



Zelienople Airport Authority

100 Tasa Dr.
Zelienople, PA 16063

March 15, 2019

The Honorable Conor Lamb
U.S. House of Representatives
504 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15228

Re: BAMR Letter of Support

Dear Representative Lamb:

Thank you for your service to our country as a United States Marine, an Assistant United States Attorney, and now as a Member of Congress. I am a Vietnam Veteran and Gold Star Father. My purpose in writing to you today is to explain the importance of BAMR to the Airport's modernization program—involving strip mine reclamation, facilities modernization, roadway and aviation safety and job-creation—to the "Cranberry Corridor" extending from Cranberry Township through and north of Zelienople Borough.

I am the manager of The Zelienople Airport, which is owned by The Zelienople Airport Authority, and I have served in this role throughout the events I recount in this letter. The Authority was created by the Borough of Zelienople. Most of the Airport's land and facilities are located in Beaver County. I also own a company called Pittsburgh Jet Center that operates from the Zelienople Airport.

BAMR's Important Role to an Important Regional Airport

The Zelienople Airport

Zelienople Airport is a federally obligated airport located six miles north of the Cranberry Township business district and is one mile from Interstate 79 located in Beaver County. The airport is a model airport in the State of Pennsylvania that has been going through a revitalization program for the last nine years by promoting private and public investment, encouraged by the FAA and Pennsylvania Bureau of Aviation as a critical component of small airports in order to survive.

The Cranberry Corridor & Airport Modernization

Since 2003, the burgeoning commercial growth of the Cranberry Corridor has accentuated the need for a regional airport closer than the Beaver County Airport, the Butler County Airport, and Pittsburgh International Airport. However, the Zelenople Airport required modernization to service those growing needs. In addition to commercial businesses, health-care facilities benefit—and often require—quick and immediate access to a modern airport. But modernization of this Airport would be no easy task—because this airport started as a private airport serving a private company in Zelenople before its ownership was transferred to Zelenople Borough, and recreational use revenues were insufficient to keep it up-to-date.

Public and Private Financial Partnership

In response to this region's need, in 2010 the Authority and state and federal agencies embarked on a bold plan to modernize the Airport, blending “multi-modal” local, state and federal money and the involvement of local businesses and private residents (\$5 Million in local private investment to date, which I expect will grow to \$10 Million in the next five years), schools, and public-service organizations. This is larger than any other regional Pennsylvania Airport has ever accomplished.

The Airport's modernization project started with infrastructure and the demolition of all buildings on the airport. Today the airport has all new buildings, all funded by private individuals with none of them being owned by the airport.

BAMR's Pivotal Role

BAMR & Strip Mines. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) has been critical among them. Much of the Airport property that's an integral part of the Airport's modernization sits atop abandoned strip mines. In overseeing the Airport's reclamation of those mines, BAMR work has been exceptional in developing strategies and timelines that fulfilled the objective of honoring its mission in the context of the Airport's and region's needs.

BAMR & State Route 288 Reconfiguration—Vehicle and Aviation Safety. BAMR has been instrumental in the reconfiguration and relocation of a portion of State Route 288. BAMR officials have worked hard to help coordinate various agencies involved in Pennsylvania's multi-modal program to make State Route 288 safer for cars and trucks—a highwall and curve near the Airport has historically been the spot of many serious accidents—while also making aviation safer by lowering the highwall that became an FAA-declared serious flight-path obstruction to commercial and recreational aircraft using the Airport.

The Airport Authority applied for several years for funding and finally secured multi modal funding from the State for the relocation of State Route 288 that engineers estimated would cost \$8.5 Million dollars. The multi model grant was for three million dollars with the Airport

Authority having a \$700,000 local share contribution. This left a huge short fall. BAMR worked with the Airport Authority and was able to assist with a pass through grant for \$2.5 Million to help reimburse the airport for work performed. The airport decided to take on the earth work ourselves and it is now approximately 70% completed. Without the expertise and commitment from BAMR to help with the highwall, the Zelienople Airport would have certainly failed.

BAMR & Jobs. With BAMR's support the airport has continued to grow and has added thirteen new aviation jobs in the last year plus all 23 of the current positions at the Airport were retained. And ten additional jobs are expected to be added this year alone. In addition, the Airport Authority assists municipalities with payments in lieu of taxes and financial contributions to our first-responders. There is no doubt that the Airport modernization project has already been and will continue to be an economic victory for Zelienople Airport, Pittsburgh Jet Center, The Borough

of Zelienople, Cranberry Township, Aircraft using Zelienople Airport and the traveling public by eliminating a dangerous bend and hill on State Route 288. None of this would have been possible without the help of BAMR.

Invitation

This letter briefly describes the circumstances of a small Pennsylvania community working hard to develop a financially sound economic plan for a prosperous airport providing services to the public and high paying aviation jobs. This is only possible with committed people and private and public investment strategies. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you and your staff to visit the airport for a firsthand view for yourselves of the work that has been accomplished with the commitment of public and private dollars. Please feel free to call if I can be of any further service.

Very truly yours,



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