BRAINERD LAKES REGIONAL AIRPORT
OCTOBER 1, 2026, 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 Commission Chair Darrel Palmer.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Approved

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

CONSENT CALENDAR – Approved.

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

APPROVAL TO PAY BILLS – Approved.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY YEAGER AND BRATNEY, 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, Jenny Holmes; Silver Bullet Communications, Mike Petersen; Hangar Tenant, Mark Neishem; Wing's Airport Café, Aaron Hautala; Strateligent, Will Smith; NorthPoint Aviation, Neil Planzer; Flight Planz, Andrea Planzer, & Dan Thesing; ARFF/Operations.

REPORTS

A. Airport Staff & Marketing/Creative Services

Ms. Roach presented a service award to Mr. Dan Thesing for 40+ years of service, and everyone present thanked him for his service.

The diesel and auto fuel tank project is still in progress, waiting for reels to be set up. Staff are still waiting to hear back from the FAA about the Part 139 inspection results. The Taxilane project is making progress. Pavement happens next and then some finishing touches with the fence. The annual airport emergency tabletop exercise was completed this last week. Next year will be the Tri-annual airport emergency live exercise. Mr. Nelson has been trained in Stormwater. ARFF live fire training is complete. The new Operations manager tentatively to start early November. A written retirement letter was received from Mr. Thesing for a 10/31/2026 end date. The open ARFF/Operations manager position has been posted for applications. Radio ads are in transition, and administration continues to meet with Ms. Holmes about the Spring Expo. Ms. Roach spoke with Lindsay at the FAA about grant reimbursements and they plan to get them rolling out soon. Airline Enplanements are up, fuel flowage is up and café revenue remains steady. Hwy 210 construction is to open at the end of October.

Strateligent presented the 2027 ad campaign to the Commission. Providing information about the purpose of the campaign. This campaign would focus on the business traveler. When BRD lost the early morning flight, the passenger count was down. Some of those passengers were travelling for leisure but the majority of the passengers were business travelers. Currently many passengers have the perception that this is a small airport, and they can arrive just before the flight and still board the plane. Strateligent will use this as an opportunity to educate the passengers on early arrival before the flight. They will also help travelers see that BRD is an investment. The ad creative drafts were presented to the Commission. The campaign launch would occur in February and continue in March and April. Then in April the airport will host a business after hours and then, in May, the airport expo. Strateligent will continue Google pay per click. The airport should do a social media post once a week on both Facebook and Instagram. Strateligent can assist with this, but that would increase the expense. Discussion about the advertising budget presented with the Commission. It was agreed that with having the early morning flight back, investing in marketing is a smart decision for the airport. Concern was expressed about the lack of availability for staff on the car rental counters. Discussions about obtaining a first-class Delta seat that would sit in the terminal for opportunities for passengers to sit in a first class seat, or possibly use it as a photo opportunity then potentially share with a hashtag on social media.

Motion to approve the marketing budget proposal provided by Strateligent for the remainder of 2026 and for 2027 in the amount of $54,579.00.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BARROWS AND SHIPE, DULY CARRIED THAT THE MARKETING BUDGET PROPOSAL PROVIDED BY STRATELIGENT FOR THE REMINDER OF 2026 AND FOR 2027 IN THE AMOUNT OF $54,579.00 BE APPROVED.

Upon roll call, all members present voted "aye" to approve the marketing budget proposal.

Commissioner Shipe advised that the Commission also approve the social media portion for marketing. It was suggested to make an adjustment to the marketing section of the airport budget. After further discussion, an amended motion was made.

Motion to amend the previous motion to accept the advertising budget amount to include social media advertising and determine at a later date, who will perform the social media service.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BARROWS AND SHIPE, DULY CARRIED THAT THE PREVIOUS MOTION BE AMENDED TO ACCEPT THE ADVERTISING BUDGET AMOUNT TO INCLUDE SOCAL MEDIA ADVERTISING AND DETERMINE AT A LATER DATE, WHO WILL PERFORM THE SOCIAL MEDIA SERVICE.

Upon roll call, all members present voted "aye" to accept the amended motion and the advertising budget amount which will include social media.

B. Consulting Engineer

Mead & Hunt informed the Commission that the Taxilane Helipad project is going well and making progress. Tenants have positive feedback for the accommodation that has been made so that they can continue to operate. Pavement should be finished up by the end of next week and then pavement markings and final touches to follow. Mead & Hunt requested that the Commission approve the IIJA pre-grant application.

Commissioner Yeager advised that the Commission doesn't really have a game plan on the cash burn. We should know what our game plan is for the next one to three years. The Commission doesn't have a good bearing of what the airport's real fair market value is. There is a rough idea of what revenue can be made. It was thought that it would be better for the airport if all tenants built and owned their own building and the airport leased the land.
Discussions about the options of FAA funded built hangars vs. private funded built hangars. Movement of the RCO antennas were also discussed. Mr. Planzer advised that the FAA has stopped giving out funding for hangars. The opportunity to use this funding to build is now. It is unknown if or when this opportunity will come again. The FAA's focus now is about the safety of airports, not the development of hangars.
Commission Chair Palmer believes that the pre-application should be completed because there is still time to make the final decisions on what the dollars are best spent on.

Motion to preapprove for the airport to apply for the $3.5 million of IIJA funding that is available.

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BRATNEY AND BARROWS, DULY CARRIED THAT THE AIRPORT IS APPROVED TO APPLY FOR THE $3.5 MILLION OF IIJA FUNING THAT IS AVAILABLE.

Upon roll call, the motion carries with 4 Commissioners voting "yes" and Commissioner Yeager voting "no".

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A. Airport Expo

Ms. Holmes provided the Commission with an estimated budget for the Spring Expo event. She

has received vendor and food truck interest. Administration provided introduction to Ms. Holmes and the event to BRD tenants. Sourcewell will fund the event planner, but the event expenses are up to the airport. Discussion about the flyer and adjustments to come.

B. Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Top Priorities

Ms. Roach received the intent to negotiate from the ARFF/Operations Union and requested to have two Commissioners for negotiations. Commissioner Barrows advised that the County and City liaisons should be the ones to join the Airport Manager in Union negotiations. It was agreed to by the Commission.

C. ARFF & Winter Operations Training Course - Update

Mr. Planzer provided Phase I and Phase II proposals for the ARFF & Winter Operations school. He continues to work with Texas A&M. Discussions about the expense to start and participation from other airports. The FAA will also need to provide approval to the airport. As we progress, additional staff will be needed. Which include instructors and administrative staff to work on a schedule. There are traveling ARFF training opportunities in this area, but no stationary school and winter operations training is provided online. Mr. Planzer hopes that the training school will be up and running by this time next year. He plans to reach out to about fifty airports to discuss interest and opportunity.

Commissioner Yeager is out at 11:25am.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Airport Rates, Fees and Charges Study by Third Party

Ms. Roach provided the proposals that have been received so far for an airport rates and charges study. They are not a good apple to apples comparison. Ms. Roach requested that the Commission allow more time to collect more information and bring it back to another meeting. The Commission directed staff to go back to the companies that provided the proposals and be sure they understand the scope of work that is expected and hopefully the costs will come back at a measurable rate.

B. 2027 Adjusted Budget

Staff and the Commission reviewed and discussed the presented 2027 budget. One account that is over budget for this year is professional services. When the budget was reviewed and finalized, it didn't include the Flight Planz services. That account was adjusted for 2027. One account that is believed could be improved is the Brainerd Public Utility account due to double water rates. Other accounts were also reviewed, and it was requested to bring the 2027 adjusted budget to the November meeting. Total staff costs were provided to airport staff from City finance. Staff will work on reviewing investment options for the airport, however, staff requested for the Commission's help with City Council on the BPU account.

Ms. Roach informed the Commission that by the next meeting, the new furniture will be installed.

NEXT MEETING:

All Commissioners present indicated that they plan to attend a special meeting on November 5, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOVED AND SECONDED BY BARROWS AND SHIPE, DULY CARRIED THAT THE COMMISSION PUBLIC MEETING ADJOURN AT 11:54 AM.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Roach
Airport Manager
Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport