



# KOOTENAI COUNTY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

JAI NELSON

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## Media Release

**From:** Commissioner Jai Nelson  
**Date:** October 31, 2014  
**Re:** Airport Director Dismissal and Airport Issues

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Recently, regarding issues at the airport, there has been reporting and comments attributed to me which are inaccurate. I did not support Mr. Delavan's dismissal. I was not in attendance in the meeting when he was dismissed. Furthermore, I do not support how the dismissal was handled. Mr. Delavan is a long-term county employee who has served as the Airport Director for many years. He has been a stalwart advocate for the airport. During the past ten years, he has overseen nearly \$18 million in FAA grant funds for airport improvement projects. Under his direction, our airport is becoming much closer to operating as a self-sustaining department. In the past few years, fee based revenues are steadily increasing and the airport is much less reliant on taxpayers for operational support.

In the last four years, I do not recall receiving a single complaint regarding services from any of our airport tenants or aviation customers. In fact, one tenant recently stated that our airport is "one of the best airports, from a user and operational standpoint, of its' size" and that our airport is an "economic engine" whose tenants may move elsewhere if they are not a welcomed and valued member of our business community.

Concerning the hiring process for a new airport director, I've reached out to our volunteer Airport Advisory Board stating:

*I feel it's vital for our Airport Advisory Board to participate and have extensive input into the airport director hiring process. Furthermore, it's inappropriate for the current Commissioners to fill this position as two commissioner seats will have new members in early January. I'm asking you to support my position and voice this support at an upcoming meeting on Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. in our Boardroom.*

There are several challenging issues regarding the long-term vision and plan for our airport. The mission of the airport is be responsive to the community it serves. I support this mission and I'm currently advocating for a collaborative approach to find consensus on vehicular roadway and air transportation conflicts.

I'm seeking resolution on long-range planning goals for roadway and runway conflicts in order to determine if roadways should bend, or runways should not extend. A future runway extension is proposed when and if there is a demand for a longer airstrip. In the end, the FAA will make the final decision for funding airport improvement projects.

Planning for an airport is crucial as our community grows and should be flexible as the community's vision and needs change. This year, I've been involved in a transportation planning reconciliation process and the information presented from all jurisdictions was insightful and provided a better perspective of their areas of concern. This process is continuing.

Currently, I'm speaking with potential aviation planning consultants to facilitate public outreach and define a practical process for moving forward to reach a positive resolution in order for our airport to be "*responsive to the community it serves.*"

For comments and questions please contact Commissioner Jai Nelson at (208) 446-1604 or via email at [jnelson@kcgov.us](mailto:jnelson@kcgov.us).