



City of Naples

City Council Chamber
735 Eighth Street South
Naples, Florida 34102

**City Council Joint Meeting with the Naples Airport Authority Board
June 9, 2026 – 8:36 a.m.**

It is noted for the record that all documentation electronically appended hereto is also contained in the file for this meeting with the City Clerk's Office.

1) CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

City Council Members Present:

Teresa Heitmann, Mayor
Ted Blankenship, Vice Mayor

Berne Barton
Bill Kramer
John Krol
Linda Penniman
Scott Schultz

Staff Present:

Gary Young, City Manager

Matthew McConnell, City Attorney
Jessica Rosenberg, Deputy City Clerk

Naples Airport Authority Board Members

Present:

Terrence Cavanaugh, Chair
John Crees, Vice Chair

Ralph Alberto
Michelle Arnold
Robert Burns

Others Present:

Chris Rozansky
Mary Tatigian
Jennifer Hollander
Christel Johnson

William Owens
Peter Kirsch
Jose Cabrera

2) SET AGENDA (add or remove items)

There were no changes to the agenda.

MOTION by Schultz to SET THE AGENDA; seconded by Penniman and unanimously carried, all members present and voting (Barton-yes, Blankenship-yes, Kramer-yes, Krol-yes, Penniman-yes, Schultz-yes, Heitmann-yes).

3) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mary Tatigian, founder of Quiet Florida, said residents are concerned about the effect House Bill (HB) 4005 will have regarding Naples Airport Authority (NAA) composition, the potential for litigation, and continued flight path concentration over certain neighborhoods. Ms. Tatigian added that residents are unsure who is advocating for their interests, which has led to mistrust. She urged that the City Council and NAA move forward to achieve a stable, long-term relationship built on trust, transparency, and shared responsibility that protects Home Rule and prioritizes the health and well-being of residents. **Jose Cabrera**, representing Responsible Government Naples, said HB 4005 is now law, and that he believed continuing the conflict resolution

proceedings is not a productive use of taxpayer funds. He added that the focus should be on finding practical solutions, restoring cooperation, and ensuring the long-term success of the airport and urged City Council to engage in good faith discussions with the NAA and pursue achievable outcomes. **Jennifer Hollander**, representing Friends of the Naples Airport, said the airport is an asset that brings immense economic benefit to the City because it functions safely, effectively, and consistently. She asserted that terminating the land lease would invite disruption, uncertainty, and costly litigation. Therefore, she urged that the City respect HB 4005 and preserve the existing land lease. **Christel Johnson**, Friends of the Naples Airport member, expressed concern that the City Council had taken action that harms the Airport by encouraging the NAA to reject grants over the past year. She urged that the City instead take steps to preserve the airport along with the businesses and jobs it supports so it can continue to be a safe and well-run City asset.

4) DISCUSSION OF ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE CONFLICT

City Attorney Matthew McConnell stated that on April 6, 2026, House Bill (HB) 4005 governing the Naples Airport Authority (NAA) became law. One of the major differences created by this legislation is that it changed the NAA from a body appointed by the City Council to one elected by Collier County residents with three members being City residents and two members being County residents. He added that the City Council passed a Resolution on April 15, 2026, related to the Chapter 164, Florida Statutes Conflict Resolution Act, which outlined issues the City believed HB 4005 presented with the airport lease. Specifically, he explained that the conversion of the NAA from a dependent special district to an independent special district frustrated the purpose of the lease; therefore, it is the City's position that the lease has been breached. The City sent a letter with the certified Resolution to Chris Rozansky, NAA Executive Director, which initiated the Conflict Resolution process. The required conflict assessment meeting between NAA Executive Director Rozansky, the City Manager and legal counsel was subsequently held on May 11, 2026. As no resolution had been reached, the joint meeting was scheduled to consider the statement of issues prepared in the conflict assessment phase, seek an agreement, and potentially schedule additional meetings if both parties believe they can reach a resolution.

City Attorney McConnell then explained that pursuant to Florida Statutes Chapter 189, cities have had the ability since the 1980s to create dependent districts on their own by ordinance without approval by the State. If the City converts the NAA to a dependent special district, the State would be unable to convert the NAA to an independent district without the City's consent which is what he said had occurred. At that point, City Attorney McConnell asserted that the issue was not about control of the Airport, but rather continued oversight and coordination. He further explained that creating a dependent special district would be the best course of action and that the proposal, if agreed to, would ensure the continued safe and efficient operation of the Airport.

Mayor Heitmann expressed appreciation for NAA Executive Director Rozansky's strong and effective leadership noting the Airport's financial and operational growth under his tenure. She then stressed the importance of City oversight of City-owned land and asserted that the City Council must evaluate whether the requests presented by the Airport are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Codes. She then added her belief that the proposal offered was favorable for both entities and asked for the NAA's response.

Chair Cavanaugh said this was a difficult and complex situation that deals with a number of different governmental entities, and that the NAA requires clarity in terms of process and timelines before it can act. He added that the NAA had proposed various questions in response to the City's proposal to which it had not yet received a response.

Council Member Kramer said he believed HB 4005 was poorly written and requires the City Council's response. Further, he said no one present wanted to sue the NAA but that Chapter 164 spells out a process, part of which requires it. In addition, he pointed out that in June 2025 the NAA had refused grants that would have addressed maintenance issues due to the will of the City Council; this, he said, was one factor that led to HB 4005. Nevertheless, Council Member Kramer

said the benefit of converting to a dependent special district was the opportunity to create a new lease or amend the current one. In response to Chair Cavanaugh, he said the attorneys would determine the applicable timelines, but the City Council needs to know if the NAA agrees in principle to the proposal submitted. Board Member Arnold expressed concern that creating a new dependent special district would conflict with the new State law. In addition, she questioned whether the current NAA Board would be the entity negotiating a new lease as it may be replaced after the November 2026 election. Council Member Kramer therefore recommended amending the lease with the current body and creating a new covenant which he said would uncomplicate many issues.

City Attorney McConnell said that the City did in fact respond to the NAA's questions at the conflict assessment meeting to the best of his ability noting that offering a precise timeline was not realistic. He added that, in order to approach the various agencies, the City and the NAA must do so together as the City is not the sponsor. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will not discuss this matter with the City without a representative of the sponsor on the telephone call. Further, he said the NAA still has the legal authority to make decisions, including a decision on the lease, until the election and that the new dependent district will honor the grant assurances and the licenses with the tenants. He, however, reiterated that the timeline for transferring the sponsorship is unknown to both the City and NAA counsel. Chair Cavanaugh said he would appreciate responses to each question in writing and noted the importance of a general timeline and sequencing in order for him to make a decision.

Vice Mayor Blankenship said the Airport has been successful for many years under the current arrangement, adding that the City Council had always sought highly qualified, experienced Board Members to manage its operation. He however expressed concern that the new law takes all authority from the City and transfers it to County voters who generally are not as impacted as City residents. Vice Mayor Blankenship added that the City Council developed the proposal as a way to achieve continued cooperation. Further, he said much of it was left open on purpose as the City Council had hoped the NAA would respond to an invitation to collaborate on how to set up a new model. He added that although the City and the NAA can develop a timeline on how the process might be resolved, the FAA will take its time for a thorough review to achieve safety. At that point, he suggested forming a small, joint task force to expand the proposal in a way that makes sense for all involved. Moreover, he said working out a governance structure will bring certainty in maintaining a collaborative process and a successful airport, and that extending the lease should not be difficult.

In response to City Council, NAA Aviation Attorney Peter Kirsch stated in his opinion that a new lease would require approval of the State Legislature and the FAA and potentially the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) depending on the content. NAA Attorney William Owens added that amending the existing lease would require approval only of the NAA Board. Vice Mayor Blankenship noted the potential to hire an appraiser to determine the lease term and price.

Board Member Alberto said there were many questions regarding the creation of the special dependent district such as the potential effect on operations during the process of a sponsorship change. He, however, expressed support for amending the lease which he said was the best way forward; NAA Board Member Burns concurred, adding that the City Attorney had in his opinion answered the NAA Board's questions to the best of his ability. City Attorney McConnell confirmed that within 28 days of the current meeting, there would be a mediation which will, depending on what transpires, finalize the Chapter 164 process. Council Member Barton said the City's proposal was a good faith attempt to keep the Airport operating in the same well-run fashion. Noting that the NAA is the sponsor and needs to initiate conversations with the governing bodies, he said the City needs to know whether the NAA is a willing participant in exploring the creation of a special dependent district. Council Member Schultz said he believed there was consensus from the NAA Board to start renegotiating the lease and recommended that both counsels begin working on the details.

Recess: 10:28 a.m. to 10:46 a.m. It is noted for the record that the same Council Members and the same NAA Board Members were present when the meeting reconvened.

NAA Board Member Arnold urged that the City determine whether it can create a new special dependent district before going any further. NAA Aviation Attorney Kirsch said, under a new federal law, the FAA may not weigh in until the pending litigation regarding sponsorship of the airport is resolved. City Attorney McConnell however said the litigation is not about the governance structure of the sponsor but about a contractual and statutory issue with the creation of an independent district; therefore, he said if the NAA is willing, he would want to proceed. NAA Attorney Owens predicted that pursuing the dependent special district approach would take considerably more time with more obstacles to overcome than amending the lease with the existing NAA. City Attorney McConnell concurred and said with diligent work over the next 60 days, an amended lease could be presented by the end of August. Regarding content, he affirmed that the amended lease could contain provisions that assure both the City Council and NAA Board of oversight, coordination, and efficiency. Council Member Barton said although the NAA Board cannot advocate for the creation of a special dependent district, it is the airport sponsor, and its collaboration is essential to obtaining answers from the FAA and other required governmental agencies. He urged that the City pursue both an amended lease and the potential for the special dependent district.

Executive Director Rozansky recommended contacting State representatives in addition to the agencies which may help determine the path forward. Vice Mayor Blankenship said the impression he received was that they were open to considering changes especially if there was consensus in the community. City Attorney McConnell said he would also call all the local representatives to explain what the City intended to do.

4.A) Documents pertaining to the conflict.

[Letter to Naples Airport Authority - Chapter 164](#)

[Resolution 2026-15847](#)

[Naples Airport Authority Response to April 16, 2026 Letter Proposal](#)

6) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Christel Johnson said that House Bill (HB) 4005 was passed because of detrimental actions taken by the City Council such as inducing the Naples Airport Authority (NAA) Board to reject grants, appointing Board Members who were against the Airport, opposing creation of new hangars, and eliminating flights. She urged that the City Council start to collaborate in good faith with the NAA Board to protect the Airport. Mayor Heitmann noted the City Council must uphold the Comprehensive Plan to control future growth and ensure that the residents' long-term expectations of the Airport are met. **Jose Cabrera** agreed with the previous speaker that HB 4005 had emanated from poor decisions and had cost the community money and caused turmoil. He added that two NAA Board Members asserted the City Council had influenced them not to accept grants. Mr. Cabrera then urged that the City Council move forward with renewing and extending the lease. Mayor Heitmann pointed out that Executive Director Rozansky had said at a prior City Council Meeting that he would never reject a grant from the FAA that dealt with safety.

5) DISCUSS POTENTIAL RESOLUTIONS

City Manager Gary Young summarized the direction to initiate a parallel path in terms of pursuing the potential creation of the special dependent district and starting work as soon as possible on an amended long-term lease to assure operational control and stability that would protect the airport. City Attorney Matthew McConnell asserted that the parallel paths could potentially resolve the Chapter 164 complaint. He then received confirmation from Executive Director Chris Rozansky that he would provide points of contact for the FDOT and other State agencies. Noting that he does not have spending authority, City Attorney McConnell said he would work with the City Manager to hire a firm to obtain the appraised value for the Airport. NAA Aviation Attorney Peter Kirsch advised that there are very few firms that perform this type of work and predicted it would take at least 9 months to receive a response.

The NAA Board expressed consensus with facilitating contact with the FAA and other State agencies with the attorneys present although not as an advocate. In addition, the NAA Board expressed consensus for renegotiating the lease.

City Attorney McConnell reiterated that pursuant to Chapter 164, the City would select a mediator within 14 days of that meeting and then hold a mediation within 14 days after that. He, however, instead proposed in 28 days having another joint meeting to follow up on the direction given to both sides. City Manager Young said this time would allow for preliminary discussions of a framework for a lease.

Recess: 12:30 p.m. to 12:39 p.m. It is noted for the record that the same Council Members and the same NAA Board Members were present when the meeting reconvened.

City Attorney McConnell said the most important action would be to schedule another joint meeting and to agree that mediation would occur no later than 45 days from that day, June 9th, with the understanding that City Council will authorize any expenditure required for the mediator. NAA Attorney William Owens said he believed this was a reasonable proposal. Both the City Council and the NAA Board concurred with this direction. The joint meeting was set for July 6, 2026 at 8:30 a.m.

7) COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

None.

8) ADJOURNMENT

12:46 p.m.

Teresa Lee Heitmann, Mayor

Patricia L. Rambosk, City Clerk

Meeting clerked by and minutes prepared by:

Jessica R. Rosenberg, Deputy City Clerk

Minutes Approved: 8/19/2026.