

Grand Haven Airport Board Meeting Minutes,

February 5th, 2026

Chairperson Ben Ennenga called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm

Roll Call: Richard Clapp, (board secretary)

Members present: Dennis Swartout, Dale Hagenbuch, Richard Clapp, Ben Ennenga, Tricia Harrell

Others Present: Earle Bares- Airport Manager, Tom Mandersheid- Airport Liaison

Guests: Mayor Bob Monetza, Jennifer Bares, Rex Slingerland, Jim Hagen, Roland Ashby, Derek Gajdos (City of Grand Haven rep.) , Robert Eyestone (Shape Corp.), Cotton

Summary:

The meeting focused on balancing operational improvements (fiber-optic upgrades), community engagement (solar project), and practical fee policies. The board demonstrated a commitment to safety, regulatory compliance, and fostering airport growth, while remaining responsive to public input.

Key Topics & Decisions

1. Approval of Agenda & Audience Comments

- The meeting began with roll call and approval of the agenda.
- Audience members raised concerns and suggestions about airport operations, including safety and fee structures. Notably, comments addressed the impact of tie-down fees on attracting pilots and compared practices at neighboring airports.

2. Shape Corp. Fiber-Optic Cable Proposal

- The board discussed and recommended approval for Shape Corp. to install new fiber-optic cable on airport property, with the condition that the junction be placed as close to the property line as possible and fused for future flexibility. The motion passed unanimously.

Vote: Recommendation to Grand Haven City Council to approve Shape Corps. new fiberoptic cable be installed on airport property with the caveat that the junction where they do the splice be as close to the property line as possible and be fused. **The board approved unanimously to forward this recommendation to city council.**

3. Community Solar Project

- The board reviewed the contract for a proposed solar array on airport property. Concerns were raised about FAA regulations, safety (especially regarding the clear zone for runway approaches), and the need for contract revisions to protect airport interests.

Vote: Recommendation to Grand Haven City Council to approve the Grand Haven BLP solar easement agreement contract. **The board voted not to recommend approval of the solar easement agreement as written, citing unresolved issues and the need for further FAA review and contract adjustments.**

4. Fee Schedule

- The board discussed the airport's fee structure, particularly tie-down fees for aircraft. After considering community input and operational realities, the board decided to eliminate daily and weekly tie-down fees, establishing a **monthly tie-down fee of \$100** for aircraft parked longer than one month. This aims to encourage airport usage while providing a clear policy for longer-term storage. **Board approved unanimously.**

5. Second Call to the Audience

Jim Hagan (400 Lake) addressed the board, referencing a previous meeting's suggestion from a pilot about splitting the proposed solar array to enhance safety for takeoffs. Jim Hagan supported this idea, noting it would provide additional safety for pilots and allow solar panels to be placed in other corners of the airport property, outside the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ). Jim Hagan also researched other airports with solar arrays in the RPZ, specifically mentioning Dane County Airport (MSN), which has a large solar installation generating 10 megawatts. Jim Hagan pointed out that this example shows such projects can be done safely in certain locations and suggested the board consider this precedent in their deliberations.

Roland Ashby, 15003 River Bluff Place, shared research on tie-down and overnight fees at nearby airports. The speaker called Grand Rapids, Muskegon, and Kalamazoo airports, finding that all three charge a \$10 overnight fee due to TSA security requirements and extra services, but none charge landing or ramp fees. Holland airport charges \$9 overnight, mainly serving business jets. The speaker expressed concern that if Grand Haven charges \$10–\$25 for light aircraft, pilots may choose other airports with lower fees and better amenities. The speaker recommended against implementing such

fees for small general aviation aircraft, suggesting that higher fees might be appropriate only for business jets, which require more airport staff effort.

6. *Adjournment*

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:27pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Clapp

Airport Board secretary