

American reportedly leaving local airport

By DK McDONALD The Daily News November 16, 2017

BULLHEAD CITY — American Airlines reportedly plans to end its daily passenger service to Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport in February.

Mohave County Airport Authority President John Hastings announced the loss of service Thursday evening during a Bullhead Area Chamber of Commerce mixer at the airport according to multiple sources.

Jeremy Keating, LBIA director, confirmed Hastings' statement but declined further comment. Attempts to reach Hastings and Bullhead City Mayor Tom Brady were not successful.

American Airlines was announced as the daily passenger service provider in October 2016, and the airline began daily scheduled passenger service to and from Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport in February 2017 through regional carrier American Eagle, operated by SkyWest, out of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.

Hastings noted at the time that the arrival of American Airlines passenger service marked a new era of economic growth and enhanced quality of life for the region, with an expected annual economic impact of over \$13 million. He also said that if the service was not used and was not profitable, LBIA would lose the service.

That forewarning apparently came to pass. During previous updates on the service, passenger counts were not considered sufficient. Attempts to increase those counts apparently didn't do enough to persuade American Airlines to extend its one-year agreement.

The arrival of daily service was the culmination of more than a decade of labor on the part of Airport Authority staff and its many community partners.

Efforts to attract scheduled air service took a positive turn in 2008 when the airport was first awarded a Small Community Air Service Development grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation and continued to gain momentum in 2010 when Sixel Consulting Group was hired by the airport to help organize air service development strategies.

The airport authority was awarded another grant, which provided \$750,000 toward the recruitment of an airline to bring scheduled air service to the community.

The required \$750,000 match was guaranteed through the partnership between public entities like the city of Bullhead City and private entities including the Laughlin Chamber of Commerce, the Bullhead Area Chamber of Commerce, Laughlin Tourism Commission, the Laughlin casino resort hotels, as well as dozens of local businesses and individual community members. An additional \$600,000 of in-kind support was pledged for marketing and advertising.

The Small Community Air Service Development Program grant supplemented the minimum revenue guarantee to American Airlines.