance hangar so that maintenance on larger aircraft can be conducted. The FAA has directed staff on an alternate route for funding so that the HVAC updates can continue and the construction of a new hangar for NorthPoint Aviation can begin. On the construction of the new hangar, Mr. Yeager would like to seek legal advice about the bigger picture and the terms of this type of agreement. Mr. Planzer confirmed that these details are not due yet. NorthPoint knows the cost spread but the information about what the building would look like hasn't been decided yet. Mr. Palmer made a call on behalf of the DNR Tanker base for their bond for a new campus. The airport will work with them to build on the other side of the ARFF building so that operations can continue during construction. Both the Senator and Representative are in favor of this project.

Observations on the airport metrics are positive. Enplanements, fuel sales and café sales are doing well.

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Stratigent advised that last month, the Communication plan for 2026 was presented to airport staff. Stratigent is preparing the workings for advertising for the early morning flight. Mr. Hautala also expressed his amazement and the perspective that passengers will take away from the sight of the hanging of the Longster.

**B. Consulting Engineer**

Mead & Hunt informed the Commission that the CIP meeting with FAA and MnDOT occurred on 10/22/25. Discussions about upcoming projects occurred at that time. Additional programs were discussed at that meeting, and applications have been sent out. For 2026 the cost split is 95, 2.5 & 2.5. In 2027-28 the cost split changes to 90, 5 & 5. Mr. Planzer is doing some research with the FAA on the RCO antennas. Discussions about how the RCO's and how they operate.

Mr. Palmer suggested to the Commission that the airport could in the future bring Neil Planzer or someone similar to Neil to the airport annually to conduct an audit as a whole and provide feedback to the Commission.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Airport Manager Posting – Update – Interview Process**

Mr. Planzer recommended a group of 3 Commissioners to conduct the interview selection. The scale used to rank the applicants was also provided to the Commission and was recommended by Mr. Planzer to utilize for the selection. Selections will then be presented at the next meeting in December. Discussion about the committee with no disagreements. When the candidates are presented at the next meeting, they will be presented as subjects 1, 2, & 3 for example so that names are not disclosed in a public meeting. Mr. Planzer requests to participate in the interviews but not be part of the selection. The airport is looking for someone with high integrity, one that is intriguing and will treat the current employees well. Background checks are being conducted with calling references. Mr. Bratney advised that he trusts the subcommittee, but he requested to express his comments to the sub-committee. "When are criminal background checks conducted?" A deeper dive into references will be conducted after the sub-committee initially meets. Mr. Yeager suggested that the Commission conduct the interviews for the new manager in the same manner as when the interim manager was selected.

Motion to create a subcommittee interview panel and will bring back 3-5 candidates at the next meeting in December.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY NYGARD AND BRATNEY TO CREATE A SUBCOMMITTEE INTERVIEW PANEL AND BRING BACK 3-5 CANDIDATES AT THE NEXT MEETING IN DECEMBER.

**B. Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Top Priorities**

A 12<sup>th</sup> priority will be added to the airport priorities list. A second ARFF truck is planned to come to the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport and staff needs to keep this item on the priority list.

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This truck will sit here at the airport in the open bay. The airport will become the 3<sup>rd</sup> fire station for Brainerd, and their firefighters will oversee maintaining the truck. A water tender was added to the grant list, because at the last live emergency training exercise, the current fire truck ran out of water prior to the arrival of BFD. With the addition of this truck, the water tender has been removed. Information is being gathered on ownership, maintenance, insurance etc.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Airport Staff Recognition**

The Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport has not had a staff recognition program in the past. On this day, the following airport staff members were recognized for their years of service at the airport.

Dan Thesing – 42 years

Cory Zeien – 3 years

Jessica Ruehling – 3 years

James Norwood – 5 years (not present during this meeting).

**NEXT MEETING:**

All Commissioners present indicated that they would be able to attend the next meeting on December 4, 2025.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

MOVED AND SECONDED BY YEAGER AND BARROWS, DULY CARRIED THAT THE COMMISSION PUBLIC MEETING ADJOURN AT 11:05 AM.

Upon roll call, all members present voted “aye” to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission