Gillespie Field Development Council

A Joint Powers Agreement Between the City of El Cajon and County of San Diego
Airport Administration Building ◆ 1960 Joe Crosson Drive ◆ El Cajon, California 92020-1236 ◆ (619) 956-4800

Barry Bardack, *Council Chair* — Wheeler North, *Vice Chair*

James Sly, *Councilmember* — Phyllis Trombi, *Councilmember* — Bob Davison, *Councilmember*

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 21, 2026
DRAFT – SUBJECT TO GFDC
APPROVAL NOVEMBER 18, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT	**STAFF PRESENT**
Barry Bardack	Jamie Abbott
Wheeler North	Carmela Gutierrez
James Sly	Ursla Null
Bob Davison	Lorie Maniss

For others present, attendee log is available in the Airports Administration Building.

1. ROLL CALL

   Council Chair Barry Bardack called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Councilmembers Wheeler North, James Sly and Bob Davison were in attendance. Councilmember Phyllis Trombi was absent.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

   Council Chair Barry Bardack led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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3. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS 4 AND 5

Chair Bardack gave a gave brief context on Gillespie Field's economic impact on East County (over $106 million in FAA grants since 2003) and explained the difference between non-binding FAA advisory guidance (e.g., compass rose standards) and enforceable grant assurance requirements, noting restaurant use is generally acceptable on airport property but beer production raises land-use concerns.
As this was a special meeting regarding two specific agenda items, he stated that comments would be accepted during the presentation of those items.

4. AGUA CALIENTE UPDATE

Public comments were received regarding Agua Caliente voicing disappointment with the County's draft public survey and requested more meaningful stakeholder input.

Jamie Abbott reported that the Board of Supervisors had directed staff to pursue additional stakeholder engagement and evaluate the option of reopening Agua Caliente. Staff is holding a virtual public meeting on October 29 (approximately 6:00–8:00 p.m.), with a registration link, sign-up, and ability to submit questions in advance to be posted on the County's community engagement webpage; questions may also be submitted during the meeting itself. Staff is also preparing to launch a related survey on the County's "Engage San Diego County" projects webpage, to remain open through approximately November 9 to allow time to gather results ahead of the County's 60-day reporting deadline to the Board. The survey and project webpage will be emailed directly to the airport's full stakeholder list.

Council voiced concerns that the survey did not provide clear information and was leading respondents towards predetermined choices. Council asked if the survey could be revised so that respondents could provide more input regarding the airport.

Mr. Abbott also explained the survey had gone through a formal County-level bias/communications review (above the Airports division, through the County's communications office and the CAO's office) and had already been edited for wording concerns identified in that review, including concern that it was written in a way that could influence the outcome and that it lacked sufficient background information for respondents; additional context is planned to be added to the project webpage and presentation materials to help address this. Staff indicated they were not in a position to guarantee further substantive changes to the survey given the review process already completed and the tight 60-day reporting timeline, but invited council members and members of the public who had specific suggestions to email Mr. Abbott directly, noting that extending the survey period

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further would come at the cost of less time to compile and incorporate results into the Board report.

Council again strongly criticized the survey as unsound and leading, stating that soliciting input on a survey that has already been finalized does not allow for meaningful revision, and questioning what decision the survey is actually intended to inform.

Mr. Abbott reiterated that an open-ended comment field would be included in the survey for respondents to share additional views and stated that the comments would be incorporated into the narrative of the Board of Supervisors presentation.

5. PROPOSED RESTAURANT/BREWERY UPDATE

Mr. Abbott updated the Council on the proposed Restaurant and Brewery in a Gillespie Field hangar. He reported that following an in-person meeting with the proposer on September 25, the County issued a written denial of the proposal as submitted, specifically regarding use of the hangar for brewing/production; a follow-up meeting was held October 12, at which the proposer presented revised concepts, including a longer-term development plan intended to produce a net gain in hangar/aircraft storage space. Mr. Abbott explained that the core issue is one of land use rather than business type: the hangar in question is currently designated for aviation use, and a brewing/production use would require the County to request that the FAA re-designate the land as non-aviation use, triggering FAA review. He noted that a restaurant and an associated tap room are not considered problematic in the same way, since those uses have been approved on airports previously, but that beer production (as distinct from service) is treated differently under FAA land-use rules.

Staff also identified other potential sites within the airports industrial park, however this was not the proposer's preferred option as the restaurant and brewery would not be combined.

Council asked Mr. Abbott what the process and timeline would be to submit a land-use change request to the FAA. Mr. Abbott stated that would likely take approximately 45–60 days once submitted. The owner of the Restaurant and Brewery, Jeff Wiederkehr, voiced that he was willing to wait out the review timeline.

Mr. Abbott stated staff would continue discussions with the proposer, engineers, planners, and the master tenant, then determine whether the proposal meets the minimum criteria for an FAA submission. If the county advances the package and a land-use or lease change is needed, the matter would return to the council for an official recommendation or decision through a new or amended lease.

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Public comments were received after the update in favor of the proposed Brewery and Restaurant.

The meeting was adjourned abruptly following a disruption by attendees in the audience.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COUNCIL FOR ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING FUTURE GILLESPIE FIELD DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETINGS

There were no recommendations.

7. ADJOURN

Council Chair Barry Bardack adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m. The next regular scheduled meeting of the Gillespie Field Development Council will be at 6 p.m., Wednesday, November 18, 2026, in City Council Chambers, 200 Civic Center Way, El Cajon.

By: _____
Lorie Maniss, Office Support Specialist

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