Development History
of
Fernandina Beach Municipal Airport
1947 Original Airport Property Line = 1116 acres
Key Dates in Development of Fernandina Beach Municipal Airport

1943 – During World War II and at request of U.S. Government City bought and provided land to U.S. Navy to build Airport with four runways and a lease was entered May 26, 1943 for 1116 acres between the City and the U.S. Government.

1946-1947 – Upon termination of World War II U.S Government determines this land surplus and offers to return land used as an Airport to City of Fernandina (later Fernandina Beach in 1951). The City, realizing that the government built airport would have to be maintained as a public airport, signed the application and accepted the Quit Claim deed with restrictions running with the land and certain obligations with respect to owning, operating, and maintaining the airport. On July 10, 1947 1116 acres and all building and improvements on the land were transferred to City under an AP-4 Agreement.

1947-1954 – Very little use was made of facility.

1954 – The City determined it was in their long term interests to release certain parcels of Airport land from the quitclaim restrictions in anticipation of improved commercial opportunity. Five separate parcels were released of approximately 596 acres on December 8, 1954. In succeeding years the land was never successfully sold nor developed and remained airport land.

1954-1966 – There was not any significant development or growth activity at Airport and Airport maintained out of city budget. Airport was largely unattended.

1961 – Use of Airport was very limited due to minimal maintenance that resulted in all but two of the approaches having natural hazards. The City then cleared the natural hazards for aircraft operational safety from the runway clear zones.

1966 – The first Airport Property and Master Plan was prepared by Smith and Gillespie Engineers to further develop the Airport. This document designated areas to be used as the Airport and areas to be used for non-related development of properties to include a golf course and residential subdivision. The FAA conditionally approved the document in 1967 subject to city accomplishing certain actions. On April 5, 1968 FAA approved the Airport Master Plan. The Master Plan established all land west of Amelia Road (now Amelia Parkway and Buccaneer Trail) returned to the Airport and all land east of Amelia Road released to the City for residential development, access road purposes, and expansion of the city golf course. However, it was specifically noted that land under the approaches of Runways 22, 26 (now 27), and 30 (now 31) in the clear zone were not released but an easement granted for the land to be used for a golf course only and clear zones must be kept clear. The land under these approaches were never released as Airport land and remain part of the original Airport property with restrictions as described in the 1947 Quitclaim deed.

February, 1966 – City entered into a 7 year contract with a fixed based operator (Rock), however, only lasted one year.

1970 – Ten year FBO agreement with Piasecki Aircraft Corporation with lease of certain lands.

1972 – Sale of 46.33 acres west of Amelia Road previously released from aeronautical use but still Airport land to Amelia Island Company for $65,000.

1975 – Airport Master Plan was developed by Fehner, St. John and Associates and approved by FAA.
1979 – Runway/taxiway lighting first installed to provide Airport night and 24/7 operational capability.

1981 – Sale of 2.2 acres previously released from aeronautical use but still Airport land to the Quinn’s for $38,400.

1984 – FAA deemed the land sold to the Quinn’s now needed for airport development and the City repurchased this land for $44,000.

1985 – City sought a release of contract with existing FBO (Hawkins) and bought out contract.

1986 – First set of six t-hangars built.

1988 – Rawls Aviation operates the FBO as a private entity and later became Island Aviation Services in 1992.

1989 – Additional twelve t-hangars built (now 18).

1989 – S-Tec Corporation builds large corporate hangar on east side of Airport and in 1995 transferred to Black Shadow Aviation.

1990 – Airport Master Plan developed by Hoyle Tanner and Associates and approved by FAA.

1993 – National Air Shows builds large corporate hangar. Since 2000 hangar has been used by Island Aviation Services, Inc., a maintenance and avionics provider.

1995 – Additional twelve t-hangars built (now 30).

1995 – Runway 13/31 rehabilitated as a FDOT demonstration project at no cost to the Airport.

1997 – First instrument approach (GPS) procedure implemented by the FAA to Runway 13.

1997 – City water established to the Airport.

1997 – Developer begins process to develop Crane Island.


March 1998 – Island Aviation Services FBO sells to McGill Aviation FBO.

December 1998 – Golf Course (Royal Amelia) on Airport property approved for construction.

December 1998 – Black Shadow corporate hangar facility transferred to Amelia Island Plantation.

1998 – FDOT puts in its capital improvement plan to fund a new General Aviation terminal building at 65% funding.

1999 – Airport Master Plan Update completed by Reynolds, Smith and Hill, Inc. and approved by FAA.
2000 – Additional six t-hangars built (now 36).

2000 – Royal Amelia golf course on airport property opens. Most land had been previously released for non-aeronautical use but not as airport land.

April 2003 – AAC brought up need for more GPS runway approaches.

2003 – Additional six t-hangars built (now 42).

2003 – FDOT proposes to fund General Aviation terminal building.

2004 – Runway 4/22 rehabilitated with FAA 95% funding.

2005 – Runway 8/26 white-top rehabilitation as a FDOT demonstration project at no cost to the Airport.

2004 – Litigation between the current FBO operator, McGill Aviation, and City (not Airport) began and did not conclude until 2010.

2004 – Runway 18/36 permanently closed (4th runway, ineligible for grant funding, little use, never updated or repaired since originally built in 1944)

July 2005 – AAC recommends City start the process to increase runway approaches beyond the current one.

2005 – City Commission votes to not move forward with new General Aviation terminal facility with its FDOT offered 65% funding which further results in FDOT not offering to the Airport any future funding as part of its five year capital improvement plan beginning with 2010.

2006 – All through AAC minutes are references to the importance of improved runway approaches to the success of the Airport.

2008 – Additional ten t-hangars/row hangars built (now 52).

October 2008 – FAA grants Airport a letter of release to allow 4.9 acres of airport land be sold to Crane Island Developers for $533,000 to provide an access road to Crane Island. Money used as Airport share to repair Runway 13/31 which had failed under the earlier demonstration project.

July 2, 2009 – Airport identifier changed from 55J to FHB.

2009 – A private entity, Sovereign Corporation, builds two large corporate hangars.

2010 and 2011 – Airport Layout Plan Revisions completed by Passero Associates, Inc. and approved by FAA (revision is an administrative action rather than a long term plan development of Airport).

June 3, 2010 – Second instrument approach (GPS) procedure implemented by the FAA to Runway 22.

2010 – Runway 13/31 rehabilitated with 50% FDOT funding.

January 3, 2012 – FAA grants Airport a letter of release to allow 8.37 acres of airport land to be sold to Florida Public Utilities for $730,000.