

MEETING OF MAY 8, 2007

Minutes of Meeting of May 1, 2007

- ❖ Freddy Walter presided over today's meeting in Conrad's absence.
- ❖ The invocation was offered by Allen Anderson.
- ❖ Francis Farmer led the club in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- ❖ Allen Anderson introduced today's visiting Rotarians and guests.
 - 1) Milton Wheeler, Argile Smith and Patty Furr of the Petal Club.
 - 2) Randy Garner was a guest of Gary Garner.
 - 3) Keith Dale was a guest of Bill Pace.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Thanks to Valerie Sartin and Tina Lowrimore for serving as today's Greeters.
2. Thanks to Gene Winters for assisting us practice our singing abilities with "Take me out to the ballgame". This will be the song for our conference food event theme this year. Plan to attend part or all of the conference.
3. Richard Topp reminded members that they are invited to buy one ticket for the Salvation Army's Boys and Girls Club Steak to Steak fund raising event next Tuesday. The first four persons buying tickets will receive a complimentary ticket for a spouse or guest from the Rotary Club.

LAST WEEK'S PROGRAM

David Senne introduced the speaker, Thomas Heanue, the Executive Director of the Hattiesburg-Laurel Regional Airport.

Tom thanked the members for inviting him back to update members on the airport. Repairs after Katrina damage have finally been concluded, as has a 2.5 million dollar security and improvement project. Additionally, Tom reported that the airport has received two grants from MDOT over the past two years. This year's grant enabled the airport to add a hanger that can house a Gulf Stream Four. The \$450,000 grant has been applied for again.

Tom described to members the TSA's Key Travel Tip 3-1-1 for carry on luggage. If you're traveling by air you can only bring three ounces of a liquid substance and only if it is contained in one, one quart bag. Any other liquid substance will be tossed by TSA before you can board. There are a few exceptions to the rules and you should log on to www.tsa.gov for more specific information.

Additionally, new weight restrictions enforce at Hattiesburg-Laurel Regional. Because of the size of the planes used at the local airport, passengers can have one carry-on bag in addition to a purse or a computer case. Passengers are allowed to carry two checked bags that can weigh up to 50 pounds. Bags weighing 51 - 69 pounds carry a \$25 charge and bags that weigh 70 or more pounds will not be allowed on the aircraft. If you are flying to an international connection, you are limited to 50 pound bags.

When you consider fuel and parking, Thom says airline rates for Hattiesburg-Laurel Regional continue to be competitive with rates out of Jackson and Gulfport. Generally customers are reported that if the airfare is within \$100 of a fair out of either of those locations, they will choose Hattiesburg-Laurel and not have to drive the extra 90 minutes.

The airport has conducted a wildlife study in an effort to improve safety to passengers and aircraft. The study included a survey of the animals within the fences at the airport and developed a hazard assessment plan that helps airport authorities to keep wildlife out of the way of aircraft. One of the improvements that came out of the study was the construction of a perimeter road that allows easier access to the fence for repairs.

Tom reports that things are going well at the Business Park. It appears that Jones and Forrest counties have joined into an agreement that will allow the counties to assist the Park in the infrastructure development of industrial sites and in exchange for that assistance will split tax revenues after ten years. A twelve acre site is under development by Jones County now and should be on the market in the near future.

Tom also reports that general aviation is going well at Hattiesburg-Regional. He reports that general aviation activities are up about 20% over last year. The airport profits from general aviation services much more so than the airline travel. If general aviation continues to grow at the same pace, it is possible that the airport could have a control tower within the next two to three years.

Hattiesburg-Laurel is still considered a part of the government's Essential Air Service program. That means that the airlines flying in and out of the airport receive a subsidy from the federal government. That subsidy is always an item in the federal budget and is an item that must be fought for every year.

Recently, thirty communities across the nation lost their Essential Air Service designation and therefore lost their air service.

Hattiesburg-Regional Airport still offers free parking, free coffee, and free wireless Internet service. Tom also says they also offer assistance to customers who return from flights and find a dead battery or a flat tire. He challenged members to try and find that kind of service at any of his competitors.

THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

The speaker, Kathleen Williams, is the executive editor of the Hattiesburg American.

She came to Hattiesburg in July, 2005, from the Tampa Tribune, where she was senior editor for metro news.

Before that she worked as the Assistant Managing Editor at the Contra Costa Times, in Walnut Creek, Calif. Her newspaper career has also taken her to Fresno, California; Asbury Park, N.J., and Cleveland Ohio.

She also worked as the editor of a business news website, *UpsideToday*, in San Francisco.

She is from Cincinnati, Ohio, and a graduate of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. She lives in Oak Grove.

Editor: Gary Garner