



**AIRPORT COMMISSION**

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AIRPORT COMMISSION OF  
THE PALM SPRINGS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

**Wednesday, February 19, 2025 – 5:30 P.M.**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Corcoran called the Airport Commission meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. The meeting was held in-person and via videoconference.

Chairman Corcoran asked Commissioner Young to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. POSTING OF AGENDA:** Posted on February 13, 2025.

**3. ROLL CALL:**

**Commissioners Present:**

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Dave Banks (Palm Springs)                 | Geoffrey Kiehl (La Quinta)          |
| Robert Berriman (Indian Wells)            | Tracy Martin (Palm Springs)         |
| Todd Burke (Palm Springs) – Vice Chairman | Samantha McDermott (Palm Springs)   |
| Daniel Caldwell (Palm Springs)            | Margaret Park (Riverside County)    |
| Kevin Corcoran (Palm Springs) - Chairman  | Christian Samlaska (Cathedral City) |
| Bryan Ebensteiner (Palm Springs)          | Dirk Voss (Desert Hot Springs)      |
| David Feltman (Palm Springs)              | Rick Wise (Indio)                   |
| Ken Hedrick (Palm Springs)                | Keith Young (Rancho Mirage)         |

**Commissioners Absent:** Denise Delgado (Coachella), J Craig Fong (Palm Springs), and Kevin Wiseman (Palm Desert)

**Staff Present:**

Scott C. Stiles, City Manager  
 Harry Barrett, Jr., Executive Director of Aviation  
 Jeremy Keating, Assistant Airport Director  
 Victoria Carpenter, Airport Administration Manager  
 Lowell Valencia-Miller, Executive Program Administrator  
 Jacob Colella, Maintenance Superintendent  
 Christina Brown, Executive Program Administrator  
 Harman Singh, Project Manager  
 Tanya Perez, Administrative Specialist  
 Tricia Diamond, Innovation and Strategic Implementation Administrator

Jeremy Holm, City Attorney

**4. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA:**

**ACTION:** Motion to accept the Agenda as presented. **Moved by Commissioner Young, seconded by Commissioner Hedrick, and unanimously approved noting the absence of Commissioners Delgado, Fong, and Wiseman.**

**5. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Former Airport Commissioner Jan Pye provided a public comment to express her farewell and extend her well wishes to the team.

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**ACTION:** Motion to approve the minutes of the Airport Commission Meeting of December 18, 2024, **Moved by Commissioner Voss, seconded by Commissioner Hedrick, and unanimously approved noting the absence of Commissioners Delgado, Fong, and Wiseman.**

**7. INTRODUCTIONS:**

Chairman Corcoran introduced the newest Airport Commissioner Dirk Voss. Commissioner Voss provided a brief overview of his background.

Item 7.A was heard after Item 8.A.

**7.A Tricia Diamond – Innovation and Strategic Implementation Administrator**

Mr. Barrett gave a brief overview of Ms. Diamond's role with the Airport. Ms. Diamond gave a brief overview of her background.

**8. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS:**

**8.A Brown Act Review**

City Attorney Holm provided a brief refresher on key provisions of the Brown Act, with a more comprehensive training to follow later in the year once the new Airport Commissioners are appointed. Mr. Holm stated that the Brown Act applies to legislative bodies of local agencies, including boards, commissions, and committees created by formal action, such as the Airport Commission. It requires that all meetings be open and accessible to the public, except under specific circumstances permitted by law. A meeting is broadly defined as any gathering of a majority of members to discuss business within the body's jurisdiction, even if no action is taken, making casual or informal discussions potentially subject to Brown Act requirements.

Mr. Holm emphasized the prohibition of serial meetings, which occur when a majority of members develop a consensus outside a public meeting through indirect communications such as emails, intermediaries, or social media. The Airport Commissioners were reminded that engaging in comment threads or using reaction emojis on social media can trigger a Brown Act violation if it involves a majority of the body. Assembly Bill 992, which currently governs social media use, permits public officials to engage with constituents online but prohibits interactions among commissioners themselves. Assembly Bill 992 is set to commence at the end of the year unless extended by new legislation.

Mr. Holm reviewed the public's right to comment during both general public comment periods and on individual agenda items. Mr. Holm also reiterated that no action or discussion may occur on items not listed on the agenda, except in limited cases such as directing staff or requesting future agenda items. Regarding teleconferencing, Mr. Holm noted that while rules were relaxed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Palm Springs has returned to the original Brown Act requirements. Teleconference participants must post the meeting agenda at their location, ensure it is publicly accessible, and be prepared for public attendance. All votes must be conducted by roll call, and a quorum of members must be physically located within the agency's jurisdiction.

Commissioner Wise inquired if this session was intended to serve as a form of final training, which may have prompted the need for a future refresher. Mr. Holm responded that the information presented was a brief overview, and a more comprehensive, formal training course covering the topic in greater detail would be conducted after July 1st, once the new Airport Commissioners were seated.

In addition, Commissioner Wise asked whether the expiration of Assembly Bill 992 would have any impact on the biannual training requirement. Mr. Holm advised that it was separate and would still be required.

Chairman Corcoran sought clarification on whether a Commissioner participating via Zoom is required to publicly disclose their physical location, and he asked if the same requirement applies to elected City Councilmembers, or if different rules govern their participation. Mr. Holm confirmed that the requirement applies to all legislative bodies that are subject to The Brown Act, and he advised exercising caution when engaging in online discussions. Chairman Corcoran asked if Commissioners would be required to post their home address if participating remotely from their residence. Mr. Holm said that Commissioners would be required to post their home addresses.

Chairman Corcoran addressed the Airport Commission, emphasizing that this is a highly sensitive issue. He cautioned that if a Commissioner participates via Zoom from their home, they must be prepared for the possibility that a member of the public could arrive at their residence and expect to be given access to the Commissioner's residence to get access to the meeting, as permitted under the Brown Act. He

acknowledged the intrusive nature of this requirement and the potential impact on personal privacy.

Chairman Corcoran inquired about when the City Public Relations (PR) team posts something and if it is acceptable for Commissioners to like or share posts provided they do not engage in policy discussions or debates. Mr. Holm confirmed that liking or sharing such posts is generally acceptable; however, Mr. Holm cautioned against commenting in a way that could prompt a chain of interactions among Commissioners. He advised that while sharing on personal accounts is fine, Commissioners should avoid intermingling with one another on such posts to remain in compliance with the Brown Act.

Item 8.B was heard after Item 7.A.

### **8.B Art Policy and Art Curator Update**

Executive Program Administrator Brown provided an update on the Airport Art Program Policy and Art Curator recruitment process. It was noted that on December 18, 2024, the Airport Commission voted to recommend to the City Council adoption of the Airport Art Program Policy, which was subsequently approved by City Council on January 23, 2025. The policy includes the formation of an Art Review Working Group composed of the Executive Director of Aviation or designee, two Public Arts Commission Members or alternates, two Airport Commissioners or alternates, and a non-voting Airport Art Curator.

Ms. Brown stated that the Art Review Working Group would be responsible for establishing a selection process and criteria for art installations, as well as addressing term maintenance, conservation, and community engagement related to the airport's art initiatives. Ms. Brown also noted that she had been working with Executive Director of Aviation Barrett, Airport Administration Manager Carpenter, and Chairman Corcoran, to form the Art Review Working Group.

Ms. Brown explained that the scope of work for the contracted Art Curator that had been previously approved by both the Airport Commission and City Council had been submitted to the City's Procurement Department for issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP). The contract was expected to be awarded by the City Council in July 2025. Ms. Brown said that once the contract is approved and fully executed, Airport staff will schedule the initial Art Review Working Group meeting.

Chairman Corcoran emphasized the significance of the City Council's support and the years-long advocacy to bring more public art to the Airport. Chairman Corcoran encouraged interested Commissioners to contact him if they wish to serve on the Art Review Working Group.

### **8.C TNC Rate Increase**

Executive Program Administrator Valencia-Miller presented the proposed Transportation Network Company (TNC) Operating Permit Agreements and rate increases for Uber Technologies, Inc. (Uber) and Lyft, Inc (Lyft). Mr. Valencia-Miller advised the Commission that the TNC companies currently operate at Palm Springs International Airport under a month-to-month agreement set to expire on April 30, 2025, and the current TNC pickup and drop-off fees have remained unchanged for the past five years. Mr. Valencia-Miller said that staff were proposing to increase the fee to \$4 per pickup and drop-off.

Mr. Valencia-Miller noted that the staff report, included in the agenda packet, contained a comparison of TNC fees at other airports, an analysis of shifting transportation modes, and data on the decline in public parking revenue. Both Uber and Lyft were consulted. Uber had no objections to the proposed fee, and Lyft stated that the \$4 fee aligns with the national average and they considered the rate fair. Both companies inquired about potential amenities for their drivers, referencing other airports such as Phoenix Sky Harbor as an example, particularly in the context of higher fee proposals.

Chairman Corcoran inquired about the amenity provided at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, to which Mr. Valencia-Miller responded that it was access to restroom facilities. Chairman Corcoran asked if there was a reason for why the Airport would not allow the TNC operators to use the Airport's restroom facilities and if they would need to park to use restroom facilities. Executive Director of Aviation Barrett confirmed that the drivers would need to park to use the restroom facilities. Airport Administration Manager Carpenter clarified that the request for additional amenities was only raised by the TNC representative if the fee increase would be higher than the proposed \$4 that was being considered.

Vice Chairman Burke clarified that the proposed increase applies only to Uber and Lyft, not taxicabs, which currently pay \$3.25 per trip. Mr. Valencia-Miller stated that Vice Chairman Burke was correct.

Chairman Corcoran asked if the taxicab companies have a restroom facility. Mr. Barrett said that the taxicab companies have access to restroom facilities that are located at their designated staging area, and that Uber and Lyft drivers also have access to these facilities, although their staging area is in a separate location. Chairman Corcoran asked if there were any restrictions to allow Uber and Lyft in the taxicab companies staging areas. Mr. Barrett advised there were no restrictions. Chairman Corcoran suggested reminding the TNC companies of the available amenities so that it could be communicated back to the TNC drivers.

Commissioner Martin asked about the term of the agreement, and Mr. Valencia-Miller stated that the new TNC agreements would remain on a month-to-month basis, with

a maximum term of two years, to provide flexibility during ongoing updates to the Airport Master Plan.

Commissioner Hedrick inquired whether Turo, Inc. (Turo) would also be subject to additional charges. Mr. Barrett stated that Airport staff had executed an agreement within the last year with Turo, and he noted that Ms. Carpenter could provide further details regarding the agreement.

Chairman Corcoran asked what Turo was currently paying. Ms. Carpenter explained that Turo is operating under terms similar to those of what the rental car companies would pay, paying 10% of gross sales. Ms. Carpenter clarified that the phrase “would pay” is used because the rental car company agreements were recently amended to require either a Minimum Annual Guarantee (MAG) or 10% of gross sales, whichever amount is higher.

Commissioner McDermott asked if Signatory Airlines would need to review. Mr. Barrett advised that the Airlines do not need to review. Chairman Corcoran asked if this would need to go to City Council. Mr. Barrett advised that this must go to City Council.

Commissioner Kiehl asked whether there was a logical reason why taxicab companies are charged a different fee structure compared to TNC Companies. Mr. Barrett explained that the Airport staff was approaching the matter systematically and noted that there was an intent to review and evaluate these fee structures in the future. Mr. Barrett also explained that staff was addressing agreements on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the specific operations of each vendor.

**ACTION:** Motion to recommend to the City Council the approval of a TNC rate increase. **Moved by Commissioner Hedrick, seconded by Commissioner Park, and unanimously approved noting the absence of Commissioners Delgado, Fong, and Wiseman.**

#### **8.D Projects and Airport Capital Improvement Program Update**

Executive Director of Aviation Barrett introduced the Projects and Airport Capital Improvement Program Update agenda item by stating that staff would present an overview of the full array of capital programs, their priorities, and the resources involved. He explained that in prior years, the Airport typically held a strategic planning meeting with the Commission in December to review upcoming plans for the next one to two years, including budgetary considerations. However, this did not occur in December 2024 due to the strategic visioning session held in August. As a result, the typical review of the capital program and associated budgeting needs was postponed.

Mr. Barrett noted that while several new capital project requests had been made, Airport staff had simultaneously been advancing existing projects in the background. These new project requests are now being integrated into the overall capital program

planning. Mr. Barrett emphasized the importance of providing a transparent overview of the status of projects, the staff's workload, and how funds and resources are being allocated.

Mr. Singh provided a presentation to the Airport Commission and stated that the presentation would offer a high-level overview of all capital projects scheduled for Fiscal Years 2025 through 2027. He noted that of the projects reviewed, 23 had been completed or were considered substantially completed. While some of the projects were still awaiting final payments or closeout documentation, most of the construction or design work had already been carried out.

Mr. Singh highlighted several key projects that had been completed or were nearing completion. Among them was the Taxiway W and A1 Rehabilitation Project, a critical project serving as the Airport's primary taxiway for commercial aircraft. He also noted the successful completion of several important design efforts, including the baggage handling system design, the managed plane parking area design, and the breach gate design. Mr. Singh explained that many of the substantially completed projects represented early-phase work, such as feasibility studies, site analyses, and project definition reports, each serving as a foundational step for full execution in future fiscal years.

For Fiscal Year 2025, Mr. Singh identified several major efforts, including the activation of the Agua Caliente activation space at the Agua Caliente Concourse, which is currently underway; collaboration with the City's Engineering Department on repairs to the hangar outfall that was damaged during the recent hurricane; and the installation of outdoor Wi-Fi to enhance passenger convenience. Additionally, Mr. Singh noted that staff were working on upgrading the Airport Conference Room to better support both remote and in-person hybrid communications.

For Fiscal Year 2026, a total of 15 projects were presented. Mr. Singh explained that projects highlighted in red were identified as priorities, primarily due to cash flow considerations, interdependencies with other projects, and existing grant obligations. Within the slides in this section Mr. Singh noted that the first column lists the project name, while the subsequent columns outlined the associated funding sources. These included FAA funding programs such as the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) and the Zero Emission Vehicle Program, as well as TSA grants and revenue from Customer Facility Charges (CFCs).

In addition, Mr. Singh emphasized that projects numbered 11 through 15, while lower on the immediate execution timeline, they remained an integral part of the Airport's overall capital improvement strategy. He noted that these projects have been carefully aligned with the Airport's Master Plan to prevent cascading delays or domino effects on interrelated infrastructure initiatives.

Mr. Singh reviewed the proposed capital projects for Fiscal Year 2027, noting that eight projects were currently identified for implementation. He provided an overview

of the priorities on the list and explained their strategic significance within the broader capital improvement timeline.

Mr. Singh presented a summary of upcoming projects representing the full scope of work the Airport anticipates executing over the coming years. He noted that the estimated total cost for these future projects was approximately \$123 million, acknowledging that this figure reflects an early estimate and is subject to refinement as planning advances.

Mr. Singh concluded by presenting staff's recommendation that the replacement of the escalators in the Sonny Bono Concourse be initiated in Fiscal Year 2027, citing operational, budgetary, and scheduling considerations.

Mr. Barrett provided a comprehensive overview of the scope and feasibility of the capital improvement schedule, emphasizing that the Airport's project plan was notably aggressive. He indicated that while staff believed it was feasible to complete most projects listed from one through ten, funding all of these projects presented a considerable challenge. Mr. Barrett also noted that the current estimate for locally generated funding was \$16 million annually. However, staff recommended that the figure be around \$8 to \$9 million per year to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Mr. Barrett explained that project timing was influenced by both funding availability and operational considerations. He noted that many projects were interdependent, with some requiring completion before others could proceed. Additionally, operational factors such as avoiding construction during the Airport's peak season were also considered. He reiterated that staff recommended programming the replacement of the Sonny Bono Concourse escalators in Fiscal Year 2027, with the potential for advancing the project if funding and logistics allowed. However, he cautioned that any acceleration must consider project interdependencies and budget constraints.

Commissioner Hedrick inquired about the overall funding composition for the capital projects, seeking clarification on the portion of funding derived from local revenue versus federal or external sources. Mr. Barrett clarified that the \$16 million referenced in the presentation represented local revenue, while approximately \$33 million was projected from federal grants and other external funding sources, including Measure J and Measure D funds.

Expressing concern over the instability of federal funding, Commissioner Hedrick asked about the contingency plan if expected grants were not received, noting that many infrastructure projects are currently being defunded at the federal level. Mr. Barrett confirmed that the Airport was working on Plan B in coordination with its consultant, Frasca & Associates, LLC (Frasca). He explained that many major capital improvement projects relied heavily on federal funding, particularly discretionary grants, which were most susceptible to reductions. He noted that while annual entitlement funding through the AIP remained relatively stable at \$5.2 million annually, the competitive discretionary funding posed the greatest risk. Additionally, Mr. Barrett

referenced allocations under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), noting they were currently considered protected but could change depending on Congressional budget actions.

Mr. Barrett further stated that the Airport, along with approximately 3,300 other airports nationwide, was actively lobbying Congress to safeguard discretionary federal funding. He emphasized that while entitlement funding was more stable, discretionary funding, particularly for infrastructure projects, remained at risk. He added that if federal funds were significantly reduced or eliminated, the Airport might need to reduce project scopes, identify alternative funding sources, or adjust rate structures to close funding gaps.

Commissioner McDermott inquired whether staff was considering strategies to achieve economies of scale, such as bundling procurement of materials or services across projects with overlapping timelines. She suggested that such strategies could help reduce the gap between the \$16 million in local expenditures and the Airport's target of \$8 to \$9 million per year. Mr. Barrett confirmed that the approach was already integrated into project planning and that staff continuously reviewed project interdependence to optimize resource use and minimize duplication.

Mr. Barrett confirmed that this strategy was indeed part of the Airport's project planning approach. He explained that staff continuously review project interdependence and evaluate how individual initiatives affect the broader facility. Where possible, synergies are built into the planning process to optimize resource use, minimize duplication, and streamline processes. Commissioner McDermott asked if this information had been incorporated. Mr. Barrett confirmed that these synergies are indeed built into the project planning and budgeting strategy.

Commissioner Voss inquired whether the list of proposed capital projects was prioritized based on internal assessments or strategic considerations, such as the likelihood of securing federal funding. Mr. Barrett responded that prioritization was based on several factors, including internal operational needs, alignment with airline and federal agency interests, timing and sequencing requirements, and funding eligibility. He highlighted that projects like the baggage handling system were high priority not only for the Airport but also for regional airlines and federal stakeholders.

Commissioner McDermott asked if Public-Private Partnership (P3) opportunities had been further explored. Mr. Barrett confirmed that no additional work had been taken on in that area, but the concept remained under consideration. He added that further discussions with staff, the Commission, and City Council would be necessary before pursuing that path.

Commissioner Berriman inquired about the status of the elevator replacement. Assistant Airport Director Keating confirmed that the elevator equipment had been procured and that installation would occur once the parts arrived, likely during the slower summer season.

Commissioner Samlaska asked whether the projects would undergo a formal RFP process or if alternative procurement methods were being considered. Mr. Barrett stated that most projects would require a formal RFP process. However, where appropriate, staff would leverage cooperative agreements and pre-established contracts to expedite procurement. Additionally, Mr. Barrett noted that approval from the Airlines would be necessary under the Airline Rates and Charges Agreement, with discussions scheduled for mid-March.

Commissioner Hedrick recommended that staff consider implementing a Commercial Paper (CP) Program to increase financial flexibility for advancing capital projects. Commissioner Hedrick noted that many projects require proof of available funding before bidding can occur, and a CP Program would allow the Airport to borrow as needed and demonstrate financial readiness up front. The suggestion included working with the Airports financial consultant, Frasca, to explore viable options and potential banking partners willing to support such a program.

Mr. Barrett confirmed that staff had been in discussions with Frasca, who had identified several mechanisms that could be utilized moving forward. He noted that the exploration of such financial tools was part of the broader financial strategy.

Chairman Corcoran expressed concern that many projects with a direct and visible impact on customer service and passenger experience appeared to be deprioritized in the current capital improvement schedule. Chairman Corcoran referenced restrooms, power upgrades, and other core amenities that significantly affect the passenger experience. He questioned whether the \$10 million allocated for land acquisition, while potentially time-sensitive, could be deferred in favor of projects with more immediate and tangible customer benefits.

Chairman Corcoran emphasized that enhancements to areas such as the Federal Inspection Station (FIS), restrooms, and public-facing facilities would likely be more noticeable and meaningful to travelers, he acknowledged the importance of infrastructure projects like runway rehabilitation, and he encouraged staff to consider applying a customer experience filter when prioritizing future capital investments. Noting that several key improvements, including baggage handling, escalators, and restrooms, were not slated for completion until Fiscal Year 2027, Chairman Corcoran asked whether more could be done to rebalance priorities in a way that would deliver visible improvements to the passenger experience sooner.

Commissioner Hedrick reiterated that a CP Program could provide the Airport with the flexibility needed to accelerate certain capital projects while still navigating complex funding timelines. He noted that although some projects may not yet have full funding in place, initiating construction now could help mitigate future cost increases, especially for land acquisition, where market values are expected to continue rising. Delaying such purchases, he cautioned, could result in 5% to 8% cost escalations due to increasing demand and limited availability.

Commissioner Hedrick explained that several other airports, some larger, some comparable, have successfully used CP Programs to maintain momentum on capital improvements. He encouraged staff and fellow Commissioners to view the CP model as a practical financial tool that enables faster progress, particularly when projects are stalled due to pending budget approvals or federal funding allocations.

Chairman Corcoran asked Commissioner Hedrick to provide some context as to what the CP program is. To ensure broader understanding, Commissioner Hedrick briefly described how a CP Program works, noting the Airport would receive a line of credit, typically backed by a financial institution, and could issue short-term notes to fund project phases. These notes are rolled over as needed until longer-term funding becomes available, allowing the Airport to secure contracts and begin work without waiting for full appropriations.

Mr. Barrett added context to the project prioritization process, noting that beyond financial consideration, a number of capital projects were driven by regulatory requirements. Specifically, projects related to safety and capacity are often mandated by federal agencies such as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the General Services Administration (GSA). These mandates necessitate certain upgrades or compliance measures that must be addressed within specified timeframes, which is why those projects are often prioritized in the Airport's capital program.

Mr. Barrett explained that the prioritization hierarchy reflects the need to address safety and regulatory compliance first, which is why some customer experience-focused projects have been deferred. He acknowledged that while these amenities are important, they often take a secondary role to federally mandated infrastructure improvements. Mr. Barrett further noted that the current capital program was being planned within the constraints of the upcoming two fiscal years. However, when looking ahead to 2028, 2029, and 2030, the Airport was facing a substantial pipeline of additional major projects. This long-term planning horizon significantly impacts how current resources are allocated and can make the overall funding landscape feel overwhelming. Balancing immediate needs, regulatory mandates, and the long-term capital vision presents a complex challenge.

Commissioner Park expressed support for the staff's recommendations, stating that it was evident staff had thoroughly analyzed the projects and identified the most strategic path forward. Commissioner Park acknowledged the age of the facility and commented that virtually any investment would contribute to meaningful improvement. Commissioner Park noted that distinguishing projects strictly as customer experience or otherwise can be somewhat arbitrary, as all improvements ultimately benefit the public. She commended staff for approaching this in a manner that builds efficiency and alignment, ensuring each project supports or connects to others in the broader infrastructure strategy.

Commissioner Ebensteiner recommended that future capital project summaries clearly identify which projects are driven by regulatory mandates or safety requirements, and which are customer service related. He explained that distinguishing between these categories would help the Commissioners and the public better understand the reasoning behind certain prioritizations, particularly as the Airport balances its budget. Mr. Barrett acknowledged the recommendation.

Commissioner Berriman remarked that, overall, passengers love the Airport, and that this goodwill presents an opportunity for effective public communication. Recognizing that many customer experience enhancements are scheduled for later years, such as Fiscal Year 2027, he suggested using social media to buy time by proactively sharing updates about what is planned.

In response, Mr. Barrett acknowledged the value of using social media and community outreach to highlight upcoming customer experience improvements. He confirmed that some communication efforts were already underway, noting that Marketing currently manages aspects of the Airport's social media presence, and updates are provided through various channels. However, Mr. Barrett cautioned against publicizing future improvements too far in advance without confirmed timelines or funding, as doing so could create unrealistic expectations.

Commissioner McDermott added that the Marketing and Business Development Committee (Marketing Committee) is actively working on communicating customer experience initiatives, and that additional updates would be provided during the Marketing Committee report later in the meeting.

Chairman Corcoran inquired whether the main terminal flooring replacement project, based on the most recent analysis, was now scheduled for Fiscal Year 2027. Mr. Barrett confirmed that the project was being deferred to Fiscal Year 2027, noting that the timeline remained subject to upcoming discussions with the airlines, which may impact its funding viability and execution.

Chairman Corcoran asked for clarification regarding the shift in funding sources. Specifically, why the project moved from being funded through Measure J funds to being categorized as an Airport revenue-funded project. Mr. Barrett responded that he could not recall the exact reason for the change at that moment. Ms. Carpenter requested clarification on which specific project was being referenced and asked Chairman Corcoran to repeat his question. Chairman Corcoran reiterated that he was referring to the Main Terminal Flooring Replacement Project.

Assistant Airport Director Keating clarified that the original Measure J funding allocation for the Main Terminal Flooring Project was \$400,000. However, after further analysis, it became evident that the cost to fully replace the flooring with terrazzo would be significantly higher and was estimated between \$4 million and \$5 million. Due to this substantial funding gap, the project could not be completed using Measure J funds alone. Mr. Keating explained that rather than allocating an insufficient amount

toward a project that could not be completed in full, the decision was made to preserve \$1 million in Measure J funds for the Shade Structure Project, which had a clearer scope and funding path. As a result, the flooring project would need to rely on other funding sources, and the remaining Measure J funding was no longer designated for that purpose.

Chairman Corcoran sought clarification by asking whether the Measure J funds previously discussed were no longer being used for the Main Terminal Flooring Replacement project and instead redirected to the Shade Structure Project. Mr. Keating clarified that while the remaining \$400,000 in Measure J funds was still technically allocated to the Main Terminal Flooring Project, it was not sufficient to cover the revised project scope involving full terrazzo installation. The Shade Structure Project was moving forward separately with Gensler engaged to evaluate historical design considerations which would come back to the Airport Commission at some point.

Chairman Corcoran asked if the Airport had a bad budget. Mr. Keating elaborated that the initial Measure J funding allocation was based on a different scope, specifically replacing the center terminal carpet. However, as discussions progressed, the project evolved into a more substantial terminal flooring upgrade using terrazzo, which significantly increased the estimated cost. He acknowledged that this scope change was not part of the original plan and contributed to the budget shortfall now affecting the project timeline.

Chairman Corcoran asked whether a clear, updated prioritization of the Measure J funding allocations existed, especially in light of the shift in project scopes and competing capital needs. Mr. Keating stated that perhaps the Airport staff needed to re-engage that discussion. Mr. Barrett acknowledged that the staff had previously engaged in extensive discussions with the Airport Commission surrounding the allocation of Measure J funds and it had been ultimately decided to pause further reallocation. Mr. Barrett stated that, at the time, the Commission agreed to leave the Measure J funding designations as they stood and instead shift focus to projects funded through Airport revenues and grant sources.

Chairman Corcoran expressed concern over the time and effort the Airport Commission and staff had invested in discussing and prioritizing of the Measure J funding allocations, only to see those projects repeatedly delayed or changed. Chairman Corcoran emphasized that extensive deliberation had taken place over several meetings to determine the best use of the funds, including efforts to secure City Council approval. Chairman Corcoran added that despite these efforts, such as when funds were directed toward shade structures and then shifted to flooring, the projects had not progressed as planned. Referring to delays like the two-year effort to install the water fountains. Chairman Corcoran questioned the consistency and follow-through on Commission recommendations. He urged the group to commit to the decisions made through these collaborative processes to avoid undermining the work already completed.

Mr. Barrett clarified that the Airport was still actively pursuing Measure J funded projects. He confirmed that the terrazzo flooring design had already been completed. However, he explained that the challenge lied in identifying how to cover the remaining costs due to the reallocation of funds. Mr. Barrett emphasized that Airport revenues cannot simply be redirected to these projects, as those funds are already committed to a range of technically complex capital improvements. Chairman Corcoran expressed concern about the lack of clarity surrounding the allocation and use of the Measure J funds. He noted that \$400,000 had been allotted to a flooring project that was now deferred to Fiscal Year 2027, raising questions about whether those funds could be better used in the interim for customer-focused improvements, such as bathroom renovations, which had also been previously discussed. He further questioned how long it takes to design restroom upgrades and emphasized that if Measure J funds remains undeployed, the Commission should have the opportunity to reassess and reallocate those funds toward high-impact, near-term projects that enhance customer experience.

Chairman Corcoran pointed out the inconsistencies in how funding decisions are communicated and highlighted and the need for transparency, particularly since the Commission had previously invested significant time and effort in gaining City Council support for certain Measure J funding allocations. He suggested that if priorities shift, such as deferring the escalator replacement to 2027, Measure J funding might be redirected to fund the escalators instead. In addition, Chairman Corcoran stated that the Airport Commission must remain actively involved in funding decisions, especially when those decisions change after formal recommendations have been made.

Mr. Barrett stated that there had been no change to the Measure J funding allocations since the last Commission decision. It was affirmed that the allocations currently in place reflect the Commission's formal action taken during the January 15, 2025 Airport Commission meeting. Ms. Carpenter referenced the January 15, 2025 meeting minutes that were included in the current agenda packet, which documented the Commission's motion to proceed with the design of the Shade Structure Project. That motion also included a recommendation to present the design to the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board and the Planning Commission for necessary approvals.

Additionally, Ms. Carpenter confirmed that the remaining Measure J and Measure D funds were directed toward the Federal Inspection Station (FIS) infrastructure project, as per the Commission's recommendation. Chairman Corcoran inquired which fiscal year the funds allocated were tied to. Mr. Keating noted that the design costs and protentional construction were in Fiscal Year 2026. Chairman Corcoran stated the cost for the design was budgeted at \$750,000.

Commissioner Hedrick reiterated that implementing a CP Program would significantly aid in advancing many of the discussed capital improvement projects. He emphasized that such a program would allow the Airport to move projects forward with greater flexibility and responsiveness.

Commissioner Voss suggested that the staff consider developing a simple, periodically updated summary, such as an excel-based info sheet detailing the status of all Measure J funded projects. Commissioner Voss added that perhaps the update should be provided quarterly to provide transparency and help minimize prolonged discussions during meetings by giving the Commissioners a quick reference to project funding allocations, status, and timelines. He noted that having access to such a document would have preempted the lengthy discussion on Measure J funding. Mr. Barrett acknowledged that this would be implemented moving forward.

Chairman Corcoran asked if the Airport has the staffing capacity to execute the proposed capital projects. Mr. Barrett acknowledged that the current staffing levels were not sufficient. Chairman Corcoran asked whether a reallocation of staffing resources would be necessary to ensure the Airport has the capacity to execute the capital projects within the projected timelines. Mr. Barrett responded affirmatively, stating that he and the City Manager had been actively working on staffing adjustments and had identified key priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Barrett indicated that addressing staffing needs was a critical part of the broader effort to ensure successful delivery of the planned projects.

Chairman Corcoran asked what the Airport was seeking from the Airport Commission tonight. Mr. Barrett responded that the primary request was for feedback, specifically regarding whether the Commission wanted to reprioritize the Sonny Bono Concourse Escalator Replacement Project by moving it forward in the schedule of capital programming. If the Commission supported advancing the escalators to an earlier fiscal year, staff was requesting direction on which of the current projects listed as priorities, particularly those numbered 11 through 15, should be delayed or moved to a later year to accommodate that change.

Commissioner Berriman asked about the condition of the escalators and stated he had heard there may be safety issues. Mr. Barrett clarified that there were no safety concerns, there is a significant noise issue. Mr. Barrett also invited the Airport Maintenance Superintendent Colella to provide a technical update based on recent findings.

Mr. Colella explained that the situation was more complex than originally anticipated. Recent meetings revealed that the design of the escalator wells and the entry corner area of the Sonny Bono Concourse presents significant complications for a full-scale escalator replacement. The \$1.5 million previously estimated for this project would only cover a hybrid solution, similar to what had been done in the past, rather than a complete replacement.

Mr. Colella further explained that a true, full replacement would require extensive structural redesign and reconstruction of the escalator wells, parts of the Sonny Bono Concourse, and the adjacent courtyard. These changes would significantly impact Airport operations during construction and increase the total cost of the project to somewhere between \$3 million to \$4 million.

City Manager Stiles took a moment to provide additional context related to earlier discussions on the uncertainty surrounding federal funding. He shared that this concern was widespread among municipalities, and city leaders across the country were closely monitoring how shifting federal priorities may impact local capital improvement efforts. Mr. Stiles informed the Commission that earlier in the week, he, along with the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and other City staff, met with Congressman Ken Calvert, the district's representative and a ranking member with significant influence over federal appropriations related to defense and water infrastructure. During their meeting, they emphasized the importance of continued federal investment in the Airport, which they identified as a critical asset. The baggage handling system and other infrastructure needs were at the forefront of that conversation.

Mr. Stiles noted that Congressman Calvert recognized the strategic importance of the Airport, especially given its proximity to the Marine Corps base and its ongoing use by military aircraft. He suggested that the Airport might improve its chances of securing federal funding by framing some of its projects around national defense preparedness and related priorities. Mr. Stiles also noted that this was a constructive and forward-looking conversation and affirmed that federal support for the Airport was the number one item discussed during their meeting. He concluded by assuring the Commission that City leadership would be vigilant in tracking developments in Washington, D.C., and were committed to leveraging strategic partnerships and advocacy efforts to protect and pursue available federal resources for the Airport.

Commissioner Voss acknowledged Mr. Stiles productive discussion praising the focus on regional support, including partnerships that benefit both the Airport and surrounding agencies referencing Cal Fire. Commissioner Voss asked whether the group was now expected to consider a formal alternative for the capital projects, specifically, whether the Commission should consider moving the Sonny Bono Concourse escalator replacement project higher in priority.

Commissioner Martin expressed concern over the potential implications of increased military use at the Airport. He emphasized the importance of preserving the community's quality of life and urged caution in how discussions around federal funding and military partnerships are framed. His concern centered on the possibility that seeking defense-related funding could inadvertently lead to more military activity at the Airport, which could raise noise and community impact issues.

Mr. Stiles clarified that the recent discussion with Congressman Calvert was not about increasing military aircraft operations. Instead, the conversation acknowledged the Airport's existing limited use by military personnel, particularly the Marines traveling via commercial airlines, and explored ways to align federal funding requests with national defense priorities. Mr. Stiles emphasized that any support sought would be intended to maintain or modestly support current activity levels, not to expand them.

Commissioner Berriman stated that there may not be an increase in military aircraft activity. However, he expressed appreciation for the support currently provided to the Marine Corps through existing partnerships with commercial airlines.

Commissioner Young requested clarification on the escalator replacement cost. Mr. Barrett advised that while the equipment alone is estimated at approximately \$1.5 million, the full project cost is significantly higher. Commissioner Young asked if this project moved up then additional projects would need to move down the list. Mr. Barrett said that's correct and that if staff moved the escalator replacement project up then staff would need to move \$3 to \$4 million dollars of projects down the list.

Commissioner Caldwell commented that the Airport knows that the escalator is safe and that it is just noisy. Mr. Barrett confirmed that's correct. Chairman Corcoran added that the escalators were also down a lot which is the bigger issue. Mr. Keating explained that the downtime was due to passengers accidentally triggering the safety sensors, often by bumping them or due to slip-and-fall incidents. These situations require the escalator to be shut down until a state certified inspector can assess and reset the system, which can take several days. Although there have been a few mechanical issues, such as a loose rail or parts needing replacement, those cases are rare. The primary issue remains sensor-related shutdowns, which are more common than most would expect.

Mr. Colella then explained that most commercial escalators, including the ones at the Airport, have sensitive safety sensors, especially at the entry points near the service areas. These sensors are designed to stop the escalator immediately if triggered, such as when luggage, carts, or passengers come into contact with them. In these cases, the escalator cannot simply be restarted by staff; a certified state technician must inspect and reset the system, which accounts for approximately 90% of the shutdowns experienced. Mr. Colella cited a recent incident in which a passenger placed luggage on the escalator, causing a shutdown that required intervention from the State Department of Industrial Relations. Unfortunately, because the incident occurred late on a Friday, the escalator remained out of service until the following Monday when inspectors were available.

Vice Chairman Burke asked given the frequency of these shutdowns whether there were any considerations on the possibility of having an in-house employee obtain state certification to perform escalator resets. Mr. Colella stated this option was being explored, and he noted that the certification process was rigorous and not easily attainable. Mr. Colella added that state certified technicians were in high demand, and the private sector often offers significantly higher compensation, posing challenges for retention within government roles.

Commissioner Martin suggested asked if there was an opportunity to monitor the escalator, particularly during peak travel periods. Mr. Barrett confirmed that although Navigators have not previously been used in this capacity, training them to assist with

safety awareness and passenger guidance could be a viable option and that it would be considered.

Commissioner Voss provided a recommendation to shift funding by deferring the Terminal Restroom Design Project and one of the three electric bus procurements. This reallocation, estimated at approximately \$3.5 million, would match the escalator replacement need while still allowing for two electric buses to move forward. Mr. Voss requested clarification regarding the restrooms, specifically whether they were being upgraded. Mr. Barrett confirmed that the restrooms were being upgraded to improve their aesthetics and to address capacity issues, noting that during peak times, wait times can reach up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Keating provided additional information, stating that the lead time for procuring brand new escalators would be approximately one year, particularly due to the complexity of the associated work. As a result, the project was anticipated to fall within Fiscal Year 2027. Mr. Keating emphasized that replacing the escalators during the busy travel season would not be feasible, making July or August the ideal time for implementation. Commissioner Voss asked if the funding for the escalator replacement were to be prioritized now, it would ensure readiness by Fiscal Year 2027, and if this was the Airport's intent. Mr. Keating said yes. Commissioner Voss restated his recommendation to defer the restroom improvements and one of the electric bus acquisitions to Fiscal Year 2027 to shift the escalator replacement in the capital plan.

Commissioner Ebensteiner asked for clarification and confirmation that due to the extended lead time, the escalator replacement would not occur until Fiscal Year 2027. Mr. Colella confirmed that due to the lead time, the escalator replacement would not be completed until Fiscal Year 2027. Even under the most expedited timeline, such as proceeding with a cooperative procurement contract, the process would still take considerable time. This includes executing the contract, completing the necessary design work, and ordering the equipment, which alone has a lead time of approximately 45 to 50 weeks. Mr. Colella added that a full replacement with a redesigned unit would need to be pursued, which is estimated to be an additional three to three and a half months for construction, depending on the scope.

Commissioner Ebensteiner expressed concern about the prioritization of projects. He questioned why the restroom improvements were being deferred to Fiscal Year 2027, allowing for a potential rescheduling of the escalator replacement to Fiscal Year 2026, when the escalator project cannot occur until Fiscal Year 2027. Commissioner Voss stated that if staff goes with what was being proposed, the Airport Commission would be moving the escalator project to Fiscal Year 2029. Mr. Barrett advised that the escalator project would begin in Fiscal Year 2027, as funding must be identified before a contract can be issued. He added that the current proposal aims to ensure the escalator project does not face additional delays.

Commissioner Martin recalled hearing that even with the new escalators, the same issue will arise regarding the sensor kickoff problem. He questioned the justification for the \$4.5 million expenditure if it would not resolve the core problem, stating that it would not make sense to invest such a significant amount only to face the same operational challenges. Commissioner Hedrick noted alternative design solutions, referencing examples from airports such as Amsterdam, where a separate chute was provided for luggage, reducing interference with the escalator mechanisms.

Mr. Colella noted that other design considerations could be explored as part of the escalator replacement project, such as increasing the width of the escalators. This could potentially improve passenger flow and reduce congestion, especially given the ongoing increase in flight activity and overall passenger numbers. Commissioner Martin asked if that cost would be incorporated into the \$1.5 million dollar budget or the \$4.5 million dollar budget. Mr. Colella stated it would be in the \$4.5 million dollar budget. Mr. Colella confirmed that enhancements such as widening the escalators could be considered as part of the replacement project. This could help alleviate congestion and better accommodate increasing passenger volumes, especially as flight activity continues to grow. He added that the existing escalators were likely original units, and only minimally modified over the years.

Chairman Corcoran inquired whether there was additional funding opportunities available to potentially accelerate some of these capital projects. He also requested an update on the Measure J funding, including how much has been allocated and what remains available. In addition, he suggested that if any of the proposed projects could be supported by Measure J funds, this might help expedite implementation. Chairman Corcoran also requested to receive quarterly updates on capital improvement priorities to monitor how they may shift over time. Mr. Barrett agreed and noted that discussions on this topic had recently taken place with Project Manager Harman who would be providing the updates.

Chairman Corcoran noted the staffing limitations that could be a constraint to project execution, and he voiced the Airport Commission's support for City Council and executive leadership to secure additional staffing, expediting hiring through Human Resources, and ensuring the necessary resources are in place to carry out the work. Chairman Corcoran concluded by emphasizing the shared desire to see accelerated progress, noting that while the Commission understands the complexity of the task's ahead, continued momentum is important. Mr. Barrett said that staff would move as fast as the government would allow.

#### **8.E Marketing and Business Development Committee Update**

Commissioner McDermott presented a brief overview of the February 19, 2025, Marketing and Business Development Committee meeting.

#### **8.F Financial Update**

Airport Administration Manager Carpenter stated that the financial update was included in the agenda packet.

### **8.G Airport Commission Meeting Start Time**

Chairman Corcoran initiated a discussion regarding the potential amendment of the Airport Commission meeting start time, noting that the City Council had granted City Boards and Commissions permission to adjust meeting start times. The Airport Commission held a brief discussion on past meeting times, which had included 8:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and the current 5:30 p.m. start times. To gauge the Airport Commission's preference, Chairman Corcoran asked the Airport Commission members for their general impressions of the three previously used start times. Some expressed challenges with early morning meetings due to other obligations, while others voiced concerns about the late 5:30 p.m. start time, particularly in consideration of staff. It was noted that the current schedule results in particularly long days for staff, with meetings beginning at the end of their workday.

Commissioner Martin suggested that an earlier afternoon start time around 4:00 p.m. might offer a reasonable compromise between staff needs and the availability of the Commissioners. After further deliberations it was determined to amend the Airport Commission meeting start time from 5:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Chairman Corcoran noted that the Airport Commission could revisit the effectiveness of the new meeting time at a future date, if needed.

**ACTION:** Motion to change the Airport Commission meeting start time to 4:00 P.M. **Moved by Commissioner Martin, seconded by Commissioner McDermott, and unanimously approved noting the absence of Commissioners Feltman, Delgado, Fong, and Wiseman.**

### **8.H Employment Update**

Chairman Corcoran asked if there were any positions that staff was looking to fill short term. Executive Director of Aviation Barrett provided a brief update on key vacancies. Mr. Barrett stated that the Deputy Director of Capital Development position remained open and now has five candidates under review. The Safety Management Systems (SMS) Manager position had been reopened for a third time after two declined offers. The Climate Action and Sustainability Specialist role was being recruited jointly with the City's Sustainability Department, with interviews planned.

Chairman Corcoran asked whether the candidates who declined the SMS Manager position had provided reasons for their decisions. Mr. Barrett responded that the first offer was declined due to salary, and the second offer was declined due to both salary concerns and the absence of relocation assistance. Chairman Corcoran then asked if this position should be reevaluated, to which Mr. Barrett confirmed that both positions were currently being reevaluated.

Commissioner Kiehl asked if there were any positions that could be contracted out. Mr. Barrett noted that while some roles may be supported by consultants, positions like SMS Manager are required by the FAA and having a dedicated in-house Deputy Director of Capital Development would be a benefit to staff due to the specialized and operationally integrated nature.

## **9. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Executive Director of Aviation Barrett stated that the Executive Director Report was included in the agenda packet.

## **10. COMMISSIONERS REQUESTS AND REPORTS:**

Chairman Corcoran expressed appreciation for the progress made in recent years and emphasized the Airport Commission's shared commitment to maintaining momentum on Airport improvements. He said that positive feedback continues to be received, particularly regarding concessions. While comments during the meeting may have sounded critical, they were intended to support forward progress and help keep priorities aligned and transparent for the public. Chairman Corcoran thanked staff for their continued efforts.

## **11. REPORT OF COUNCIL ACTIONS:**

- 11.A. Past City Council Actions
- 11.B. Future City Council Actions

## **12. RECEIVE AND FILE:**

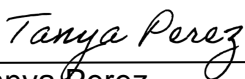
- 12.A Airline Activity Report January 2025
- 12.B Airline Activity Report Fiscal Year Comparison

## **13. COMMITTEES:**

- 13.A Future Committee Meetings
- 13.B Committee's Roster

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

The Airport Commission adjourned at 7:12 P.M. to a Regular Meeting on March 19, 2025, at 4:00 P.M.

  
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Tanya Perez  
Interim Executive Administrative Assistant

APPROVED BY AIRPORT COMMISSION: 5/21/25