



Date: August 24, 2009

PUBLIC HEARING FOR CONSIDERING RENAMING THE DES MOINES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

WHEREAS, the City of Des Moines owns and operates an airport known as Des Moines International Airport (hereinafter called the "Airport"), located in Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa; and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2009, by Roll Call No. 09-1153, the Des Moines City Council referred a request to the Airport Board from Dr. K. L. Hebron of Indianola to rename the Des Moines International Airport to the "Luther Smith International Airport"; and

WHEREAS, on July 13, 2009, by Roll Call No. 09-1263, the Des Moines City Council referred a second request to the Airport Board from John and Kay Jones of Des Moines to rename the Des Moines International Airport to the "Arthur E. Thomas International Airport"; and

WHEREAS, on August 4, 2009, the Airport Board conducted a public hearing as required by the Des Moines City Council's Naming Policy; and

WHEREAS, the Airport Board, by Resolution No. A09-147, recommended to the Des Moines City Council that the Airport name remain "Des Moines International Airport"; and

WHEREAS, the information contained in Attachments 1 & 2 was received by the Airport Board and is provided to the Council for their consideration;



Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

56

Date: August 24, 2009

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA:

That the City Council hereby accepts the Airport Board's recommendation to retain the current name as Des Moines International Airport

Moved by _____ to adopt.

Approved as to form:

(Council Communication No. 09-607)

David A. Ferree
Assistant City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
HENSLEY				
KIERNAN				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
VLASSIS				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	

CERTIFICATE

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.


IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

Mayor

City Clerk

OFFICE OF THE AVIATION DIRECTOR
Des Moines, Iowa

Airport Board Communication 09-0807
August 4, 2009

Subject: Public Hearing on Requests from Dr. K.L. Hebron, Indianola, IA, and John and Kay Jones, Des Moines, IA., to Consider Renaming the Des Moines International Airport	Action Required: Receive/File • Recommendation to Council Approval	Submitted By:  Craig S. Smith, A.A.E. Aviation Director
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BACKGROUND:

On June 22, 2009, by Roll Call No. 09-1153, the Des Moines City Council referred to the Board a request to rename the Des Moines International Airport. The proposal from Dr. K. L Hebron of Indianola is to rename the facility "Luther Smith International Airport". Attachment No. 1 is a copy of this request.

On July 13, 2009, by Roll Call No. 09-1263, the Council referred a second request. The proposal from John and Kay Jones of Des Moines is to rename the facility "Arthur E. Thomas International Airport". Attachment No. 2 is a copy of this request.

The Council has a formal policy in place to address matters concerning the naming of its streets, facilities, and park land. The policy can be summarized as follows:

- The Council retains the exclusive right to name and rename streets, facilities, park land, and park facilities.
- Because a public citizen has requested the name change, the Council may either deny the request or refer the item to the appropriate Board/Commission for further review and recommendation.
- Within thirty days of Council referral, staff from the applicable department will research and verify all information submitted in the request.
- Staff must also request a review from the following City departments and commissions: Legal, Police, Fire, Information Technology, Engineering, and the Historic Commission.
- Within ninety days of Council referral, the applicable Board/Commission will consider staff findings and the extent of public support for, and public opposition to, the proposed name.
- The appropriate Board/Commission will then present its recommendation to the City Council via the Council Agenda at a regularly scheduled Council meeting for final Council consideration and approval or denial of the request.
- Public notice will be given and a public hearing will be held on the request.

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- If the request is approved, the cost of producing, installing, maintaining and replacing City signs with the new name may be required to be paid for by the person or organization requesting the name change.
- The naming or renaming of City streets, facilities, park land, and park facilities may be, but is not limited to, in honor of individuals, living or deceased, who have made significant and outstanding contributions of services, land, funds, or goods to the City, State, nation or world.
- When evaluating naming or renaming requests, consideration should be given to the following criteria:
 1. Overall benefit to the City of Des Moines.
 2. Positive reflection on the City.
 3. Purpose and Mission of the City.
 4. The proposed name is well known to all citizens and/or acknowledged by other national, state or local community organizations for lasting significance.
 5. Citizen input and support for name change/commemoration.
 6. No duplication of names or repeated recognition of a specific person or group.
- Preference will be given to naming City streets, facilities, park land, and park facilities that have not been previously named to honor a specific person or event.

Attachment No. 3 contains the full policy, which was adopted on May 4, 2009, through Roll Call No. 09-802.

It appears that the impetus for the renaming began with a Des Moines Register article written by Marc Hansen, dated May 21, 2009. The article provides a summary of Luther Smith's life, first as a young child learning to fly aircraft at the Des Moines Airport and then his subsequent accomplishments as a World War II pilot and prisoner of war. The article is Attachment No. 4.

It is apparent that the article prompted the request by Dr Hebron, as it is referenced in his narrative.

In accordance with the City naming policy, Aviation Department staff requested a review by the City's Legal, Police, Fire, Information Technology, and Engineering Departments, as well as the Historic Preservation Commission.

The responses from the Police, Fire, and Information Technology Departments indicate that there will be no impact on these departments. The Engineering Department's response provides some cost data concerning potential changes needed to street and highway signs, which have been summarized in the Fiscal Impact section of this communication. The Legal Department response refers to the numerous places in the City Code and the Airport Board Regulations that refer to the Des Moines International Airport. Changes to those documents would occur by amendment.

Staff has not received a formal response from the Historic Preservation Commission, but did receive comments from one of its members, Mr. Denny Marchand. His response follows:

The Tuskegee Airmen were by far the most unwanted group of pilots in WWII. Although highly qualified, and skilled, it took Eleanor Roosevelt's special touch to help get them in combat where they could risk their lives in service of their country. Luiher Smith is an Iowan War Hero. His accomplishments through life serve as a reminder that anyone can overcome great odds and make a difference. I would strongly advocate re-naming Des Moines International Airport to Luther Smith International Airport as a tremendous way to honor Luther Smith's past, and a part of history that the citizens of Des Moines will always be proud of.

In accordance with the naming policy, staff has gathered a significant amount of information which is summarized as follows:

General Comments Concerning Both Proposals:

Aviation Department staff offers the following comments using the criteria established by the naming policy:

1. Overall Benefit to the City of Des Moines

Determining the overall benefit to the City of Des Moines is, at best, difficult. If there are any tangible benefits, this can only be realized over time. There are no known immediate financial benefits to the City or the Airport.

Airports located in large populated cities with multiple airports have, out of necessity, adopted other names to avoid confusion. Over time, the public has become familiar with many of the names of these major airports (LaGuardia Airport, etc.), but they do not represent a valid comparison to Des Moines.

For those airports in U.S. cities similar to Des Moines, there are cases where airports have been named for other than the primary city in which they are located. Examples are as follows:

Airports named after individuals:

T.F. Green Int'l Airport
Austin Straubel Int'l Airport
Bishop International Airport
Hector International Airport
Norman Y. Mineta Airport
Eugene Bradley International
Will Rogers World Airport
Gerald R. Ford Airport
General Mitchell Int'l Airport

Airports named for other geographic regions:

Capital City Airport
Tri-Cities Airport
Eastern Iowa Airport
Southwest Florida Airport
Valley International Airport

As is evident, these airports are not identifiable to the general public. It is clear to staff that to the average traveler, the location of these airports is obscured because of the chosen name. From a marketing and branding perspective, staff believes that any renaming will be detrimental. People from around the world seeking air travel to Des Moines may experience difficulty identifying the best or closest airport. The Iowa Caucuses, along with a number of other events, give Des Moines an international position.

Over the course of the past five years the Airport has spent a considerable amount of time, effort, and dollars to market and brand the Airport. The Board established a committee in 2004 for the purpose of developing an identifying logo. The Airport spent many hours and over \$5,000.00 on this project.

Additionally, the Board has authorized and expended over \$500,000 on marketing and advertising efforts during the past five years. We have used the logo exclusively in all our marketing materials along with television and print advertising. Changing the name of the Airport will require development of a new logo and staff will also need to create a successful marketing campaign.

2. Positive Reflection on the City

It is difficult for staff to evaluate if either proposed change will be a positive reflection on the City. This is very subjective and can only be determined over time. In the case of Luther Smith, because he is still living, this perspective could change in the future as well.

3. Purpose and Mission of the City

The City's Vision Statement is -- We aspire to be the city of choice for ourselves and future generations - beautiful, clean and safe. We will achieve our vision through a healthy economy, strong businesses, vital neighborhoods, excellent schools, a vibrant downtown, and extensive recreational and cultural opportunities. We will preserve our City's friendly, hometown atmosphere and celebrate the diversity of its people. We require innovative governance that is accessible, accountable, and efficient with a system of funding that is fair, affordable, and stable.

The City's Mission Statement is -- To provide and maintain essential services that meet the collective basic needs of the citizens of Des Moines and to identify and seize opportunities for a higher quality of life.

It is not immediately clear whether either naming proposal would significantly deter from, or support, the Vision Statement or Mission Statement of the City.

Comments Specific to the Luther Smith Proposal:

Very briefly, Mr. Luther Smith was born and raised in Des Moines, graduated from Roosevelt High School, and received two engineering degrees from the University of Iowa. He learned how to fly aircraft at Des Moines Airport under the instruction of Howard Gregory before joining the military and becoming a Tuskegee Airman.

Mr. Smith is a World War II veteran and was wounded in combat when he bailed out of his P-51 fighter plane over Yugoslavia on his 133rd combat mission. He was captured and spent several months as a prisoner of war.

In 2007, President Bush honored Mr. Smith and 200 other airmen with the Congressional Gold Medal. Mr. Smith has also received the Daughters of the American Revolution Medal of Honor.

4. **The proposed name is well known to all citizens and/or acknowledged by other national, state or local community organizations for lasting significance.**

It is unknown and difficult to determine how many people in the community recognize the name Luther Smith. Staff is confident that there are several people supportive of this proposal. This is evident by the information that was received and included in this communication.

5. **Citizen input and support for name change/commemoration.**

The City has received the following letters of support and additional documentation related to the Luther Smith request:

Attachment No. 5	Letter from Dr. Sally Mason, President, University of Iowa
Attachment No. 6	Letter from Mr. Robert D. Ray, former Governor of Iowa
Attachment No. 7	Packet of information provided by Mr. James Bowman
Attachment No. 8	Packet of information provided by Ms. Judith McNamara
Attachment No. 14	Additional letters of support and opposition

It is anticipated that other support, both for and against, changing the name of the Airport will be provided to the Board and Council during the public hearing process. It should also be noted that comments associated with the newspaper articles surrounding the renaming of the Airport are largely opposed to any renaming.

6. **No duplication of names or repeated recognition of a specific person or group.**

No other airport has been named in honor of Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith has previously been honored in Des Moines at two different locations. First, Mr. Smith is included in the recognition of the Tuskegee Airmen at the Fort Des Moines Museum. Additionally, in honor of the Tuskegee Airmen, there is a replica P-51 aircraft located at the entrance to the Iowa Air National Guard Base. The Tuskegee Airman Memorial was dedicated on November 9, 2002 and sponsored by the Fort Des Moines Park and Education Center. The display features the names of Tuskegee Airmen on a plaque mounted on the base of the replica aircraft. Mr. Smith's name also appears on the side of the aircraft. Attachments 9 through 11 are pictures of the replica P-51 aircraft, the plaque, and the side of the aircraft depicting Mr. Smith's name.

