

From the Mayor...

April 7, 2023

In last month's column, I wrote about the history of the Warsaw Airport and the decision by the City to approach the County to create a joint Airport Authority. The City Aviation Board approved the move and the City Council followed their lead and sent the resolution across the street for County approval.

Leading up to yesterday's public forum, hosted by the Kosciusko County Council, there were many rumors and inaccuracies that made their way into the public discourse. In today's column, I want to try and clear up a few of those misunderstandings. I know the issue has created quite a bit of conversation that I think would be best served with the benefit of some facts.

First and most important, Indiana Code 8-22-3 guides the formation of a City/County Airport Authority (CCAA). The City is following the process as prescribed by the state legislature. I have heard complaints questioning the role of the City as it pertains to the ratification process, the makeup and size of the board, the limits and funding of the budget, and who has the final approval of the budget.

The formation of a CCAA requires a resolution approved by the legislative bodies of both the City and County. With that, the CCAA is allowed to adopt an annual budget and levy taxes, which we will get to in a moment.

The statutory requirements of the CCAA board composition dictate that it is made up of three members appointed by the mayor (no more than two of the same political party) and three members appointed by the County Commissioners (no more than two of the same political party). It is a statutory oddity that, like the City Aviation Board, the CCAA has an even number of members. Most boards have an odd number of members to avoid gridlock. There have also been complaints that the board representation should be proportional to the population. Once again, the statute dictates an equal number of representatives from each governmental unit. The statute is also very clear that while the board can adopt a budget, the legislative body of both the City and County must agree to approve the budget, or it goes back to the board. If either City or County disapproves after resubmission, it reverts back to the previous year budget.

The main purpose of forming an Airport Authority is to give joint control to all operational and capital planning decisions. It allows the entire county to be represented in the future of the airport.

We are blessed to live in a community that is rich in manufacturing. The growth of the Orthopedic and Agri-Business industries in our county has expanded the assessed value (tax-base) that keeps the tax rate down. Job creation grows our population, which also expands the tax base and keeps downward pressure on the tax rate.

The robust economic impact of the Warsaw airport on our community has been highlighted in two separate studies for INDOT in 2022 and 2012. That, combined with the economic impact of our robust manufacturing, creates a synergy that everyone in this county has benefited from for many years.

The two are inseparable.