

Hello to All:

Read Beneath the Headlines

If you picked up the February 21st edition of the Oldham Era and read the headline, “All Airport Sites Are Eliminated,” perhaps you now believe the airport initiative is dead. I regret to tell you that the airport initiative is very much alive. I attended the same airport board meeting as Oldham Era staff writer, Elizabeth Troutman, and I’d like to offer my comments on what she wrote. Ms. Troutman’s comments are in bold italics; mine are in normal font:

All Airport Sites are Eliminated—No airport sites were eliminated. The airport board simply withdrew their approval of the three sites recommended by the Entran Feasibility Study. When the board concludes that an airport will bring economic prosperity to the county (and they will--no matter how long it takes), then all 17 sites surveyed by Entran will be re-opened for discussion. This includes the Blakemore, Gathright, and Dawkins, sites. I personally believe that the airport board will look for sites where landowners want to sell their property for an airport. Currently, there are at least two sites available right now (I-71, and Eden Park), where property owners are happy to accommodate an airport. However, you must consider that a downturn in the housing market might convince a property owner at other potential airport sites to sell his/her land to the first person who makes a reasonable offer.

If an airport won’t generate revenue, board members say the FAA’s process to determine the possibility of developing an airport is futile—wasting time and grant money. It is the Airport Board that accepted a \$200,000 grant (**taxpayer money**) from the Kentucky Department of Aviation, to do an airport feasibility study. It is the Airport Board that has spent \$70,000 of this grant for Entran’s Feasibility Study. It is the Airport Board that has needlessly spent money, and no one else.

Bob Sargis [airport board member] said he believes the airport board whisked ahead by tackling technical questions first, as required by the FAA. Mr. Sargis is correct in that the board moved too quickly. However, the FAA does not prohibit an airport board or a fiscal court from doing their homework prior to requesting a feasibility study. The board should have done all the studies they are now calling for, before spending grant money. It’s like having an architect design a house for you before you even determine that you need or even want a new house!

The board is collecting information on the public’s opinion of the project, which will be presented at a meeting March 6. In order to conduct a professional opinion poll, one would have to contract an independent body, develop an unbiased set of questions, and then administer the poll. This would cost several thousand dollars—money the airport board doesn’t have.

If the board members choose to return to the FAA process, they are required to launch a new feasibility study. This statement is simply not true. In the February Airport Board Meeting, the board made it very clear that they could only ask for refinements to the

current Entran Study, since the board has a \$200,000+ contract with Entran. That money cannot be used to launch another study using another firm. And, the airport board has no other source of funding a feasibility study.

There are a string of comments offered in Ms Troutman's article from board members and even the Judge/Executive that appear to blame the current state of affairs on the FAA and the Kentucky Department of Aviation. This is not true and unfair. Each of these organizations has a set of rules for determining whether or not an airport should be built. If the airport board and judge executive didn't like the rules, then steps should have been taken--prior to using the grant money—to resolve the local issues not addressed by state and federal authorities.

My point is not to disparage Ms. Troutman's article, but to inform you that many of her points could mislead the reader into believing that the airport initiative is all but dead. It's also important not to lay the blame for airport board's abrupt reversal at the feet of the FAA or the Kentucky Department of Aviation. Now, to get out of this jam, the airport board will look for money to do more studies. And, it appears the Oldham County Economic Development Authority (OCEDA) is willing to lend it to them. Where does OCEDA get its funding? Your tax money--of course! If you don't think your hard-earned money should go to doing a second economic impact study (the first one was shown during the November 2007 public forum), please contact:

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