

Mt. Vernon Airport Authority
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners
Held March 14, 2019 at 6:00 PM

Present: Gary Chesney	Chairman
Eddie Lee	Vice Chairman
Mike Ancona	Treasurer
Marty Cox	Commissioner

Absent: Ryan Wellmaker Secretary

Staff: Chris Collins
Sheila Jolly-Scrivner

Guests: Don Lewis, Brian Hubbard, Nikki Mellot, Alexis Sawyer, and Wil & Tressie Downs.

PUBLIC INPUT

Hearing none, Chairman Chesney moved forwards with the Agenda.

OLD BUSINESS

Restaurant

Mr. Collins noted that he and Mrs. Jolly Scrivner were visited by representatives of the Tumbleweed Grille on Monday morning. Tumbleweed Grille would like to enter into a Lease Agreement to operate the restaurant. Since the airport has been in discussions with the Bonnie Café for several weeks, Mr. Collins asked both entities to submit proposals. A Special Meeting would be scheduled for Thursday, March 14th at which time each entity would be given 20 to 25 minutes with the Commissioners. Mr. Collins informed everyone present that each Commissioner had both proposals in hand. The next step would be to determine who would go first and who would go second. Mr. Collins presented a quarter and asked for a volunteer to conduct a coin toss. Commissioner Lee agreed to flip the coin and noted the winner of the toss could either take the first slot or defer to the second. He then asked for one of the entities to call the toss. Tressie Downs of Tumbleweed Grille won the toss and deferred to the second slot. Motion was made by Commissioner Cox and seconded by Commissioner Lee to enter into an Executive Session to discuss Contracts. Upon roll call vote, all were in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

Hearing none, Chairman Chesney moved forwards with the Agenda.

OTHER BUSINESS

Upon returning to Open Session, Chairman Chesney addressed the restaurant decision. He began by thanking both operators and expressed it is a shame the airport only has one restaurant. There are no losers. Only one can be selected. Both presentations were strong and both would be a great fit for Team MVN. Chairman Chesney stated it seems unfair to have to make a decision – one of the toughest this Board has had to make. When asked if there were any motions, motion was made by Commissioner Ancona and seconded by Commissioner Lee to select the Bonnie Café as the airport's next restaurant. Upon roll call vote, all were in favor.

There being no additional Executive Session items, no additional Other Business items, and no further items for discussion on the Agenda, motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Upon roll call vote, all were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Executive Session

March 14, 2019

BONNIE CAFÉ:

Mr. Collins introduced Mr. Brian Hubbard, owner of Bonnie Café. Mr. Hubbard provided the following facts about the Bonnie Café:

- Established in Bonnie, Illinois in 2012
- Four locations (Bonnie, Nashville, Centralia, and West Frankfort)
- 80-100 total employees
- Family run business (son manages Bonnie, wife manages West Frankfort). Hired management at Nashville and West Frankfort
- Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner – Tuesday through Sunday
- Good home cooked food at reasonable prices. Friendly staff. Great reputation.
- Same specials served each day at each location
- The business has 12,000 – 14,000 social media followers
- History of giving back to local causes through revenue sharing nights

As for a potential airport location, Mr. Hubbard said the following:

- Mr. Hubbard will manage the airport location
- There will be 20-25 employees at the airport location
- Sunday lunch buffet. Possible Friday and Saturday night buffet
- Will focus on developing the breakfast market from the start

Discussion ensued with the Commissioners asking questions about how soon the Bonnie Café would open, if anything is needed, and are there any demands from the airport.

Mr. Hubbard stated he wants to get started as soon as possible. He explained he will be adding/upgrading the restaurant equipment (at his own cost - \$20,000) as more equipment is needed to handle the expected volume. Mr. Hubbard indicated the Colonel R.D. White Museum would need relocated as the business needs the area for additional seating. He noted the Bonnie Café has a dedicated equipment maintenance technician to help maintain equipment. Mr. Hubbard would like the airport to invest in new tables, chairs, and booths to ensure an updated professional look. He promised to establish an equipment fund to re-invest in the facility.

Mr. Hubbard concluded by thanking the Commissioners for the opportunity and informed them that he and his wife started their restaurant careers at the airport as the Mt. Vernon Airport Buffet in 1997. Treatment of the business was different under the administration of that time. He is impressed with Team MVN and seeks a long term relationship.

Executive Session (continued)

March 14, 2019

TUMBLEWEED GRILLE:

Mr. Collins introduced the owners of the Tumbleweed Grille Will & Tressie Downs. Also present was Lead Waitress Nikki Mellot and Ms. Abby Sawyer from Sysco Foods. The Tumbleweed Team provided the following facts about the Tumbleweed Grille:

- Owned by Will & Tressie Downs
- Open seven days per week, breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- 20 total employees
- Located West of Bluford, Illinois at the former Kimmy's Kitchen
- Although only open two weeks, the owners and Ms. Mellot have extensive restaurant experience (Bonnie Café over 20 years, Stormy's at the airport, Shenanigan's)
- Serving all you can eat crab legs on Saturday nights (only restaurant in Jefferson County currently doing so)
- Hosts benefits for local causes
- Large social media following
- Different specials each day
- Good food, great servers

As for a potential airport location, Mr. & Mrs. Downs said the following:

- Seek long term lease on Team MVN
- Open seven days per week, breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- New business, but can do something very special
- One location – 100% dedication
- Nice casual atmosphere with options
- Bring entertainment and the bar back to the airport
- Use the patio, Pepsi is sending umbrellas
- Energy!

Discussion ensued with the Commissioners asking questions about how soon the Tumbleweed Grille would open, if anything is needed, and are there any demands from the airport.

Mr. & Mrs. Downs noted they would like to get started immediately. The present kitchen equipment is satisfactory. If more equipment is needed, the Downs mentioned an equipment supplier in St. Louis could be contacted. Food Supplier Sysco could help also. As for demand, the present location is much smaller and does not have an automatic dishwasher – so the airport is a tremendous upgrade facilities wise. The Downs indicated the Colonel R.D. White Museum would need relocated as the business needs the area for additional seating. They would also like to re-open the bar.

The Tumbleweed Team concluded by noting they were willing to work with the airport on anything, food, specials, – even their name. They thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity and reiterated they will work as a team with the airport to ensure success.

Executive Session (continued)

March 14, 2019

Discussion ensued about the difficult choice that lay ahead. The Commissioner agreed both entities were determined, qualified, energetic, and would be a great fit on Team MVN. The Commissioners looked at the menus and pricing supplied by both operations. Business experience and time in service was scrutinized by the Commissioners. The Tumbleweed Grille as an entity is only two weeks old. It was the consensus of the Commissioners that if there were no competitor, the Tumbleweed Grille would be a fine addition to the team. However, since there is a contest – the scale seems to be leaning toward the Bonnie Café. Mr. Collins mentioned the social media “exploration campaign” that occurred in the week before the Tumbleweed Grille owners visited the airport (the airport had been working with the Bonnie Café since November, 2018). Thousands of locals expected the Bonnie Café to be at the airport. He noted the decision was entirely the Commissioner’s, but social media is the future of marketing and information. The Commissioners debated and established a grading scale on a one to ten basis for each entity. After each Commissioner expressed his choice, the selection favored the Bonnie Cafe