



Willows City Council Special Meeting Action Minutes April 6, 2023

City Council
Rick Thomas, Mayor
David Vodden, Vice-Mayor
Jeff Williams, Councilmember
Gary Hansen, Councilmember
Casey Hofhenke, Councilmember

City Manager
Marti Brown

City Clerk
Vacant

201 North Lassen Street
Willows, CA 95988
(530) 934-7041

1. **CALL TO ORDER – 3:02 PM**

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL**

Councilmembers Present: Councilmembers Hansen, Williams and Hofhenke, Vice-Mayor Vodden and Mayor Thomas

4. **ADDITIONAL CLOSED SESSION REPORT FROM THE MARCH 28, 2023 CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

Action: To place the City Manager on paid administrative leave.

Moved/Seconded: Councilmembers Hofhenke and Williams

Yes: Councilmembers Hofhenke and Williams

No: Councilmember Hansen, Vice Mayor Vodden and Mayor Thomas

Motion failed.

5. **CLOSED SESSION**

a. **Public Employee Appointment (\$ 54957)**

Title: City Attorney.

Potential Action: Review proposals for City Attorney services, conduct interviews of candidates and appoint a new contract City Attorney.

6. **OPEN SESSION REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION**

Action: To execute an agreement with Prentice | Long PC for City Attorney services based on the retainer in the proposal; and delegate authority to Mayor Thomas to execute the contract.

Moved/Seconded: Councilmembers Hofhenke and Williams

Yes: Councilmembers Hofhenke, Williams and Hansen, Vice Mayor Vodden and Mayor Thomas

Motion passed.

7. **REGULAR SESSION – DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

a. **Letter of Support, Opposition or No Action – National Register of Historic Places for Willows-Glenn County Airport**

Action: To submit a letter of support to the Department of Parks & Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation related to the proposed application recognizing the Willows-Glenn County Airport as a historic place on the National Register

Motion/Seconded: Councilmember Hansen, Vice-Mayor Vodden

Yes: Councilmembers Williams and Hansen

No: Mayor Thomas, Vice-Mayor Vodden and Councilmember Hofhenke

Motion failed.

City Council correspondence regarding the item: Holly Myers and Ted Atlas– letters of support

8. ADJOURNMENT 6:32 PM

Dated: April 7, 2023

Marti Brown, City Manager

HOLLY MYERS
211 W SYCAMORE STREET
WILLOWS, CA 95988

April 4, 2023

City of Willows
201 N Lassen Street
Willows, CA 95988

Dear, Mayor Thomas and Councilmen,

RE: National Register of Historic Places/Willows Glenn County Airport – Letter of Support

The cities most recent Economic Development Plan is focused on attracting new business to three basic areas of the city, Basin Street Industrial Park, Historic Downtown and North Humbolt Avenue.

Currently there is a kiosk featured at Walmart inviting visitors to explore our Historic Downtown area and the Willows Planning Commission has been working tirelessly to get Historic signage on the freeway.

Recently the council approved a banner program welcoming guests into Historic Downtown.

The pattern for growing and developing our city has been primarily based on our Historic assets, one of which is the Willows-Glenn County Airport.

Historic Attributes

- Steel tower lighting the way for mail flights prior to electronic/radio navigation (ours, the only tower remaining in its original location)
- The only civilian airfield utilized by the Doolittle Raiders for training
- A center for aerial rice sowing and other aerial ag related activities, a major driver in the local economy
- Where fighting fires from the sky and aerial training began

Contributing Resources are 1 site, 4 buildings and 1 structure

- Flight Apron - Approximately 10 acres
- 15 Plane Hanger - Built in 1947
- 15 Plane Hanger - Built in 1952
- 6 Plane Hanger - Built in 1960
- Former Admin Building - Built in 1952
- Steel Tower – Built in 1928

The historic designation alone will not prevent future changes or additions at the Willows-Glenn County Airport.

Having the Willows-Glenn County Airport listed on the Historic Register is an honor. With its extensive history, the airport is an integral part of our community and should be recognized as such.

It is your responsibility now to assess and interpret the public sentiment regarding this opportunity.

Respectfully,

Holly Myers



April 5, 2023

Dear Mayor Thomas and Members of the Willows City Council,

I am the person responsible for nominating the Willows-Glenn County Airport for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. I did this after thorough research into the development of the Mendocino Aerial Tanker Squadron in 1956 and the history of the airport leading up to that time.

It is a honor that will be shared with twenty-eight other airports, as well as many of the most revered places in our nation's history. It was not intended, nor should it be, a source of political contention in your community. No matter one's political viewpoint, I think we as Americans agree there is all too much of that in our discourse.

More than a year ago, as part of the application process, I asked the Glenn County Administrator if the Board of Supervisors would give their support to this application. He never specifically answered that request, and I only became aware of their refusal to support the application when I was given a copy of his letter of March 28, 2023.

Unfortunately, the Board of Supervisors has fallen into the trap of misinformation and misunderstanding that often surrounds this designation. As the regulatory agency of the airport, the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) is required to consider the historical status of the airport under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. That consideration is just one small part of the myriad list of approvals needed to do anything at an airport. The approval process has short time limits and comes in the very earliest stages of approving a project. It does not add undo, if any, additional expense, and little additional work by the applicant. In fact, most of the burden to meet the requirements of Section 106 falls upon the FAA, not the owner of the airport. It also does not prevent changes to the airport. I refer you to this webpage for more information.

https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/environ_policy_guidance/guidance/media/section-106-handbook.pdf

The beacon tower at the entrance to the airport was erected by the Department of Commerce Aeronautics Bureau in 1928 when they built the airport as an Intermediate Landing Field (ILF) along the Los Angeles-Seattle Contracted Air Mail Route. By the mid-1930s, there were 42 airports and ILFs on various air mail routes in California. The 51" tower at the Willows Airport is the only one of those 42 still in use at the original airport, and probably one of the few anywhere in the United States. You should be proud of that piece of history.

Shortly after the airport opened in 1929, the citizens of Willows held fundraisers, including parades, air shows and a production of *The Mikado*, in order to improve the airport and, in 1932, enabled the Achaean Club of Willows and the American Legion Post to purchase the airport from the federal government. It soon became the base for the nascent aerial seeding efforts, led by Floyd Nolte. There is no doubt that aerial seeding was responsible for the growth of rice production into the prime economic

factor in the North Sacramento Valley. In the 1930s, the Willows Airport was the busiest airport in Northern California other than those with major passenger airline operations.

After serving the Army Air Forces during World War 2, including as the final practice site for the Doolittle Raiders, the airport ownership transferred to Glenn County.

The application for inclusion on the National Register is based on the airport being the location of the Mendocino Aerial Tanker Squadron, the first such unit in the United States and, lacking any evidence to the contrary, the first anywhere in the world. In those first years, starting in 1956, firefighting and forestry agencies from throughout the world came to Willows to learn and improve those efforts. Every time you see video of fire retardant being dropped from aircraft, remember that it began in Willows.

I urge you to lend your support to placing the Willows-Glenn County Airport on the National Register of Historic Places. It does not prevent future development, renovations or repairs but merely considers the historical aspects of those resources.

It is a rare chance to honor the memory of the citizens who raised money during the Depression to purchase and improve the airport as well as the generations of ag pilots who contribute so much to the economy. It is an even more rare chance to honor the eighty-two Doolittle Raiders, particularly the three who lost their lives upon reaching China and the four who died while being held captive by the Japanese. And it is a chance to honor the original aerial tanker pilots, and those that followed, who risked their lives to protect our forests and wild lands.

I am happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have in this matter. I hope that you honor the legacy passed on to you and do the same for future generations.

Regards

Ted Atlas