

# Airport study grounded

The Livingston Parish News

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By Alice Dowty | [9 comments](#)

LIVINGSTON - Selection of an airport feasibility consultant is still mired in parish government's contentious procurement process.

Three firms applied to the Council's Procurement Committee, Jimmie McCoy said Thursday night.

Brandon Ellzey, Parish President Mike Grimmer's chief of staff, said the administration had received only two applications, and was recommending LJC Poole, LLC.

McCoy said he wanted to hire Davies Engineering, the firm that flew below the administration's radar.

The airport feasibility study has been discussed since 2009.

The airport under consideration would be a small general aviation facility with a 7,000 ft. runway and no tower.

The feasibility study is needed to evaluate locations with respect to environmental restrictions, and also predict use and recommend funding sources.

The size could be anywhere from 200 to 1,000 acres, depending on what kind of development is planned around the airstrip, Grimmer said in 2009.

A local airport could serve emergency, commercial and recreational purposes.

The feasibility study will consider the possibility of hangars, offices, and an industrial park with warehouses.

The facility would serve local pilots and an increasing number of businessmen who would reach their final destinations more easily from Livingston Parish than from north Baton Rouge, Grimmer said.

Such an airport could be under public or private ownership.

All these options will be considered in the feasibility study.

Lucien J. Cutrera Jr., the "LJC" in LJC Poole, spoke with McCoy after Thursday's meeting, saying that his work would precede an engineering contract.

The airport feasibility study is being funded by a \$25,000 Act 41 Department of Treasury appropriation that expires June 30.

The parish also has \$50,000 for planning from state Capital Outlay that requires a \$16,667 cash match from the parish.

Traditionally, the Parish President puts contracts out for bid and makes hiring recommendations, which the Council can reject. Councilmen voting on their own hiring recommendations is a relatively new practice.

Last year's Council chairman Don Wheat created a Procurement Committee to take away Grimmer's authority over the consultant selection process.

Ordinance 10-02, passed in February 2010, allowed councilmen to accept their own recommendations concerning which consultants to hire. Soon afterward, Councilman Thomas Watson advertised for proposals, describing the Council's need for assistance with over 60 governmental functions.

Grimmer vetoed the procurement ordinance March 4, citing provisions in the Home Rule Charter.

Councilmen overrode the veto. Councilman Marshal Harris and Cindy Wale were the only two that voted against the override.

Harris asked what would happen if Grimmer refused to sign a contract with a consultant chosen by the Council.

Legal counsel Blayne Honeycutt has distanced himself from the controversy, saying that "it would be better" if Grimmer signed contracts.

The power struggle over signing authority goes back to 2008, when McCoy signed contracts related to Hurricane Gustav debris without Grimmer's knowledge, and without authorization from other councilmen.

The lack of a clear procedure for procuring consultant services has created delays, most notably in the selection of a consultant to do the parish master plan.

The Council Procurement Committee balked at selecting the master plan consultant that came out on top using scoring criteria mandated by the state agency overseeing the \$500,000 grant, and voted to hire another firm. However, faced with losing the grant, councilmen finally approved Grimmer's recommendation.

Selection of a consultant to manage redistricting went quickly Thursday night. Parish councilmen hired low bidder Nancy P. Jensen with Garnet Innovations, LLC, with an agreement not to pay over \$18,000.

Jensen said her work will include obtaining pre-clearance from the U.S. Department of Justice. The approved plan needs to be submitted to the Louisiana Secretary of State in time for the next election cycle.

According to the 2000 census, Livingston Parish had a population of 91,814.  
According to the 2010 census, the parish has 128,026 residents.

The gain of 36,212 is not evenly distributed among the nine council districts, meaning that councilmen must adjust their boundary lines so that the population of each district is relatively equal.

The deviation between the least populated district and the highest populated district is not supposed to exceed 10 percent.

Council meetings can be viewed at [vimeo.com/livingstonparish](http://vimeo.com/livingstonparish).