

Grand Haven Airport Board Meeting Minutes, November 25th, 2025

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, Sarah Kallio (city council member), Derek Gajdos, Mike Dora (city council member)

Summary:

This document provides a comprehensive summary of the recent Grand Haven Airport Board meeting. The meeting covered a range of operational, technical, and administrative topics, including weather advisory systems, maintenance updates, financial reviews, and community engagement.

First Call to the Audience: (none)

Approval of Meeting Minutes – October 28, 2025

Motion by Dennis Swartout to accept the minutes as presented. Support by Richard Clapp.

Motion carried unanimously.

Community Solar Project Overview

- The project aims to help the city comply with new state renewable energy laws passed in December 2023.

- BLP is ahead of most similar utilities, with a compliance strategy to reach targets by 2035–2036.

Proposed Location & Rationale

- The preferred site is a city/airport-owned parcel just south of Comstock and 168th, chosen for its suitability and existing infrastructure (double circuit pole line for easy grid connection).
- The site is inside city limits, which avoids extra township taxes and leverages city-owned land for future expansion (e.g., battery storage, training).

Project Details

- The solar array would be about 500 kW, with 12–15 rows of south-facing panels, spaced 15–17 feet apart for maintenance.
- The project is intentionally small, with room for future expansion if needed.

Regulatory & Safety Considerations

- All FAA regulations must be met; no construction can proceed without FAA approval.
- The site is in the runway approach path, so compliance with airspace and safety standards is critical.
- Board members emphasized the need for FAA and state approval as a first step before further planning.

Project Process & Next Steps

- BLP is seeking feedback from three stakeholders: its own board, City Council, and the Airport Board.
- If supported, the next steps include issuing an RFP for design/costing, seeking grants, and working out land lease/sale details.
- The goal is to pre-sell about 50% of the panels before signing contracts, with construction targeted to begin before July 4, 2026.

Board Discussion Points

- The board raised concerns about selling airport land, preferring leasing to preserve airport property.
- Safety, airspace, and long-term airport needs were emphasized as priorities.
- The board recommended moving FAA approval to the top of the project checklist.

Annual Safety & Security Report- Earle Bares, Airport Manager

There have been no significant changes to FAA or Department of Homeland Security requirements compared to last year. Notably, we underwent a Department of Homeland Security inspection and achieved a 100% compliance rating, attributable to our comprehensive documentation and the robust implementation of our security program.

We continue to address key safety concerns, particularly regarding tree growth in approach zones and local wildlife activity, both of which are subject to ongoing evaluation and management. Additionally, we recently installed a weather station accessible via our UNICOM frequency; pilots up to 34 miles out have reported successful real-time weather updates through this system. Our wind instruments are also fully operational.

Overall, our general safety and security plans remain current, and we actively participate in the Airport Watch Program. We have an emergency response plan in place and regularly reviewed.

Noise abatement:

Remains unchanged from previous years, with no complaints received this past year—a positive outcome. Our program, particularly the signage, has proven effective as both pilots and drivers notice and respond to it. When addressing concerns in prior years, informing people about the program and visible signage at the airport has led to their satisfaction.

Recommendation to Grand Haven City Council to approve June 6th, 2026, of the Dawn Patrol Open House from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Motion to approve recommendation by Dennis Swartout, support by Richard Clapp.
Motion carried unanimously.

Recommendation to Grand Haven City Council to approve October 24, 2026, Trunk or treat with airplanes from 2:00 to 4:00.

Board Discussion:

- To address traffic issues on 168th and Comstock, we need to coordinate with the Department of Public Safety ahead of time.

- An “Air Boss” was suggested for coordinating air traffic and sky diving activities.

Motion to approve recommendation by Dennis Swartout, support by Richard Clapp.
Motion carried unanimously.

Recommendation to Grand Haven City Council to approve MDOT-Aero Grant 2026-0052 for design of up to Six T hangers in the amount of \$63,000.

Motion to approve recommendation by Dennis Swartout, support by Richard Clapp.
Motion carried unanimously.

Recommendation to Grand Haven City Council: Approve the Prein and Neuhoff engineering contract for \$8,000 to identify and tag trees in the East approach

Board Discussion:

Why are we spending another \$8,000, what’s different now? The need is to specifically identify which trees are on our parcels. Previously, we only had raw data or images; we didn’t have precise locations for each tree. There are some features we can spot visually, but for the East approach, visual identification from drawings isn’t enough.

Motion to approve recommendation by Dennis Swartout, support by Richard Clapp.
Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business: None

Airport Manager’s Report

Overall, activity levels for this period were consistent with historical norms. We experienced an increase in fuel sales of approximately 300 to 400 gallons, attributable to the Trunk or Treat event. This resulted in a roughly 10% uptick compared to previous years. Seasonal factors, such as weather, had variable effects on operations, leading to fluctuations in monthly performance. Nevertheless, year-over-year figures show a slight overall improvement.

Our newly installed weather station is operational and can be accessed via Unicom frequency 122.7. Reports indicate that the signal has been received up to 34 miles away,

without significant interference reported from other airports operating on the same frequency. Occasional overlap occurs, similar to instances with runway lighting activation.

As winter approaches, preparations for snow removal are in place. Snow clearing begins at 3:00 AM when accumulation reaches half an inch or as conditions require. The city's maintenance team typically clears runways by 9:00 AM, with all surfaces accessible by the afternoon. Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) will be issued as needed.

Safety, security, and noise abatement

Construction near the airport, such as recent crane usage by Village Green, must adhere to FAA notification requirements under the Tall Structures Act.

Wildlife management efforts continue, with two recent bird strikes involving sparrows resulting in no aircraft damage. Emphasis remains on minimizing wildlife presence per FAA recommendations.

Orange powerline balls have been replaced.

Major Projects

Design has commenced for the C Row hangar, funded through airport initiatives. Applications have been made for available grants, including one for \$83,090.

Operations & Facilities

There are currently 58 aircraft based at the airport, with continued demand as reflected in a growing hangar waiting list. Fuel prices remain stable, though Jet A pricing has seen a modest increase relative to 100LL.

Tree Trimming

We are proceeding with our planned approach tree trimming project, anticipating its completion around mid-December, except for some tasks remaining on the east side. The state licensing process is underway, allowing us to begin work at the ends of the north-south runway. However, to do so, we must remove the "circle to land" *"We do not have to remove the circle to land, but it would be prudent to remove. MDOT has requested we remove it in order to comply with the state approved approach obstacle restrictions."* -Earle Bares, Airport Manager.

Question, by Harrell: Did we decide to remove the circle to land approach limitation.
Earle: Prudent to pursue this. In process. Amend minutes to reflect change to "must" regarding circle to land.

provision from the RNAV approach. Documentation regarding this adjustment is provided at the end of this report. Coordination with the FAA has been necessary due to procedural requirements concerning approach modifications, and we are awaiting further guidance.

Tree removal projects associated with approach zone maintenance continue, with quotes obtained for labor and no plans for additional land acquisition unless necessary, due to high cost. Runway approaches are being reviewed to ensure compliance with both state and federal standards, and existing obstacles, particularly trees, are being systematically addressed.

Airport Liaisons Report- Tom Mandersheid

We currently have a cash balance of \$433,000. We'll need to retain about \$200,000 for operating revenue, primarily for fuel and ongoing expenses. We've discussed budget needs with both the assistant city manager and finance director, especially regarding tree management projects that weren't originally budgeted. This year, \$25,000 is allocated for tree removal, but that's insufficient. Tree removal from the West and South approaches requires \$11,000, and the East side could exceed the preliminary \$34,000 estimate, potentially reaching \$40,000. These costs are our full responsibility and need prompt attention once we receive answers from MDOT. Meanwhile, the north approach near the trailer park cost us \$2,700.

T hangar funding of \$63,000 was approved, with grant approval received despite provisional license status. Mayoral and council decisions on this and an \$8,000 item are scheduled for the December 15th City Council meeting. The airport board meets December 16th at 5:30 PM.

Receivables over 90 days are minimal (\$15). The 18/36 runway contract is signed, work begins early spring.

Second Call to the Audience

Mike Dora: Thank you, Rob and Derek, for presenting and keeping us informed. I also appreciate the board members for preparing thoughtful comments and facts. I agree with Denny that FAA and MDOT approval is one of the next crucial steps, as further discussion won't matter if they reject it. Thank you all for your time and effort.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Clapp

Airport Board secretary