

Town of Nantucket
NANTUCKET MEMORIAL AIRPORT
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Commissioners
Arthur D. Gasbarro, Chairman
Andrea N. Planzer, Vice Chair
Anthony G. Bouscaren
Jeanette D. Topham
Philip Marks III

AIRPORT COMMISSION MEETING
Special Meeting Minutes
January 14, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 AM by Chairman Arthur Gasbarro with the following Commissioners present: Andrea Planzer, Anthony Bouscaren, Jeanette Topham, and Philip Marks III.

Airport employees present were: Vilina R. Ilieva, Office Manager and Elizabeth Reuss, Administrative Assistant.

Others in attendance:

011425-01 Interview with Michael Caires, Candidate for Airport Manager Position

To begin the meeting, Mr. Gasbarro welcomed Mr. Caires to Nantucket and the interview. Mr. Gasbarro went on to thank Mr. Caires for going through the process of taking all the steps and taking interest in this position, our airport and our community. To conduct the interview Mr. Gasbarro will be asking Mr. Caires a few questions as well as other commissioners who may have follow-up questions.

Please briefly tell us why your background prepares you to be the next manager of the Airport?

To answer the first question, Mr. Caires believes that his diverse experience across two small hub airports and across all aspects of airport management affords him with the opportunity to make a difference here in Nantucket. Being able to balance safety and security is paramount in any airport environment, but customer experience follows very closely behind. Mr. Caires believes that his background in collegiate athletics and hospitality prior to working in aviation helped create a baseline for his aviation career, then going through the P.R. standpoint to the operational realm of an airport would fit well with what Nantucket Airport is looking to provide. Mr. Caires continued to say that customer experience and the clientele that comes through Nantucket Airport is very important, and he feels he is well suited to help continue the positives that we have here and make a difference in the future.

Based on your knowledge of the airport, what would your top three priorities be?

Mr. Caires said that maintaining the Airport and if there are areas of improvements in customer experience would be some priorities. As mentioned earlier, the clientele is very important and while working his original career in professional athletics and through his experience in an aviation environment at both airports, he dealt with high profile individuals, so safety and security were a top priority to maintain. Improvements in customer experience is a key component to continue and not overlook. Mr. Caires had read through some of the information that was provided to him during this process and made note of whether there are airport improvements or optimization that could be done and would follow through on those projects that are on the books from a capital standpoint which are important factors.

Mr. Gasbarro agreed that Nantucket Airport caters to a wide clientele with both tourist-based visitors and second homeowners through the FBO, visitors through the commercial side, as well as all our tenants and the GA local community.

How would you go about establishing a rapport with the Airport staff and what is your management philosophy internal to the organization?

Mr. Caires said the staff at the airport is a key stakeholder, which the same could be said about the tenants. Mr. Caires sees himself as a collaborative leader and he believes in two-way communication. It is very important to be available and approachable by checking in, which adds to the initial importance of the staff. Mr. Caires finds one-on-one meetings to be beneficial because he is able to receive more information from the individual to make sure nothing important is missed about what happens on a day-to-day basis and establish relationships.

How many people do you currently oversee in your organization?

Mr. Caires said the number of employees he oversaw varied at both Atlantic City Airport and Orlando Sanford Airport due to some different factors of the needs of the authority.

Mr. Gasbarro expressed that his hopes as a commissioner is that if Mr. Caires should come in as the manager, he would bring his fresh perspective towards looking at the Airport's organization chart and making recommendations to the commission, not to come in and change everything but as a new leader of the organization based on his experience.

Mr. Caires added he wouldn't look to make change just for the sake of making change however he doesn't look at it as "let's just do things because that's the way it's always been done". Mr. Caires would like to have a thoughtful approach with making change which would go back to having those discussions with staff and external stakeholders to know their perceptions of the Airport, strengths, weaknesses and that could help develop a plan. Mr. Caires wants to get a sense of what the employee's thoughts are if he were to make a

recommendation, which is a collaborative approach that he prefers to do. At the end of the day, if a decision must be made, Mr. Caires feels confident in making that decision but would like to have whatever thoughts that are expressed have some backup to it. If Mr. Caires were to look to introduce any changes and received push back but the only answer he is given is “that’s the way it’s always been done”, he would encourage an explanation of why it has always been done that way and hopes to learn together if it’s truly believed a change should be instituted.

What do you believe keeps the employees engaged and motivated?
How do you see yourself in that role?

Mr. Caires shared a quote that resonated with him from Joe Lopano at Tampa International Airport to empower employees which was, “Enable greatness in others”. Mr. Caires said the employees here are no doubt skilled in the different positions they do. What could be done resource wise to enhance those skills, are there skills that could be upgraded, and what are their interests. Someone might start in a particular career path and do it well but have an interest level in something else which could be encouraged. Within that, enabling greatness in others really is about empowerment. If that empowerment and confidence is maintained in that individual person, it helps keep staff engaged and feeling they are a contributor and part of the overall Airport environment, like a piece to a puzzle.

How did Atlantic City operate to increase revenue?

Mr. Caires said it is owned by the Transportation Authority (SJTA) which also owns the Atlantic City Expressway toll road and provides transportation services. The Airport itself is part of the SJTA and is still at a multimillion-dollar annual deficit that is offset by the Toll Road. SJTA is a state entity that is set up in their manner, the company that Mr. Caires works for, TBI as part of this global Airport management operator, has a defined role in partnership with the Authority where they have helped with finance and control expenses and monitored the expenses to help bring that deficit down from the expense side and also make recommendations of additional opportunities of revenue. Therefore, the Airport does not make money and is at a deficit, however they have enhanced the concessions program through working with external parties of interest and vending opportunities. For example, Atlantic City introduced a frozen yogurt robot arm vending machine which has a novelty to it but created an offering they did not currently have. This was a very minor addition but has enhanced the customer experience and revenue stream. Mr. Caires explained the more recent RFP projects the Airport was involved in, that contributed to the revenue stream.

Mr. Bouscaren explained that Nantucket Airport operates an FBO and needs to generate money to pay staff, which is more like running a business. The Airport operates on its own income and doesn't look to any additional sources for funding. A part of the job as Manager would include interacting with the Airport's neighbors and Town Management. Nantucket Airport has very experienced staff and would be a helpful source to utilize.

Mr. Caires explained he viewed it almost as what Mr. Bouscaren said, a lot of dealing with the higher level and external forces that are part of this Airport versus the nitty-gritty details that appear from the staff level and as things operate.

Have you had any experience with adversity relative to PFAS, Airport Expansion, and Noise in Atlantic City and if so, how did you deal with it?

Mr. Caires explained his direct involvement is minimal in those areas, it's more in meeting and listening to what is going on. Atlantic City has a five thousand (5,000) acre property and half of that is the FAA Tech Center, which the Airport has been involved in and informed of some of the research and development they do including PFAS alternative testing. A lot of that activity is going on at Atlantic City, especially taking into consideration it was and still is a military installation. Going back many decades with military installations, the thought of what was being dumped and left behind was not taken into consideration, so they have been dealing with issues stemming from that. Mr. Caires said while he has been part of the conversations regarding these issues, he has not been part of direct mitigation, involvement or decision making.

Mr. Gasbarro explained the Airport operates as an enterprise form of the Town, so it has quite a bit of autonomy and authority under Mass General Law. The Town of Nantucket Select Board appoints the Airport Commission and the Town Manager. The Town also has a Finance Director and while the Airport has a Finance Manager here, there is a synergy that needs to be maintained with the Town. Ultimately the decisions for the Airport do rest with the commission, but it's not completely autonomous, there is a reality of working with the Town Finance. Mr. Gasbarro said the common goal he has is to stay in the black. If the Airport were to fall into a deficit, it would need to be made up by the Town as an enterprise fund. The Airport found itself in this situation under a previous regime and has been paying back the Town for the past decade. The Airport reviews rates and charges on an annual basis. To give a sense of general philosophy where the Commission is with respect to finances and how important it is to diversify revenue stream, our land leases represent a significant amount of the income, there are PFCs in place and there is also the fuel sales. To manage this and the adjustments that need to be made day to day, the Commission looks to the Airport manager and staff, which it seems that Mr. Caires has experience and understanding of those budgetary projections and needs.

Mr. Caires added that he is heavily involved in the financial discussions in capital and operating budgets, making decisions prioritized. So, he is fully versed and confident in being able to do that. Mr. Caires has been with the same company for 26 years and has taken on his role at Orlando Sanford to Atlantic City having two (2) different scopes of service. When taking on his role at Atlantic City, he knew the Airport operated at a deficit and understood that is the circumstance they were under and did his best to help develop their team to manage those constraints. As mentioned before about the collaboration, Mr. Caires prefers to gather as much information as he can. In an emergency situation that is constantly changing, you need to make quick decisions. For long-term or medium-term projection type situations, Mr. Caires prefers to take his time to come up with a thoughtful approach and recommendation. Where it goes from there is where the collaboration continues, there's going to be different priorities that have to be managed and then manage the expectations of every stakeholder as well.

Mr. Bouscaren mentioned one of the biggest issues on Nantucket is housing and the Airport is currently building housing that they are hoping to lease out. Part of the job as Manager

would include managing that project. This job includes a lot of different operations and establishing relationships with people in the Town.

How do you personally feel about the housing situation, and have you looked into it?

Mr. Caires said there has been some discussion about accommodations that are out there and would be happy to talk more in depth about them. This is certainly a large part of the ultimate decision if he were to receive the offer, which would add to the question of the short-medium-long-term plan.

Mr. Gasbarro added that the commission has been collaboratively working on what he refers to as the Airport Production Plan. Currently under construction is a modular dorm style housing. On the same property the Airport has programmed a duplex, the Townhouse, that would have two (2) units with three (3) bedrooms each and there is room for additional housing on the property. There is another property that the airport owns which is seasonal housing. This is something the Airport Manager would be overseeing, and which employees are selected to occupy that housing.

What do you enjoy most about being an effective leader as well as what you believe is the most challenging?

Mr. Caires said from an enjoyment standpoint, it's about the people and the relationships that drives him. Being able to see where he has been able to make a difference not just in someone's professional life but their personal life as well. He has taken great pride in his career that there have been numerous occasions where staff members have confided in him on a personal level, which gives him the greatest joy of accomplishment that he is trusted. Who he is as a human being is what he values the most but that he is also trusted for his opinions and thoughts. Mr. Caires then added he finds the relationships amongst the individuals within that organizational structure can be a challenge. Mr. Caires feels that if he has a positive relationship with others, they should have a positive relationship with each other because he does but has learned over time, that is not always the case. Which extends from not only a professional level but a personal level as well. This has been a challenge Mr. Caires has had to overcome and being able to take a step back and manage what each person's expectation is. If there is a true concern between two (2) employees, and something is affecting them on the working level, it is addressed right away so it's not a lingering issue.

How would you address a situation where compliance is not coming forth as it should?

Mr. Caires said in those circumstances, for example, for unionized employees there is a collective bargaining agreement that states certain criteria, so they need to make sure they are adhering to that agreement. The collective bargaining agreement was put in place to benefit all parties. If there is an employee that is constantly tardy, there are specifics about tardiness in that collective bargaining agreement, but it can't be let go just because you have a good relationship with that employee. You would need to address the issue when it first comes up to open that conversation and make them aware. Mr. Caires said it's all about being open and up front with anybody that you deal with. You lay the parameters

out on the table of what the situation is and it's important to hear what they have to say about a particular situation. If it is a situation that involves more than one (1) employee, you would hear both on an individual basis. The follow up may be in a group setting, then take it to another topic if there is a conflict between the two staff members. At the end of the day, there's an Airport to run.

Mr. Gasbarro feels that segueing into the aviation field from baseball is an important factor involved is regulatory compliance, including Part 139. Nantucket is unique and can get attention on a national level that wouldn't happen for other small towns in Massachusetts. It is very important that while safety is paramount, it's also important to be sure we run an operation that lacks surprises.

Mr. Caires agreed that you can prepare yourself the best you can, but surprises will come up. As mentioned before, Part 139, it has been over multiple years that the annual inspector commented that Atlantic City Airport keeps the best paperwork they have ever seen. While he can't take credit for the procedures that were put in place for paperwork, he has been able to maintain and modify them to be readily available for the inspectors. If Mr. Caires were to become the Manager, he wouldn't make changes just to change. If things are working, he would see how and why they are working, then maybe there are recommendations that come down the road.

Mr. Marks said that Mr. Caires is a candidate to come run the Airport as the manager, and while the commission is oversight, they are also there to help the manager. Everyone that sits on the board has their own little niche. For example, Mr. Marks sells fuel on the other side of the Airport, so he deals with the logistics of the boat and getting fuel to the Island. One of the conversations Mr. Marks had with Mr. Karberg was about Avgas and how to mitigate that situation by talking to the trucking company to make them aware of what's going on. The commission has a lot to offer and it's important to understand that Nantucket can be unique in a lot of ways. Living on an Island is a very unique situation that is often overlooked by people who come to visit. It is important to understand the travel of getting back and forth, and what the Island does and does not have. It is important that the Manager that is chosen comes here and wants to stay.

How Confident are you that you would be comfortable on Nantucket?

Mr. Caires agrees that Nantucket is a unique place but New England in general he understands. He was born here in Massachusetts, and this will always be home. Mr. Caire's wife was not able to join him on the trip and experience Nantucket herself, but her concerns are whether she's able to effectively work from home and her ability to travel for work as well. Mr. Caires would like a more in-depth conversation about the housing to get a better understanding of the plan and factors that are important to an overall decision. Mr. Caires isn't worried about living here and wouldn't have come this far if he wasn't feeling confident.

Is there anything else you would like to tell the Commission that hasn't already been shared?

Mr. Caires said it's all about teamwork. He enjoys being part of a team and part of something. He hopes his input into that team helps the positives and the decisions that are made collectively.

Do you have any questions for the Commission?

Mr. Caires added that if anyone has anything that might not have been said, he would certainly be open to hearing that. A lot of what was said answered the questions he may have had.

Mr. Gasbarro added the Commission is very much a policy setting board and the Airport Manager's supervisor, everyone else is managed under the Airport Manager. It is very important that the Commission is not going to micromanage under the Manager but must hold the Manager accountable. If the manager were to have ideas to implement change, it can always bring it to the Commission to qualify policy that helps support those initiatives. Mr. Gasbarro advised Mr. Caires that working together with Commissioners and staff working under the Manager's leadership will bring positive results to maintain a successful airport.

Ms. Topham made a **Motion** to adjourn the meeting. **Second** by Mr. Marks and **Passed** by the following roll call vote:

Ms. Planzer – Aye
Mr. Bouscaren – Aye
Ms. Topham – Aye
Mr. Marks – Aye
Mr. Gasbarro – Aye

Meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Reuss, Recorder

Master List of Documents Used

- 1/14/25 Special Meeting Agenda