

**GAINESVILLE-ALACHUA COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY**  
**Monday, March 9, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.**  
**Airline Passenger Terminal – Board Room**  
**Special Called Meeting**  
**Highlights**

**Call To Order By the Chair** – Chair Kinnon Thomas called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

**Invocation** – Mr. Fugate delivered the invocation.

**Pledge of Allegiance** – Mr. Posner led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**GACRAA General Counsel:** Mr. Blake Fugate was present.

**Roll Call**

Authority Members Present: Teresa Callen, Wes Maul, Fred Posner, Brand Renton, Staci Sims and Kinnon Thomas were present were present at roll call.

John Hooker arrived at 10:15 a.m.

Due to a flight cancellation on the previous evening, Mr. Hayes-Santos flew to GNV on the morning of the meeting and arrived at 11:05 a.m.

Brian Crawford was absent.

**Determination of a Quorum:** A quorum was present at roll call.

Gainesville Chamber of Commerce representative, Ian Fletcher. was absent. City of Gainesville liaison, Forrest Eddleton, was absent.

ADK Executive Search consultant Blake Astran was present. ADK Project Manager Sia Schatz participated for the first 30-minutes of the meeting via Teams Meeting.

**Adoption of Agenda**

***Ms. Sims moved to adopt the agenda. Mr. Posner seconded the motion. Motion passed.***

**Airport Business: CEO Final Candidate Interviews**

Mr. Fugate stated that this public meeting is subject to Florida Sunshine Law and any notes taken by the Board members and staff are subject to Public Records Requests. He indicated that the Board members were not required to turn in their notes at the conclusion of the meeting, but they should keep the available if a Public Records Request for their notes is submitted to GACRAA.

Mr. Thomas stated that each candidate should be asked the same questions.

Mr. Fugate stated that additional questions may be asked to help clarify a candidate's answer.

Mr. Thomas proposed that each Board member, in order of where they were seated, ask a question in the order presented in an ADK handout, which contained 12 questions. (Exhibit A). He also acknowledged that Mr. Hayes-Santos proposed the following questions to be added to the list as questions 13 and 14:

**Question 13)** Gainesville is expected to start reconstructing its main commercial runway within the next year. Have you managed a runway reconstruction while the runway remained operational? If yes, please walk us through your experience on the project. If you have not, please walk us through your experience managing a major capital project while the airport remains fully operational. What were your primary considerations for balancing the construction schedule with federal compliance and the passenger experience?

**Question 14)** Air service development is a top priority for the airport. Walk us through specifically how you would approach attracting a new airline or expanding routes within your first 12-18 months. What data would you analyze, which stakeholders would you engage, what incentives would you offer, and how would you measure success?

Mr. Thomas recommended omitting ADK question # 9: “How do you define ethical behavior for yourself and others?”

It was the consensus of the Board to skip ADK question # 9 and add Mr. Hayes-Santos’ questions as # 13 and 14.

Mr. Astran recommended that the Board also allow time for each candidate to ask questions of the Board.

Interviews were scheduled for the following times:

Interview actual time:

Paul Mehrlich: 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

10:33 a.m. to 11:25 a.m.

Jason Devillier: 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

12:03 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Stephen Clark: 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

1:25 p.m. to 2:28 p.m.

*Each of the above candidates toured the airport individually with CEO Allan Penksa for 1 hour prior to his scheduled interview time.*

*A refreshment break and comfort break followed the conclusion of the interview with Paul Mehrlich.*

*A longer refreshment break and comfort break followed the conclusion of the interview with Jason Devillier.*

*With the conclusion of the interview with Stephen Clark at 2:28 p.m., the Board took a quick 5-minute break. When the meeting resumed, the Board members discussed their preferred candidate(s). Chair Thomas also invited comments from staff and members of the public.*

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Candidate Preference</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Adrian Hayes-Santos	Stephen Clark	Due to Economic Development Experience
Fred Posner	Paul Mehrlich, Stephen Clark, Jason Devillier	In order of preference
Brandi Renton	Stephen Clark, Paul Mehrlich	
Wes Maul	Paul Mehrlich, Stephen Clark	Economic Development should be driven by UF, City, Chamber and County, and not by the Airport CEO.
John Hooker	Paul Mehlich or Stephen Clark	Toss-up

Teresa Callen	Paul Mehrlich or Stephen Clark	Toss-up
Staci Sims	Paul Mehrlich, Stephen Clark	In order of preference, Paul # 1 as he is the only candidate that meets all the requirements of the CEO job advertisement
Kinnon Thomas	Paul Mehrlich	

***A lengthy discussion followed regarding the role of the Airport CEO: economic development versus maintaining and operating the airport.***

***Mr. Hayes-Santos moved to offer the CEO position to Stephen Clark. Ms. Callen seconded the motion. A roll call vote followed: Ms. Callen – aye, Mr. Hayes-Santos – aye, Dr. Hooker – nay, Mr. Maul – nay, Mr. Posner – nay, Ms. Renton – aye, Ms. Sims – nay and Mr. Thomas – nay. The motion failed 3-5.***

***Mr. Hayes-Santos moved to offer the CEO position to Paul Mehrlich. Ms. Callen seconded the motion. A roll call vote followed: Mr. Hayes-Santos – aye, Dr. Hooker – aye, Mr. Maul – aye, Mr. Posner – aye, Ms. Renton – aye, Ms. Sims – aye, Ms. Callen – aye, Mr. Thomas – aye. The motion passed 8-0.***

***Mr. Hayes-Santos moved to amend the motion to offer the position to Paul Mehrlich to include the following: if Employment Contract negotiations with Mr. Mehrlich do not work out, then offer the position to Mr. Clark. Ms. Sims seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.***

**Adjournment**

***There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.***

**GACRAA Monthly Meeting**

\_\_\_\_\_

Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Secretary/Treasurer

\_\_\_\_\_

Date



**Exhibit A**  
**March 9, 2026 GACRAA Special Meeting Highlights**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
**Gainesville Regional Airport**

Completed By: \_\_\_\_\_

POINT SCALE IF DESIRED - NOT REQUIRED

5 - Outstanding  
 4 - Good  
 3 - Average  
 2 - Fair  
 1 - Insufficient/Incomplete

	QUESTIONS	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B	CANDIDATE C
1.	<i>Welcome Candidate</i>			
2.	We have had an opportunity to review your submission, please tell us <i>briefly</i> why your background prepares you to be our Chief Executive Officer?			
3.	Describe how you would lead GNV in the identification and monitoring of strategic objectives and goals and the advancement of the airport's vision.			
4.	Share your experience in developing and managing other capital projects and operating budgets. Please discuss your experience in airport funding mechanisms, specifically in managing grant processes to obtain funding.			
5.	What is your experience in working with the local FSD, FAA and other regulatory stakeholders?			

	QUESTIONS	CANDIDATE A	CANDIDATE B	CANDIDATE C	
6.	The CEO role is accountable for a large workforce. If selected, how would you initially go about establishing rapport with the airport staff? Share how you have inspired performance and developed and nurtured the skills of your staff?				
7.	Describe your approach to managing conflict, building consensus, and facilitating collaboration among various stakeholders, both internal and external.				
8.	In general terms, what three challenges and scenarios are you best at addressing? Conversely, what 2-3 areas do you need for more exposure or growth in?				
9.	How do you define ethical behavior for yourself and others?				
10.	What value-added contributions will you make in the first 90 days of your tenure with the Airport?				

	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>CANDIDATE A</b>	<b>CANDIDATE B</b>	<b>CANDIDATE C</b>	
11.	Are you familiar with the Gainesville area? What excites you about living in Northern Florida.				
12.	In 10 words or less, why should we hire you? What does your resume not tell us about you?				
13.	Gainesville is expected to start reconstructing its main commercial runway within the next year. Have you managed a runway reconstruction while the runway remained operational? If yes, please walk us through your experience on the project. If you have not, please walk us through your experience managing a major capital project while the airport remains fully operational. What were your primary considerations for balancing the construction schedule with federal compliance and the passenger experience?				

14.	<p>Air service development is a top priority for the airport. Walk us through specifically how you would approach attracting a new airline or expanding routes within your first 12-18 months. What data would you analyze, which stakeholders would you engage, what incentives would you offer, and how would you measure success?</p>			
To Candidate: Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not discussed today?				
To the Interview Panel: Is there anything else that anyone would like to ask the candidate?				
Thank the Candidate. (ADK will escort them out).				

Notes: