



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 THE GILLESPIE FIELD DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MARCH 18, 2026

<u>MEMBERS PRESENT</u>	<u>STAFF PRESENT</u>
Barry Bardack	Jamie Abbott
Wheeler North	Clifford Reinhart
James Sly	Carmela Gutierrez
Bob Davison	Ursla Null
	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 6:02 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.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA

There was one comment regarding the need for stronger communication with County staff.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilmember Wheeler North moved to approve the January 21, 2026 minutes. Motion was seconded by Bob Davison; motion passed.

5. COUNCIL CHAIR REPORT

Chair Bardack provided a history of AEF balances from 2002-2025. He requested that information on the spending of funds be addressed at the next meeting during the financial update from County staff.

6. AIRPORTS DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Jamie Abbott presented updates on the following:

Airport System Updates-

- Staffing
 - Cathie Johnson has been appointed Airport Manager at Palomar Airport. Gillespie will be managed by Assistant Airport Manager Cliff Reinhart until the Manager position can be filled. Operations Coordinator Keegan Robilotta has been promoted to Assistant Airport Manager at the desert airports to assist Airport Manager Meadow Chase.

Cajon Air Center-

- Ursula Null provided an update on the Cajon Air Center
 - Phase 1 of RFP preparation remains on track, however with some consultant work taking longer than anticipated, the timeline may have to be slightly adjusted.
 - RFP is still expected to have a summer release date.
 - We are in the process of developing the necessary background documents such as the Plat Maps, legal descriptions, ALTA survey, and drafting development agreements and leases prior to solicitation.
 - We are also evaluating market and economic conditions and appraising the land in the context of known constraints to inform evaluation of proposals.

- We are working with regional partners to fully outline development constraints and outline requirements for all bidders.
- Once we announce this opportunity, we will host a "site visit" and pre-proposal conference where we can answer all of your questions.

Ms. Null also provided her contact information for interested parties as the website has not been posted at this time. Vice Chair North asked if the entire leasehold was going to be offered as one parcel or broken down. Ms. Null stated that it would be going out in sections and divided into multiple leaseholds to extend opportunities for interested parties.

- Agua Caliente
 - A nonprofit group is working with the State to evaluate options to re-open Agua Caliente and reverse the decision to close the airport. Staff is optimistic that this can be done.
 - Andrew Hayes from District 2 has been supportive of this project and is helping to start a coalition with his office, pilots and stakeholders on increased outreach regarding County Airports as a whole, to address the needs of desert airports.
 - Letter has been drafted to both State Aeronautics and Caltrans as a first step in reversing the decision to close. Letter is currently under review with leadership.
 - County needs to determine how much AEF funds will be dedicated to rehab of runway.
 - County Airports is looking into a partnership with Recreational Airports Foundation (RAF) to manage and maintain the airport if reopened.

7. FINANCIAL UPDATE

This item was postponed until the next scheduled meeting.

8. REAL PROPERTY UPDATE

Carmela Gutierrez briefed the Council on staffing. One Sr. Agent is retiring which will create another vacancy. Ms. Gutierrez is hoping to interview for this vacancy sometime in March or beginning of April.

9. AIRPORT MANAGER UPDATE

Assistant Airport Manager Clifford Reinhart presented the Airport Manager Update. The month of January had 15,243 operations. During that month, we received 177 noise complaints from seven households. This included 213

overnight operations, in which there were three complaints received. In February there were 15,064 operations with 107 noise complaints received from five households. Overnight operations totaled 187 of which three complaints were received.

The Runway 17/35 and VSR project is expected to go out to bid in late April or beginning of May.

Mr. Reinhart also advised that the airplane wash rack will be closed from March 23rd through March 27th tentatively. The closure is required to facilitate improvements and align with the City of San Diego's storm water compliance requirements.

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

There were no recommendations.

11. OLD BUSINESS

- Agua Caliente Update

Mike Finkle, Airports Support Network Volunteer with the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) presented an overview of Agua Caliente airport including the history of the airport, the County agreement with the State to manage the airport and the current state of the airport. Mr. Finkle collected information from State Parks and Caltrans regarding the paperwork submitted for closure. As there appeared to be an error with the assumption that the County was the owner of Agua Caliente, he is researching the possibility of having the permit reinstated instead of re-starting the permit process. He asked Caltrans to check with their legal department to see if this is a feasible request. Caltrans has agreed to resend the revocation as long as the County provides a letter that they want to resend the revocation. This would only be the first step in getting the permit back to a suspended status. Mr. Finkle requested that once the County gets the permit back into effect, they have a stakeholder meeting to discuss options for rehab of the airport. This would include a timeline of the rehab as well as a guarantee from the contractor on the work being performed. Mr. Finkle stated to Jamie Abbott that he is willing to assist the County with working to re-open Agua Caliente.

After the presentation, public comments were received for Old Business.

One comment was received regarding the need for more transparency at the airport, and the need for leases to be processed in a timely manner.

Several comments were received regarding the need to re-open Agua Caliente.

- GFDC Vision for Development

Vice Chair Wheeler North presented an update on the GFDC "Vision for Development" providing the first draft version to the Council. The presentation introduced the workgroup members that are participating in creating the "vision-values" document to help guide the development and decision-making about Gillespie Field. During the presentation, Vice Chair North outlined the values and goals for the Council. Website information was made available for airport users to provide input through May 1st. Further refinement of the vision will be based on input received as appropriate.

The second reading of the document and possible adoption will be at the May 20th GFDC meeting.

Council gave positive feedback in favor of the vision and feel that it will benefit the County economically.


12. NEW BUSINESS

There were two comments received regarding overall management of the airport.

Councilmember Davison stated the need for an airshow or static display at Gillespie to create more interest in the airport.

13. ADJOURN

Council Chair Barry Bardack adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m. The next meeting of the Gillespie Field Development Council will be at 6 p.m., Wednesday, May 20, 2026, in City Council Chambers, 200 Civic Center Way, El Cajon.

By: 

Lorie Maniss, Office Support Specialist

