Memorandum

To: Mayor Rick Baker and the Members of the City of St. Petersburg Council

From: Jason Henbest and Chad Lallemand, Dispute Resolution Consultants/Facilitators

Cc: Dr. Tom Taylor, Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium

Date: May 15, 2002

Re: Process plan for resolving the Albert Whitted Airport property controversy

Recently, you received a comprehensive plan from the city’s economic development director, Mr. Ron Barton. The plan proposes closing Albert Whitted Airport (AWA) and, in its place, building a new waterfront public park and selling or leasing the remaining acreage for private, mixed-use development. We are concerned that any action taken by the Council to approve or disapprove Mr. Barton’s plan without sufficient public involvement may generate a massive public backlash.

As you know, AWA has a long and decorated history within the city, and many citizens view it as a valuable and historic public asset. However, as Mr. Barton’s proposal exemplifies, the airport does not enjoy universal support; rather, some view it as a playground for a few wealthy citizens. With such divergent views on the airport, many citizens will surely be upset with any decision made by the Council for determining its future. With that in mind, we believe it is important to develop a structured means to study Mr. Barton’s proposal, open the discussion to other ideas, and develop a forward-looking plan that represents the best interests of both the city and its citizenry. Therefore, before taking action to approve or disapprove Mr. Barton’s proposal, we strongly urge you to consider the broader question of what the future of the AWA and its land should be, bringing together for the discussion those who have a direct interest in the decision and those who can exercise some degree of expertise and decision-making authority. The citizens of our City possess many outstanding qualities, and this is an optimal time to use those abilities to develop and/or improve the AWA site in such a way as will create a groundswell of support for the proposal that emerges from the process.

Our projection regarding the public’s reaction to any unilateral Council decision is strongly grounded in experience and history. Many other cities face these same issues every year as one segment of the population wants to close the local general aviation airport in favor of some other land use while the airport supporters are placed in a position resisting the attacks. In fact, the City of St. Petersburg has faced this issue numerous times in the past, and based on interviews with various local activists from both sides of the fence, preparations are already underway to influence your decision and, if necessary, fight any adverse action. A decision now will place the Council in the undesirable position of creating a rift in the City, destroying relationships, wasting resources, and reaching a conclusion that turns out to be unsustainable. There is little hope to avoid such an escalating spiral unless the City takes
affirmative steps to develop an inclusive decision-making process that takes advantage of the positive qualities of the City.

Our proposed dispute resolution process consists of an information-building and reaching-out campaign, a public forum where citizens will be asked to voice their interests and create a Task Force that is based on those interests, and a series of Task Force meetings where, ideally, a sustainable solution will be produced for adoption and implementation by the City. The Task Force will be well-suited to engage the airport property issue because of its compact structure, its broad interest base, its capacity to consult with experts, and its inclusion of many and varied St. Petersburg residents who have substantial stakes in the hoped-for successful outcome.

The outcome greatly depends upon members of the community being active participants in all of the various phases. Therefore, in order to foster an environment that effectively induces participant enthusiasm, it is important that positive relationships between members of the community are built. The plan requires that the public build relationships with one another by meeting and working face-to-face with one another, exchanging and exploring ideas in an open and relaxed environment, identifying and constructively working through differences, and, most importantly, generating the kind of results with which all sides will be satisfied.

Due to the nature of the issue at task, a solution that is reached through a bottom-up approach, rather than imposing a top-down, exclusive decision, will surely have a more lasting and positive impact on the City. Our plan will provide a structured, and thus inherently more predictable, setting for a solution to resonate. By fostering an environment where ideas can be openly expressed and shared without fear of scrutiny, the possibility for reaching a solution where all parties walk away feeling satisfied, rather than some leaving completely dissatisfied, is greatly enhanced. Adopting our resolution process will give you the opportunity to make such a situation a reality.

We hope that you will seriously consider this plan to resolve and mitigate any conflicts before taking any substantial action on Mr. Barton’s proposal. Should you have any questions or concerns about the materials we are providing herein, please feel free to contact us.

Regards,

Jason Henbest

and

Chad Lallemand

Enclosures
Process Plan for Determining the Future of Albert Whitted Airport

Overview

Reaching sustainable solutions from complex public problems depends upon the active participation and commitment from members of the community. This facilitative process provides a structured framework for utilizing and encouraging these necessary components. It will use a bottom-up, inclusive approach where residents are given the opportunity to voice their opinions, generate and exchange ideas, create agreeable options, and choose a direction for the future of the Albert Whitted Airport site that is both feasible and widely supported among the residents of St. Petersburg.

Process Objectives

1) To create a positive environment where representatives of various stakeholder groups can come together, share, and explore ideas on what to do with the airport property.
2) To identify common ground, options, and areas of constraint in dealing with the issue.
3) To discover creative, alternative, and feasible means for addressing the issue.
4) To adopt agreeable process steps and procedures for establishing a Task Force.
5) To establish a Task Force that represents the concerns and interests of city residents.

Procedure

I. Surveys, Interviews and Focus Groups
   A. Upon Council approval of the process plan, the facilitators will begin conducting background interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.
      1. Candidates for interviewing will be selected by consulting with the local media, local activist groups, airport preservation groups, environmental experts, city officials, city administrators/planners, and from information obtained through the interviewing process.
   B. Packets/brochures will be produced to provide interested persons with information about this process.
   C. Survey forms will be distributed beginning in June.
      1. They will be available for pick-up at various locations throughout the city, including public meetings, will be published in local periodicals and on the Internet, and will be mailed out upon request.
   D. Interested persons will be able to call a hotline to request copies of the survey and informational packets/brochures to get information about the process.
      1. The phone number will be advertised on news bulletins and posters throughout the city and will be announced on local TV programs and listed inside local publications.
E. The information obtained through survey forms and interviews, though kept in the strictest of confidences, will assist facilitators in identifying common interests, areas of constraint, options, and key stakeholders.

II. Public Forum (see attached agenda proposal)
A. There will be one public forum held on July 6, 2002.
B. The meeting will be held inside the main hangar at Albert Whitted Airport.
   1. The site was chosen for the meeting because it is centrally located in the city, is the location of the dispute, and is large enough to accommodate a large turnout.
C. The objective of the first part of the forum is to bring interested people together, hear and document public input, foster a positive atmosphere where ideas can be openly shared, hear from city officials and experts, and discover the underlying interests.
   1. Members of the public will be given the opportunity to speak on a first-come basis. Each speaker will have 1 minute to state his/her ideas, concerns, and/or questions, and after each individual has had the opportunity to speak once, the floor will again be open to all individuals.
   2. At the conclusion of this step, attendees will be asked to vote on their top three choices from those developed. This information will be used to formulate the options that will be examined and further developed by the Task Force.
D. During the second part of this meeting, attendees will be asked to volunteer to serve on the Committee on Task Force Membership.
   1. This committee’s duties will generally focus on the need to have a third party decide any issues that arise with respect to who can and should be able to serve on the Task Force.
   2. The members of this committee will not be able to serve as members of the Task Force.
   3. The selection process is described in greater detail below.
E. The objective of the third, and final, part of the meeting is to determine the individuals who will represent the varied interest groups that have a stake in the decision.
   1. Facilitators will use the information obtained through the surveys, interviews, focus groups, and morning discussion to set up “Areas of Common Interest” representing the interests of the primary stakeholders.
      a) Any attendees who feel as though their interests are not sufficiently represented in any of the “Interest Areas” can consult with a facilitator or staff member on hand for direction. More “Interest Areas” may be added at that time.
   2. The attendees will then divide into the designated “Interest Areas” with which they most associate themselves, and each group will vote for two individuals among them (one representative and one alternate) for inclusion in the Task Force.
      a) Each group will have the option to vote to have its representative and/or alternate appointed by a Committee on Task Force Membership. The “Interest Area” attendees will have final approval of the appointment.

III. Task Force (see attached agenda proposal for initial meeting)
A. The purpose for establishing the Task Force is to create a compact group that can engage the question of the property; represent the interests, concerns, and values of the residents;
engage in idea generating activities; form positive, working relationships; and, finally, to reach a sustainable, feasible solution.

B. The meetings will begin on July 20, 2002, and will be conducted every other Saturday for approximately three months.
   1. The meetings (other than the launch meeting) will typically be held Saturday mornings from 9:00 to 12:00 at the airport.
   2. The deadline for the Task Force to present its recommendation to the City Council will be November 1.

C. The Task Force will meet together for AT LEAST the first three meetings, with the first one being a “Charge” meeting where formal and informal events will occur to encourage the building of constructive, positive relationships.

D. At the third meeting (or later, if necessary as determined by the Task Force members), the Task Force will vote on a broad, general vision for the future of the airport. The vision may be any one of the three options presented to the Task Force by the attendees of the public forum or any combination thereof.

E. Based upon that decision, the Task Force may or may not break into sub-committees that will play a more precise role in making this vision a reality. The sub-committees would be area-specific—such as economic development, site plan design, environmental protection, etc.
   1. If sub-committees are deemed necessary and desirable, the meeting schedule will be revised so as to avoid placing unreasonable time demands on the volunteers participating on the Task Force.

F. At the start of each Task Force meeting (other than the launch meeting), 15 minutes will be set aside for public comments.
   1. Individuals will have up to 3 minutes to address the Task Force members.
   2. Additionally, an E-mail address and a post office box will be set up and monitored by the facilitators, allowing the public a direct line of communication. Appropriate comments will be shared with the full Task Force.

G. All Task Force and sub-committee meetings will be open to public observation.

H. The public will be encouraged to attend and participate in the Task Force meetings by offering their input in a series of public workshops that will take place at various phases during the time the Task Force meetings are in session.

Other Information

I. Provisions to Enhance Adoption and Implementation
   A. City Council members must approve this process plan and any final decisions made by the Task Force.
   B. City Council members will be invited to observe all phases of this procedure.
   C. Process plan is designed for broad public input.
   D. Final recommendation by the Task Force will be one that includes input from all interested parties designated by the public.
   E. Expert involvement and consultation in all phases will ensure that the necessary steps for implementing proposals are thoroughly explained and that the final recommendations made by the Task Force are feasible.
F. Because the process includes broad public input, adoption and implementation phases should be accompanied by broad public support and enthusiasm.

II. Facilitation techniques used throughout various phases of the process plan
A. Often individuals feel more comfortable in smaller groups. Therefore, to accommodate those individuals, process plan participants will frequently be asked to disperse into smaller groups. It is hoped that this change in setting will encourage contribution from those with introvert personalities while, at the same time, deepen the overall level of understanding of the topic. Smaller settings will also allow participants to further engage with experts.
B. Facilitators will use the stacking method to promote fairness in the open forum portions of the process plan and to ensure “jittery” individuals that they have been acknowledged and will be given the opportunity to speak.
C. Participants and facilitators will utilize chartwriting techniques in appropriate phases of the process plan.
D. Facilitators will engage in active listening, and will assist and encourage process participants to do the same, so that constructive and thoughtful discourse can take place.
E. The facilitative technique of balancing will be used in various discussion related situations. Often, participants may become stuck on an issue, one group of participants may be dominating the discussion, or individuals with less popular viewpoints may feel singled out. In situations such as these, it will be beneficial for the facilitator to take delicate steps to balance the debate and offer the opportunity to participants to voice another point of view.
F. When engaging complicated issues, it can be quite easy for discussions to divide into subconversations. In these circumstances, the facilitator may use tracking techniques to keep everyone involved in the same conversation.
G. Facilitators will always keep their ears open to times when process plan participants have reached a common ground.
H. Broad input gathering is the focus of our comprehensive facilitative plan. Without broad input, a successful outcome will not be possible.
I. The process plan calls for a plethora of idea-generating activities to occur in both the Public Forum and the Task Force. The activities will vary in scope and structure as the setting and number of participants change.
J. Structured go-arounds will take place at the Task Force meetings so as to keep the discussion moving forward and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.
K. More facilitative techniques will be employed as situations arise that call for them.

III. Who should be involved?
A. Public Forums
   1. Facilitators: Jason Henbest and Chad Lallemand
   2. St. Petersburg residents
   3. Non-elected public officials as both participants and consulting experts
      a) the City Planning Director (or designee), the City Economic Development Director (or designee), and the City Attorney (or designee).
   4. Elected public officials as observers
      a) City Council members and/or Mayor Baker
5. Experts
   a) FAA representative, Army Corps of Engineers representative, economic
development expert, planner, and DEP representative
6. Media

B. Task Force Meetings
1. Facilitators
2. Elected members of the Task Force
3. Non-elected public officials as Task Force members (voting)
   a) City Planning Director (or designee), the City Economic Development Director
      (or designee), and the City Attorney (or designee)
4. Elected public officials as observers (non-voting)
   a) City Council members and/or Mayor Baker
5. Experts, available as consultants.
   a) FAA representative, Army Corps of Engineers representative, and DEP
      representative
6. St. Petersburg residents
7. Media

C. Sub-Committee Meetings (the necessity of these meetings will be determined by the Task
   Force based on the broad vision selected)
1. Facilitator
2. Those selected to be on the sub-committees
3. Experts

D. Committee on Task Force Membership
1. Committee will have at least 3 but not more than 5 members.
2. At the conclusion of the first part of the Public Forum, attendees will be asked to
   volunteer to be a part of this committee. If five or less attendees volunteer, all will be
designated members of the committee; if more than five volunteer, the volunteers’
names will be placed in a hat and five will be drawn at random.
Process Scheme and Timeline

City Council Resolution — Approve Creation of Task Force

Public Forum and Task Force Election Meeting

Various and Appropriate Sub-Committees
  OR
  Task Force Meetings

Public Surveys, Interviews, and Focus Groups

Task Force Meetings — Develop Options and Decide Broad Vision

Task Force Meeting — Adopt Final Recommendation

City Council Meeting — Adopt Final Recommendation

June 1

June/July

July 6

July 20, Aug. 3, Aug. 17


Oct. 26

Nov. 1

Decided by Council
PUBLIC FORUM

JULY 6, 2002, AT ALBERT WHITTED AIRPORT HANGAR

Agenda

9:00 Introduction by Facilitators and City Council Member
   Welcome, opening comments, and instructions.

9:20 Identification of the Problem and Constraints
   Organized into topic areas, experts in attendance will discuss the legal and
   physical constraints on any recommendation.

9:50 Brainstorming Ideas and Options for the Future of the AWA Site

11:30 Lunch Break

1:00 Attendees Vote on the Options Developed During the Brainstorming Session

1:30 Formation and Introduction of the Committee on Task Force Membership
   Attendees will be asked to volunteer to be a part of this committee. If five or
   less attendees volunteer, all will be designated members of the committee; if
   more than five volunteer, the volunteers’ names will be placed in a hat and
   five will be drawn at random. Members cannot serve on the Task Force.

2:00 Attendees Divide into Areas of Common Interests
   Interest Areas will be determined based upon the survey responses,
   interviews, and focus groups as well as the morning discussion; additional
   groups will be added as needed as determined by the Committee on Task
   Force Membership.

2:30 Individuals in each Interest Area will vote on Representatives for the Task Force
   Members of each Interest Area will vote on one representative and an
   alternate to represent their interest in the Task Force. As an alternative, each
   IA has the option to have a representative and/or an alternate appointed for
   them by the Committee on Task Force Membership. The individuals in that
   Interest Area will have final approval of the Committee’s appointment.

3:00 Introduction of the Task Force Members

3:15 Concluding Remarks
   The next steps of the resolution process will be outlined along with
   information on how the public can stay involved in the process.

3:30 Adjourn

Everyone in attendance is encouraged to stay and mingle with the members of the new Albert
Whitted Airport Task Force—meet them, ask them questions, make suggestions, and tour the
airport facilities.
ALBERT WHITTED AIRPORT PLANNING TASK FORCE

LAUNCH MEETING

JULY 20, 2002, AT ALBERT WHITTED AIRPORT HANGAR

Agenda

8:00   Continental Breakfast
       Bagels, donuts, danishes, fruit, coffee, and juice will be served.

8:30   Introduction and Charge
       The Mayor, a Council member, and the facilitators will discuss the need and expectations for this collaborative process.

8:50   Airport Site Presentation
       The facilitators and the City Planner will provide a brief history of the airport and will discuss the currently existing facilities and site conditions.

9:30   Break

9:45   Tour of the Airport Facility
       The Task Force members and all other attendees will be given a guided tour of the current site. Draft architectural renderings of each of the proposals developed at the Forum will be used to help Task Force members what the site could look like if a proposal is implemented.

11:00  Establish Ground Rules

11:30  Lunch

1:00   Form a Common Statement of the Problem, Establish Objectives for the Process, and Discuss External Constraints
       Experts in attendance will discuss the legal and physical constraints on any recommendation.

2:30   Break

2:45   Develop Options/Brainstorm Ideas for Each of the Three Forum Proposals

4:00   Review of Options/Ideas, seek consensus on the refinements and identify next steps to resolve non-consensus issues

4:15   Wrap-Up

4:30   Adjourn

6:00   Meet at the Vinoy for Social Hour and Dinner
       Each Task Force member is welcome to bring one guest