

# Community key to future of air service

By DK McDONALD The Daily News

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BULLHEAD CITY — Continuation of American Airlines service at Laughlin Bullhead International Airport depends on the community, according to the Mohave County Airport Authority Board of Directors.

“We’re in good shape — if you look at it from the right angle, we’re in great shape; if you look at it from some other angle, it’s like, who knows,” said Board President John Hastings. “I don’t. People ask me all the time if we’re going to keep it — I don’t know, it’s up to you. It’s no longer up to me. Everybody (at the airport) has literally done everything that’s within our control. Are we going to make it? You tell me.”

Hastings updated the board on the status of the air service and the Small Community Air Service Development Program grant that supplements the minimum revenue guarantee to American Airlines. “Based on the forecast as I have it today, when we get to the end of July of 2018, we will still have about 115,000 dollars in the bank,” Hastings said. “So if somebody says ‘Hey, they’re going to run out of money in the next month, the air service is going to go away,’ it’s just patently not true.”

Hastings also took a few minutes to share personal memories of Board Director Lloyd Allen Shires, who died in September. “I will say on a personal level, Lloyd was one of the biggest supporters of me and the air service effort,” Hastings said. “Over the years, even though we didn’t always see eye to eye, we became good friends, I believe. I like to think we were— he was very supportive. A good man, he’s missed.”

Director Steve Willett will serve as interim board secretary.

In her report to the board, Director Lisa McCabe, chairwoman of the Air Service Development and Marketing Committee, updated board members on a number of outreach efforts. The efforts include business walks for local business owners who join the Bullhead Area Chamber of Commerce, with the opportunity for participants to win an American Airlines gift card purchased by the chamber, a booth at the Mohave County Fair, use of the airport’s mobile billboard, social media, and participation in the upcoming Boom Box parade among other upcoming community activities.

“We are getting out there, getting the word out there, having good conversations with folks,” McCabe said. “A lot of people already know about the (American Airlines service) program and like I’ve said all along, we have to convert awareness to usage. That is, what we are trying to get across to people is that if you don’t use it, you’ll lose it.”

“If the community, the business community and the residential community and the incoming tourists want this service, we’ve got it,” Hastings said. “It’s healthy, we can support it for a

while. If they use it, we're in good shape. So there's no reason for doom and gloom or excessive stress, it's really up to those factors and we'll have to see how it plays out."

The airport has spent well over \$500,000 on the minimum revenue guarantee, the subsidy for air service, and more than \$200,000 in non-subsidized money on marketing the service, Hastings said.

Treasurer Brad Bellhouse reported that one month into the fiscal year, July airport revenues were slightly ahead of budget over the prior year and net income was a little below the budget of last year, attributed to the amount of money going toward supporting the new air service and the associated marketing.

Airport Director Jeremy Keating reported the airport will hold its tri-annual FAA required full-scale emergency response exercise Wednesday, Oct. 25.

Jim Zaborsky, board vice president, reported the real estate committee is still working on developing the shopping center, citing as a major sticking point for many retailers that the land is leased. Zaborsky also noted Arizona Department of Environmental Quality is reviewing whether or not to continue a program that may have assisted in the clean up of underground fuel storage tanks left over from the original gas station at the airport.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting is 9:30 a.m., Jan. 9 at the Bullhead Area Chamber of Commerce, 1251 Highway 95.