

BRAINERD LAKES REGIONAL AIRPORT
DECEMBER 4, 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: Neil Bratney; Vice Chair, Darrel Palmer; Chair, Andrew Shipe, and Glen Nygard. Members noted present according to Minn Statute 13D.021 via video call: Steve Barrows at 9:45am. Members noted as absent: 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.

Motion to approve the agenda with additions of video interviews at 10:00 am and 10:45 am with chosen Airport Manager candidates.

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

CONSENT CALENDAR – Approved.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY SHIPE AND NYGARD, DULY CARRIED THAT THE CONSENT CALENDAR BE APPROVED WITH COMMISSIONER BRATNEY OBSTAINING FROM APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 27, 2025, DUE TO BEING ABSENT.

APPROVAL TO PAY BILLS – Approved.

Commissioner Shipe requested for information about the double invoicing of the water portion of the Brainerd Public Utilities invoices.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BRATNEY AND SHIPE, 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, Zach Jackson, Mike Petersen; Hangar Tenant, Aaron Hautala; Strateligent, Ken Heintzman, James Norwood; ARFF/Operations, Coreen Roberts; Hangar

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Tenant, and Walt Roberts; Hangar Tenant. Mr. Roberts requested that the airport review to see if the draft copy of the AOPA airport minimum standards got approved or if there is a more current and correct copy.

REPORTS

A. Airport Staff & Marketing/Creative Services

Mr. Planzer informed the Commission about how well the ARFF/Operations staff handled the recent heavy snowfall.

The DOT provided an update on the EAS. It is moving along and in process but hasn't yet been approved. They are hoping to have approval by Christmas. Mr. Planzer received a call from Skywest about advertising, and he informed them that we plan to continue with Strateligent. The job position for the Assistant Manager of Operations has been posted, and the airport hasn't received many applications.

Hangar construction for NorthPoint aviation was discussed. Items like lease, insulation, heat etc. Costs for these items still need to be discovered. A meeting should be set up with the Airport Manager, NorthPoint and one, two or three Commissioners. Construction cannot begin until all the details are worked through. Mr. Bratney is interested in participating in a subcommittee for NorthPoint's planned hangar project. Mr. Barrows suggested that the liaisons be part of the committee and Mr. Bratney could participate as well.

Motion to create a subcommittee of Commission members for planning and development of a new hangar for NorthPoint Aviation before the April 2026 Commission meeting with Neil Bratney, Kevin Yeager and Steve Barrows being members of the subcommittee.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BRATNEY AND NYGARD, DULY CARRIED THAT A SUBCOMMITTEE OF COMMISSION MEMBERS BE CREATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW HANGAR FOR NORTHPOINT AVIATION BEFORE THE APRIL 2026 COMMISSION MEETING CONSISTING OF BRATNEY, YEAGER AND BARROWS.

The Commission took a few moments to review two resumes prior to having video interviews.

At 10:01 am, Jennifer Roach logged in online for a video interview. The Commission went around the table with introductions, then per directions from Mr. Palmer, the 3 Commission members that weren't present during the in-person interviews, had the opportunity to ask questions. Jennifer is currently employed at Caterpillar and is a retired Army helicopter pilot which provides an aviation background. She advised that building relationships at any level is important. Understanding who's involved and what's important to them. Ms. Roach said she is an avid traveler and having more airline options at BRD would be great, for both business and leisure travelers. BRD has great opportunities for the younger generations, and these should be marketed to the community. When it comes to learning the current regulations of TSA, she understands that there is a good foundation at BRD and believes she'll be able to continue moving forward. In the first 30 days, it's a lot of "show me". She expects staff to continue doing what they are doing and micromanaging is not her style. Around 60 days, the question to ask is where we can make changes and which ones are appropriate. At 90 days is the point of

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implementation, while keeping safety first in mind. The team at BRD is small but they are the bread and butter that keep everything going. Ms. Roach is a hands-off manager and likes to let staff take ownership of what they do and how they do it. She plans to continue to build the relationships between the City, the County and the Airport Commission with having one-on-ones. The Manager is really the liaison of the Airport between the Commission, the City and the County. Ms. Roach asked the Commission about snow removal. Is this something the airport manager is expected to do. Mr. Planzer responded with not normally. The Manager should be ARFF certified but there are many other items that will need your attention. There isn't anything that prevents you from doing snow removal. ARFF/Ops Norwood advised that the Manager has the opportunity if they would like to learn and participate in snow removal. It's to the discretion of the administrator. The primary challenge is the amount of workload and the lack of human resources. We have a great team and capital resources of equipment but sometimes there aren't enough hands. Ms. Roach also asked about the organization's support. Mr. Barrows advised that currently the City of Brainerd provides services of finance, HR, IT and payroll. A new contract is in process, but the City of Brainerd is the resource at this time.

After that interview, the regular meeting continued with a discussion of engaging government bodies.

At 10:45 am, Matthew Ziomek logged in online for a video interview. The Commission went around the table with introductions, then per directions from Mr. Palmer, the 3 Commission members that weren't present during the in-person interviews, were given the opportunity to ask questions. Matthew informed the Commission of a snow removal routes project that he has been developing for the last few years. Mr. Ziomek is interested in leaving Chicago and has no plans to return to a big city. If selected, he plans to stay for several years. He informed the Commission that he would work with the City and the County by attending their meetings and explaining to them what is happening at the airport from month to month. Mr. Ziomek said that he would plan to grow the airport with plans for more hangars, planes and fuel. He would also work to get the airport more commercial flights. He provided a 30-, 60- and 90-day plan at his initial interview. He would start by getting to know the airport and everyone involved. Matthew said he isn't experienced with TSA and the security side of the airport, but he is willing and able to learn. By the 90-day mark he would like to bring to the Commission meeting where we are and where we are headed. He has no concerns with leaving Chicago and moving to Brainerd. There are three generations of his family in Chicago, but he has other desires that Brainerd has to offer. Mr. Ziomek asked the Commission what they think that the Manager's role can play in the community? Mr. Nygard advised that it would benefit the community to have another airline operating out of BRD. Mr. Bratney advised that the Airport Manager should have continuous relations with those in our community, informing them about the airport as a whole. Matthew asked the Commission; "What would you consider a successful first year as the airport manager?" Mr. Palmer advised that a successful first year would be working with Neil, making a smooth transition, looking for improvement, good community support, happy staff, no chaos and the return of the morning flight. Mr. Barrows said that education and relationship building are an ongoing responsibility.

The interview was completed and the regular meeting continued with creative services.

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Stratelligent informed the Commission that they are continuing to work on the morning flight awareness. The public service announcements are now live on Hubbard radio. Discussion about when the morning flight is scheduled. Mr. Planzer advised they are on the schedule for April 13, 2026. There is a risk of advertising these flights at this time since the airport hasn't received an official word from the DOT. Discovery during the meeting reflects the early morning flight will return March 8.

Mr. Bratney requested to ask Mr. Planzer an additional question. Previous to the meeting, Mr. Bratney was informed about a hunter inquiring about hunting on airport property and Mr. Planzer denied permission and also followed up with the DNR. "Don't we allow cross-country skiing on airport property? What's allowed and what isn't?" Cross-Country skiing and snowmobiling are allowed. Hunting is dangerous near the airport. The gate will stop a snowmobile, but it won't stop a thirty odd six bullet. There is an agreement with the Snodeos for the trail on airport property which excludes them from trespassing.

B. Consulting Engineer

Mead & Hunt is working on the taxi lane construction/rehab project. Plans will be reviewed with airport staff before sending bids out on the street for bids. Anderson Brothers is off the suspension list. We will get new quotes in the spring. Also, Hy-tec donated \$1,000.00 to the airport for the hanging of the Longster. Mr. Palmer asked if we have to do anything with changing of funds for the new hangar. Mead & Hunt resubmitted preliminary grant applications to the FAA noting the airport are not using AIG funds in 2026 and noted that it won't be constructed until 2027. Discussion about funding for the strategic plan to come in the future. An Airport Master plan is 100% eligible by the FAA with shares of 90% FAA, 5% State and 5% Local. The Strategic plan is not fully eligible. The Master plan signals things that the airport wants to change, shows the big picture. The Strategic plan explains how the airport will get there. The airport also needs a revenue plan.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Airport Manager Posting – Update – Interview Process

A special meeting has been set up to discuss the selection of a new airport manager on December 8, 2025.

B. Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Top Priorities

Engaging the government bodies; The Airport is planning to hold an Open House on May 16th, 2026, with a car show, a variety of aircraft and work to get all tenants involved. A master schedule of events is still in process. The Master plan needs to be updated. The airport is working to explore new revenue streams, but with caution. Parking, for example, charging for parking would be a real problem. RCO's are on the list, and a decision will need to be made. The Airport doesn't currently have a strategic plan. The DNR Bond issues are still in process. A number 12 has been added to the list; Grant Processes. Mr. Planzer plans to put together a training program for whoever is selected for the manager position.

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C. BRD Airport Flag Quote

A quote for a Brainerd Airport logo flag was provided to the Commission prior to the meeting. Custom flags for the airport are expensive. Discussion about how long the flags last. State flags run out of life in 60 days or less, weather dependent. The U.S. flags run out of life in about 90 to 120 days. After discussion, Chairman Palmer suggested that the airport continue to fly the flags as they have in the past and it was agreed by the Commission to continue to fly the former MN State flag.

NEW BUSINESS:

NEXT MEETING:

All Commissioners present indicated that they would be able to attend the special meeting on December 8, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED AND SECONDED BY SHIPE AND NYGARD, DULY CARRIED THAT THE COMMISSION PUBLIC MEETING ADJOURN TO THE SPECIAL MEETING ON DECEMBER 8, 2025, AT 11:57 AM.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission

