
DIGEST

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HB 743 Original

2026 Regular Session

St. Blanc

Abstract: Creates the Harry P. Williams Memorial Airport District.

Proposed law (R.S. 2:350.1) creates the Harry P. Williams Memorial Airport District, subject to a majority vote of the St. Mary Parish Council and approval by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Further requires prior approval of the St. Mary Parish Council to levy taxes.

Proposed law (R.S. 2:350.2) specifies that the domicile of the district is in St. Mary Parish. Further authorizes the board of commissioners to move the domicile to any place located within the boundaries of the district. Also specifies that the domicile may be the seat of any political subdivision, a portion of which is included within the boundaries of the district.

Proposed law requires that the boundaries of the district be coterminous with the boundaries of St. Mary Parish, consisting of Harry P. Williams Memorial Airport per plats, for aeronautical, commercial, industrial, and agricultural areas, designated for aeronautical purpose in the unincorporated areas of St. Mary Parish.

Proposed law (R.S. 2:350.3) specifies that the control and management of the district is vested in a board of commissioners composed of seven members. Requires all members be citizens of the U.S. and residents of St. Mary Parish. Further authorizes the St. Mary Parish Council to appoint all members of the board and to, by majority vote, remove and replace any member.

Proposed law requires members have experience in aviation, business, accounting, finance, marketing, engineering, law, real estate, economic development, management, or another field of value to operation of the airport. Further prohibits full-time employees of local government from being appointed to the board, except those responsible for the parish's economic development.

Proposed law allows the current St. Mary Parish Airport Advisory Committee to serve the remainder of their current terms. Additionally, requires that upon expiration of their terms, successors are to be appointed as provided in proposed law, and may serve up to three additional terms of five years. Further specifies that board members who serve four or more years of a term will be considered to have served a five year term.

Proposed law specifies that any vacancies in board membership be filled by a majority vote of the St. Mary Parish Council for the remainder of the unexpired term.

Proposed law authorizes the removal of board members for cause upon the recommendation of any

member.

Proposed law requires the board elect from among its own members a chairperson, a vice chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer. Authorizes the offices of secretary and treasurer to be held by one person.

Proposed law requires the board meet in regular session once each month and also meet in special session as often as the chairperson convenes the board or on the written request of three members. Additionally, specifies that a quorum is four members of the district board present at a meeting. Further requires a simply majority vote to pass an agenda item.

Proposed law specifies the board members serve without compensation.

Proposed law requires the board to prescribe rules to govern its meetings, and allows the chairperson to vote.

Proposed law (R.S. 2:350.4) specifies that the district is a public corporation and has all powers of public corporations including the right and power to incur debt and contract obligations, to sue and be sued, to have a corporate seal, and to perform in its corporate capacity and in its corporate name all acts necessary and proper for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, maintaining, and operating airports and airport facilities, including both movable and immovable property within its jurisdiction.

Proposed law grants the district all authority as provided in present law and upon the "approval date" which is defined as the date on which the FAA issues a certificate to the district, conferring operational jurisdiction over the airport under present law, the board will acquire the following powers:

- (1) Accessibility to the FAA's approval of the assignment of existing grant agreements to the district, in the case of an uncertified report, the date specified in the agreement under which the airport is to be transferred to district.
- (2) Enter into contracts and agreements necessary or incidental to the performance of its duties and execution of its powers under proposed law, with a department or agency of the U.S., with a state or local governmental agency, or with another person, public or private, with terms and conditions acceptable to the district.
- (3) Exercise exclusive responsibility to study and plan any improvements, expansion, or enhancements that affect the airport and commission planning, engineering, economic, and other studies to provide information for making decisions about the location, design, management, and other features of the airport or airport facilities.
- (4) Exercise responsibility for developing all aspects of the airport and airport facilities, including, but not limited to, all the location of terminals, hangars, aids to air navigation, parking lots and structures, cargo facilities, and all other facilities and services necessary to serve passengers and other customers of the airport.

- (5) Obtain street and highway access with the objective of minimizing, to the extent practicable, traffic congestion on access routes in the vicinity of the airport.
- (6) Participate in demonstration programs and economic development that directly benefits the district.
- (7) Act as a sponsor and submit requests for, accept, and be responsible to perform all of the assurance associated with accepting grants from the FAA, or another agency of the U.S. or of this state, with respect to the airports under the operational jurisdiction of the district, and perform the duties and responsibilities previously assumed by the local government by virtue of its acceptance of grants from the FAA or another agency of the U.S. or this state. Requires the district to serve as the agent of the local government for the preparation, submission, execution, and administration of any state or federal grants pending on the effective date of proposed law.

Proposed law specifies the district has the additional power to do the following:

- (1) Acquire and assume the exclusive right, responsibility, and authority to occupy, operate, control, and use, the airports and the airport facilities owned by the local government on that date, or under the jurisdiction of the St. Mary Parish Council subject only to any restrictions imposed by present law.
- (2) Exclusive rights and authority to occupy, operate, control, and use the district facilities.
- (3) Acquire the operational jurisdiction over all real property of the district, including, but not limited to, terminals, runways, taxiways, aprons, hangars, aids to air navigation, vehicles or facilities, parking facilities for passengers and employees, and all buildings and facilities used to operate, maintain, and manage the district, including governmental, industrial, commercial and agricultural within the geographical area of the airports property, subject to any liens on the real property and restrictions and limitations on the use of real property.
- (4) Assume the local government's right, title, and interest in, and to all of the local government's responsibilities arising under leases, concessions, and other contracts for the airport facilities.
- (5) Assume all financial obligations secured by revenues and fees generated from the operations of the district, including but not limited to airports revenue bonds, special facilities revenue bonds, and all bonded indebtedness associated with the district.
- (6) Assume ownership of all cash balances and investments relating to or resulting from operations of the district for which operational jurisdiction has been transferred to the district, all money held under an ordinance, resolution, or indenture related to or securing obligations of the local government that have been assumed by the district, all of the accounts receivable or actions arising from operations of the district, and all benefits of contracts and agreements.

- (7) Assume ownership of all vehicles, office equipment, furniture and furnishings, and movable assets, including but not limited to computers, records and files, software licenses required for financial management, personnel management, accounting and inventory systems, and general administration.

Proposed law (R.S. 2:350.5) requires the district to submit an annual financial report disclosing all receipts and disbursements to the St. Mary Parish Council, within 120 days following the end of each calendar year.

Proposed law (R.S. 2:350.6) requires the local government comply with the following requirements:

- (1) Refrain from any action that would impair the district's exercise of the powers granted to it under proposed law or that could cause the district to violate its rate or bond covenants.
- (2) Refrain from any action to sell, transfer, or otherwise encumber or dispose of airport facilities owned by the local government without the consent of the district and, if necessary, the FAA.
- (3) Take all action reasonably necessary to cure any defects in title to airport facilities transferred to the district.

Effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds R.S. 2:350.1- 350.6)