

BRAINERD LAKES REGIONAL AIRPORT
FEBRUARY 26, 2026, SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the regular meeting of the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Airport Conference Room by Commission Chair Darrel Palmer.

The following Commission members were noted present: Steve Barrows, Darrel Palmer; Chair, Andrew Shipe, and Kevin Yeager. Neil Bratney; Vice Chair, present at 9:17 am. Present via video call: Neil Planzer; Interim Director. Also present: Jennifer Roach; Airport Manager, Jessica Ruehling; Assistant Manager of Administration, and Michelle Baird, Consulting Engineer Program Manager.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Approved.

Commissioner Yeager requested an additional line item on this agenda and for future discussions, added to New Business 6.b. De-Icing Pad.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BARROWS AND SHIPE, DULY CARRIED THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED WITH ADDITIONS.

Introductions:

REPORTS

A. Marketing/Creative Services

Stratigent advised that the good news of the morning flights have been distributed for both the press release and advertising. Billboard selection is in process and radio ads will begin as soon as there is proper audio, planned for the first week of March.

B. Consulting Engineer

Mead & Hunt advised the Commission that grants and projects update will be provided at the regular meeting in March. The CIP meeting with MnDOT and the FAA needs to happen prior to May 1st. The Commission Chair confirmed that March 19, 2026, at 11am will work for him to be in attendance. Airport staff have already confirmed that this is also a good date. MnDOT will be in attendance in person at this meeting and the FAA isn't sure if they'll have approval for travel but will be present via Teams.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Top Priorities

Mr. Planzer informed the Commission that there are 16 items on this list and the first item on the list is Increase Revenues. Mr. Planzer advised that he is planning to continue to work on the

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ARFF training facility plan and has a meeting with John Gogllia later today. John is the former chairman of the NTSB and worked in the FAA. Mr. Planzer is seeking incite from him about the training facility. He then handed this agenda item over to Ms. Roach. She informed the Commission that the ARFF training facility covers items one and two. Item three is new management structure. Establishing a clear chain of command and looking at the Ops manager position and brining someone on board. Item four is Airport manager of which Ms. Roach suggested can be crossed off and the Commission agreed. Chair Palmer then provided an official welcome to Ms. Roach as the Brained Lakes Regional Airport Manager. Item five is Hangar Growth with emphasis on the expansion of the FBO. A meeting was held with the FAA about the RCO's and an airspace review is in the works with plans to meet again on about 45 business days. There is no cost to the airport for this 45-day review. Item six is Engaging Government Bodies. Ms. Roach attended a department head meeting and an after-hours event put on by the Chamber of Commerce. Item seven is Maintain and Grow Relationships. Will continue to connect with others, attend City Council meetings and the County Board meetings. Also working to meet with Stauber. Item eight is Build Esprit de Corps. Ms. Roach advised that the staff here are top notch and we'll look at award and appreciation type opportunities for budget and personnel. Mr. Planzer spoke about the team dinner that was had in early February with all airport staff and their spouses. Mr. Zeien informed the Commission that it was great to have everyone together at the same place and at the same time. Mr. Palmer noted that Neil Planzer has been funding snacks and other things for the employees here at the airport out of his own pocket. He thinks it would be great to create a budget for that. Mr. Barrows advised that the County can't use taxpayer dollars for things like that. Connie from the City said they utilize Sourcewell or dollars back from health insurance for lunch-n-learn and employee appreciation events. The airport needs to be cautious about creating a budget item for that. Mr. Palmer would like this to be a future agenda item for discussion and exploration. Ms. Roach advised that she plans to create a master schedule of events for the airport, along with a Strategic plan and a Master plan. The airport has received updates from the DNR about the bond that they have requested for the upgrade and expansion of the DNR Tankerbase. Staff will also review grant processes, a second ARFF truck, airport terminal advertising and the Airshow/Open house.

B. Open House - Discussion

At the February 5th meeting, it was advised that the Open house be tabled and possibly explore other sources of help to plan the event. Mr. Shipe informed the Commission that Mr. Yeager, Ms. Ruehling and Mr. Shipe met with the Mayor of the City of Brainerd, and Bear, an event coordinator to discuss the event and it's potential for success, or if additional time was needed. Bear provided the Commission with a 30-, 60-and 90-day plan for this event. Mr. Yeager thanked Mr. Straub for coming to the Commission and taking time to meet with us to hear what has been planned. He believes the timeframe is a challenge; mostly because the Commission doesn't have an established budget. Bear provided the Commission with information on events that he has done in the past and believes that the Open House is doable in this timeframe. Discussion about getting sponsors for the event. It was advised that the shorter the window of time for the event the higher the cost. A proposal was provided to the airport from Strateligent for \$80k to promote the event. Mr. Planzer informed the Commission that he had reviewed the proposal and advised that the event needs to be advertised but not at that level. It is a short amount of time and an immense about of work has been completed. Another date can be sought after to ensure success of the event. Commissioner Shipe believes that a fall date would make

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sense. The target is the community, not necessarily vacationers. Ms. Roach advised that the airport would develop a subcommittee for planning. Commissioner Yeager requested an outline of the event, discover the budget and then pick a date. It was requested to put out an RFP for an event planner of the Open House.

Motion to suspend the airport's May Open House and direct staff to develop a strategy and a potential outline for a future Open House which includes a proposed timeframe and proposed budget and proposed RFP process for an event planner.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY YEAGER AND SHIPE, DULY CARRIED TO SUSPEND THE AIRPORT'S MAY OPEN HOUSE AND DIRECT STAFF TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY AND A POTENTIAL OUTLINE FOR A FUTURE OPEN HOUSE WHICH INCLUDES A PROPOSED TIMEFRAME AND PROPOSED BUDGET AND PROPOSED RFP PROCESS FOR AN EVENT PLANNER.

At 9:56 am the Chair requested an introduction from those that are present at the meeting. Michelle Baird; Mead & Hunt, Aaron Hautala; Strateligent, Mike Petersen; Hangar Tenant, Mark Nesheim; Wing's Airport Café, Tom Pearson, Connie Hillman; City Finance Director, and Cory Zeien; ARFF/Operations.

C. ARFF/SRE Building Warranty Items

Commissioner Yeager requested this as an agenda item. Communication was received about some warranty items that needed to be addressed, and it was advised to bring this to the Commission for discussion. Mr. Planzer advised that the ARFF/SRE building came with some warranty items. A couple issues currently under warranty are the paint that is chipping on the garage bay doors, and the heat tripping and needing to be reset. The paint issue is under a 3-year warranty which ends June of 2026. The painters have been contacted, and Commissioners requested Mead & Hunt to get something in writing to ensure the warranty is held. The heat pump in the watch tower was commissioned and working properly at completion of the project. It began to trip and is not working properly. Airport staff have met with Mead & Hunt staff that worked on the heat pump along with discussions with Hy-tec trying to bring back the controls to the original settings. Mr. Planzer advised all to understand what is covered under warranty and what's not. Not when it was working but what's the coverage now to fix it. It is also part of the operations roles to reach out to vendors for information on repairs. If warranty letters serve a purpose, then Mead & Hunt or the Airport Manager could write the letters. The Chair questioned how the airport could have a Cap-Ex accrual to help cover potential costs like this in the future. Commissioner Yeager advised that it is very difficult. The Park board has recently developed a potential way for this to happen.

D. Personnel Policy Manual Review/Update

The Commission confirmed that they have reviewed the Personnel Policy Manual and compared it with the red-lined copy that was provided. Mr. Barrows advised of two grammatical errors for correction. Commissioner Bratney reviewed the grievance complaint section in the manual and questioned who the personnel and finance committee is for the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport.

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Motion to officially reflect that the City Liaison and the County Liaison are the make-up of the Airport's Personnel and Finance committee.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY PALMER AND SHIPE, DULY CARRIED THAT THE CITY LIAISON AND THE COUNTY LIAISON ARE THE MAKE-UP OF THE AIRPORT'S PERSONNEL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE.

Mr. Bratney questioned Bereavement leave information listed in the policy. The Airport Manager requested some time to review this information with HR prior to approval. Mr. Barrows cautioned the Commission that we don't want to create an issue on leave when we get to labor negotiations. Mr. Yeager would like to allow the employees to review the manual and give them an opportunity to speak about any of it at the next meeting. It was agreed to have the Airport Manager review all details in the policy, compare with the labor agreement and distribute to employees for feedback, then bring to the April meeting for discussion and approve at the May meeting.

E. Mills Hangar Lease Update

Mr. Planzer has been having some discussions with others about some hangars and those that didn't have non-aeronautical items stored inside as per the lease requirements. Since those discussions there is now an experimental aircraft in this hangar. No additional information at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Financial Discussions & Discussion of 2026 Adjusted Budget

The Commission received the 2026 adjusted budget. Mr. Yeager thanked everyone involved for their time and effort in developing the new format for the current budget spreadsheet. Discussion about staff costs moving around a bit in 2026 with the addition of the new Airport Manager, the projected add of the Operations manager, and with Mr. Planzer moving into a professional services role. Review and comparison on City/County/Airport budget processes and which way is best. It was advised that the best thing to do when presenting the budget is to show and explain what is being asked, having solid numbers that are justifiable. Adjustments were advised to be made and then bring the budget back to the Commission. Mr. Shipe requested information about the double charges from BPU and a description of what City IT services does for the airport.

B. De-Icing Pad

Commissioner Yeager requested this as a discussion item. Mr. Yeager requested that this be an agenda item at the April meeting. He advised that it would be good to de-ice like other airports and complete the service away from the building.

NEXT MEETING:

All Commissioners present indicated that they would be able to attend the next meeting on March 5, 2026 with the exception of Chairman Darrel Palmer.

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ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BARROWS AND YEAGER, DULY CARRIED THAT THE COMMISSION PUBLIC MEETING ADJOURN TO AT 11:20 AM.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Roach
Airport Manager
Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Manager

