

Ontario International Airport Authority (OIAA)

League of Women Voters of Mt. Baldy Area

Observer Report by Karen M Rosenthal

June 2019-May 2020

The City of Ontario and San Bernardino County developed the OIAA in August 2012 by enacting a Joint Powers Agreement. The OIAA was formed following the return to local control of this regional airport from LAWA (Los Angeles World Airports). The OIAA provides overall direction for the management, operations, development and marketing of Ontario International Airport (ONT).

The Commissioners:

Ontario City Mayor ProTem Alan D. Wapner (President)
Retired Riverside Mayor Ronald O. Loveridge (Vice President)
Ontario Council Member Jim W. Bowman
San Bernardino County Supervisor Curt Hagman
Julia Gouw, Retired Business Executive

Executive Staff:

Mark A. Thorpe, CEO
Lori D. Ballance, General Counsel,
John M Schubert, CFO
Claudia Isbell, Board Clerk

Regular meetings of the Ontario International Airport Authority are scheduled at 2 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month at the OIAA Administration Building at 1923 E. Avion Avenue, Ontario, California 91761. (South side of the airport)

In the past 12 months (May 2019-2020) 19 meetings were scheduled, eight meetings were held as regularly scheduled, three meetings were adjourned to another day and time, two meetings were canceled, and five special meetings were held. The average meeting length is 11-25 minutes. I attended 6 meetings, two on-line.

The meeting audiences are staff, vendors, service providers and contractors. Occasionally community members appear or submit comments regarding excessive night-time noise and flight patterns by the airborne freight companies.

The agendas are clearly written and accessible with some backup material on a well-designed website. The Consent Calendar is the main focus of the regularly scheduled meetings with up to 12 items of business listed. These items generally authorize the CEO to negotiate and execute contracts with contractors, vendors, service providers and consultants, as necessary. Most of the monthly business is currently on the consent calendar. There are rarely any discussions or questions.

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Significant 2019/2020 accomplishments pre Covid-19:

1. Implementing new logos and a widespread marketing campaign.
2. Expansion of domestic airlines and Chinese airlines serving ONT including the return of Jet Blue and future increase in non-stop trips to additional airports by currently contracted airlines.
3. Significant increases in volume of passengers and cargo tonnage over prior years.
4. Terminal improvements and expansion of passenger amenities.

In 2019 the number of air travelers at ONT increased by more than 10% over the same period in 2018 to more than 5.5 million. According to a national aviation newspaper Ontario is the fastest growing airport in the country. All concepts of travel changed in February of 2020 with the Covid-19 virus pandemic.

The required resolution was passed in March and again in April declaring the continued existence of a local emergency relative to the Covid-19 outbreak and indicating compliance with health authorities' guidance in response to the outbreak.

The Authority approved deferral of certain tenant rents and fees and adjustments allowed within the parameters of the CARES Act. There have been significant impacts at ONT. In the first five months of 2020 passenger air traffic fell considerably, especially in March and April due to the Stay-in-Place orders mandated by the CV19 pandemic. Freight increased 22% and mail numbers dropped. The escalators in both terminals are being replaced during this very slow time.

At the May 2020 meeting it was announced that a tunnel proposal by Elon Musk and his Boring Company was being considered by the City of Rancho Cucamonga to provide access from the RC Metrolink station area to the OA at a cost considerably less than expanding either the L Line or a separate San Bernardino line developed by SANBAG (San Bernardino Associated Governments) to the airport.

The League of Women Voters Government Position:

The League believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination among levels of government, effective enforcement and well-defined channels for citizen input and review. It appears that the OIAA is being directed by a very capable and experienced staff who are responding in an appropriate way, especially to this landmark emergency situation.
