

Friday - February 28, 1958

Council met in special session to consider the report of James C. Buckley Inc. Present on roll call 8: Battin, Bratrud, Humiston, Perdue, Stojack, Goering, Tollefson and Mayor Anderson. Absent 1, Jensen.

Mayor Anderson announced that this special meeting was called to hear the report from Mr. James C. Buckley.

Mayor Anderson said there was a special committee of the Council that has been working on this, consisting of Dr. Humiston as chairman, Mrs. Goering and Mr. Tollefson.

At this time Mayor Anderson turned the meeting over to Dr. Humiston.

Dr. Humiston said the function of this committee was to outline to Mr. Buckley and his firm, the questions which they wanted answered as the City Council. The committee themselves did not take any part in the preparation of the report, all the Committee did was to pose questions to Mr. Buckley and his firm he said. Essentially, there were three questions asked; 1. Does Tacoma need a municipally owned airport? 2. If so, where should it be? 3. What are the financial considerations involved, initially, and so far as the operation of an airport is concerned in the future.

Now, Mr. Buckley is here to give his report.

Mr. James C. Buckley explained that he understood their assignment to be; to determine whether there was a need of an airport in Tacoma from the standpoint of the economical welfare of the City, from the standpoint of jobs, payrolls and tax base and not to approach it from the standpoint of pleasure flying or air transportation as a recreation activity. He said they have given their attention to the question to whether Tacoma needs a publicly owned airport from the standpoint of its affect on the city's ability to continue to grow, and to grow prosperously rather than for any other reasons. To that end, he said, they looked first into the question as to whether there was a need of a publicly owned airport at Tacoma from the standpoint of the use of air service and found there are very serious gaps in the access to scheduled air service, not from the standpoint of trunk line air service, which is available from the Seattle Tacoma Airport. He said unless Tacoma has good access to scheduled local air service the City is becoming more and more shut off from business interchange from other cities at a time when the use of schedule air service is growing more rapidly, both nationally and in the Northwest, than is the use of trunk line air carriers. Therefore, he said, they feel from the standpoint of Tacoma's access to schedule service by local service airlines that the absence of a conveniently available Tacoma airport in which the West Coast Airlines can operate, is a very substantial barrier to Tacoma maintaining and improving its position in business with other communities of the United States. Mr. Buckley said that about 10 years ago they found that the use of aircraft by individual business in their own flying was a relatively minor matter, back in 1948 such use accounted for approximately 15% of the total hours flown by non-airline aircraft. Most of the hours then were flown only in instructional flying and pleasure flying and airplane was only beginning to become useful to business as a private vehicle. Today, however, he said, over 45% of the total hours that are flown by a non-airline airplanes are flown in airplanes owned by business and operating in business service and increasingly the availability of an airport at which business aircraft can be operated has become an important location factor. Whether your local business can afford to expand here or whether new business can locate here will depend in part on the availability

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of an airport at which they can use their own aircraft in hours service and which can be used by the aircraft of other company's coming to do business with them. Here in Tacoma they find there is no convenient airport that can reasonably serve this need.

Mr. Buckley stated that they feel from the standpoint of the ability of Tacoma business to expand here and to compete effectively with other businesses from the standpoint of Tacoma to attract new business, the convenient availability of an adequate permanent airport is a very essential part of the Community's economic asset.

Mr. Buckley said they have studied the trends which have been developing in the City and found obviously that Tacoma is going to grow, but the big question is, if that growth is going to be accompanied by a maintenance or improvement of the level of prosperity or whether it isn't. You have to have new basic industry to provide new basic jobs. He said there was no question at all about the fact that Tacoma needs a permanent, conveniently available airport.

Mr. Buckley said in their findings they felt that Tacoma should have a publicly owned airport. He said a publicly owned airport has added advantages, it can secure grants and aid from the Federal Government which will considerably reduce the burden of providing such an airport on local taxpayers. He said they recommend the airport which Tacoma needs should be provided as a publicly owned facility. He said from the standpoint of what kind of an airport Tacoma needs they have established two primary considerations. 1. From the standpoint of business use and 2. from the standpoint of local air service the airport should be conveniently available. Based on country wide experience. That means it should be 10 miles or less from the center of the City, secondly the airports capacity should not be limited by existing air space use, it would not be a sound use of public money to develop an airport at a location where the air above the airport, and the air above the approaches to the airport, is already substantially used by aircraft from Seattle Tacoma to McChord or other airports. When they applied those two basic factors plus the requirement of an initial runway 5,000 feet long and an ultimate runway 8 to 10,000 feet long to the 22 sites which have been considered from time to time in the area, they found that only two sites could meet those requirements. Those were McChord Air Force Base and the Peninsula airport site. Mr. Buckley said they have rechecked the cost estimates for the development of the site with the City Engineer very carefully and jointly have come up with a revised figure of \$1,645,000 against the original figure of \$1,667,000. He said he finds that this is within the City's budget and believes the project should go forward under that basis. From the standpoint of revenue and expense the airport should earn all of its operation and maintenance expense beginning with the first year, therefore he said, it should not be an annual burden on the taxpayers as far as the operation and expense are concerned.

After Mr. Buckley had completed his report, Mayor Anderson asked if any of the Council members wished to ask any questions of Mr. Buckley.

Mrs. Goering said that she felt the need was well reported and very well documented and contains information that they did not have because of the surveys that was taken among the industries. Mrs. Goering said there was no comparison to proximity to industrial areas or fog danger, and those were the two questions that they were keenly interested in. Mr.

Mr. Buckley said the bridge and transmission towers do not constitute landing hazards and said that fog would be no particular problem at the site according to the CAI officials.

Mrs. Goering said the thing that disturbs her, was the lack of advise on financing contained in the report. She was not convinced that the operation of the field would be financially sound. Mrs. Goering said that no where in their ledger have they looked into the matter of maintenance, like locating and relocating sewers, watermains, electric power lines, roads and the inconvenience to the citizens as a whole. Those are the pitfalls that have not been completely explored because of this financing problem. She said the City's 15 mills of revenue which would pay for this airport are already pledged to the citizens of Tacoma for other services. She said she could not see how they can use this money unless it is repayed within a reasonable time, and it couldn't be done under this arrangement. She said the airports' feasibility is based on the \$350,000 contribution from the Port of Tacoma. Noting that the report indicates the Port of Tacoma's pledge is unsatisfactory.

Mr. Buckley said it is true that a more firm pledge by the Port would make it easier to operate the airport, but if that was not forthcoming it was no major obstacle and no reason not to go ahead.

Mrs. Goering said she is not against airports but is against this system of financing.

Mr. Buckley said he thought this was a problem of a policy matter.

Mayor Anderson left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Bratrud said he hoped the general public doesn't have the same pessimistic attitude on all these bond issues or the whole thing will go down the "sewer", he added.

Mr. Perdue said he heartedly disapproved of what seems to be Mrs. Goerings attitude and pessimism on the matter. He said he felt that the investment that is necessary here is just a little more than what the City puts into the parks every year, and this would be just a one time proposition. He felt that the good an airport would do Tacoma from the job point of view and economic basis, is far in excess of the money that is being spent here and felt it would come back to Tacoma over and over again.

Mr. Bratrud agreed with Mr. Perdue wholeheartedly.

Mr. Tollefson said they employed Mr. Buckley to answer the questions on an airport, adding that the firm had answered all questions that were possible to answer.

Dr. Battin pointed out that the firm had said the airport was feasible adding it was up-to the Council to make it work. Dr. Battin said he felt Mrs. Goerings points are largely doubts of her own council perhaps and of herself on what she might do about this in the future. He said he felt her criticisms were not economically sound.

Reno Odlin said he was happy to know that the Buckley firm found that the findings of his sub committee were borne out by their further studies and investigation. Mr. Odlin said he would like to make a report on behalf of the 200 people that did quite a lot of work on this sub committee. He said he had the utmost respect for the conscientious investigation on this whole question that Mrs. Goering has given, but he said, they are up against a question in Tacoma now of adopting a proposal that he considers pretty vital to the future of this City. We have the requirement of getting out a pretty substantial vote

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and getting them to vote on all the propositions that are on the ballot. " I would hate to have a conflict over policy which might jeopardize the success of the overall program." He said, there are a good many people who feel that we should not build any airport and some who do not feel it should be built at the site selected, but he said, he felt they have a right to their opinion. He said he would hate to give them material to argue and cloud the issue up that they would lose the major ambitions that many of them have for their community in modernizing and making a real city out of Tacoma because of some relatively minor difference. He said he was disturbed with Mr. Buckley's report that Tacoma is lagging and not on its toes. "Let's get our town off its heels and on its toes and go someplace." We have not kept up with the growth and development pace of other comparable cities in our area.

It was then moved by Mr. Bratrud that the Council accept the report submitted by James C. Buckley Inc. Motion seconded by Tollefson; Ayes 7; Nays 0; Absent 2, Jensen & Mayor Anderson.

Council then adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Attest:

Josephine Melton
City Clerk

John W. Anderson
President of the City Council