

Inside Today

The Navy is keeping close watch on a Russian task force in the Caribbean, paying a 'courtesy' call to Cuba. Page 7.

The Times-News

Now...One of America's Most Modern Newspapers

Weather

Warm and humid thru Saturday with a chance of afternoon thunder showers.

VOL. 94—No. 163

HENDERSONVILLE, N. C., FRIDAY, JULY 11, 1969

SINGLE COPIES 10 CENTS

Airport Suggestion Creates A Stir Locally

By JOHN C. DILLS

A suggestion by Asheville Vice Mayor Webster Anderson that non-residents of Asheville be charged a special tax to board airliners at Asheville Airport, and pay double parking fees at the parking lot, has created a stir among leaders in Hendersonville.

Anderson said Thursday that Asheville City Council is seriously considering charging non-residents boarding fees to try to help raise revenues for airport improvements.

However, U. Gary Taylor, director of aviation of the City of Asheville, said present state legislation will not permit the City of Asheville to charge boarding fees.

"We would be working in the area of interstate commerce," he said, "and we can't do this under present state laws."

He remarked that it will be at least two years before state laws

can be changed to permit Asheville to impose boarding fees.

"We believe that such a move would be fair," Taylor told The Times-News this morning. He said the residents of Asheville are maintaining the airport, but not getting a fair return from its use.

He said the city does benefit, but not to the extent that other areas in Western North Carolina do.

The City of Asheville charges landing fees for airliners, at the rate of seven cents per 1,000 pounds of the unloaded airplane. The revenue derived from landing fees, he indicated, is not sufficient to offset the costs of airport operation.

"We don't know whether the boarding fee can be implemented," Webster told The Times-News this morning. But, he said, "We are going to have to find a source of revenue. The city does not have enough money now

to enable us to get \$250,000 in federal money to repair the airport runway."

He suggested that boarding fees would be collected by airline ticket counter personnel.

Airline personnel declined comment on the proposal.

Anderson also suggested that the city could charge double parking fees in the parking lot for persons who don't have City of Asheville tax stickers on their cars.

Taylor said this can be implemented, since the parking lot is purely local, and does not involve interstate transportation.

Hendersonville Mayor Boyce A. Whitmire said he believes that imposition of the proposed boarding fee "would adversely affect the entire area. We understand that Asheville does need new sources of revenue to operate the airport, but I can't see that they would raise sufficient tax money from the proposal to really ease their load."

The Mayor also commented that he believes such a move would be "extremely poor public relations" among the other areas of Western North Carolina.

Asheville City Manager Phin Horton remarked that the City of Asheville has not come to a definite conclusion as to what moves to make to obtain the needed revenue.

On the public relations aspect, he said, "The city is in such a desperate financial situation that public relations would be a minor consideration."

In his talk Thursday, to Asheville Rotary Club, Anderson, a retired Army major general, said the U.S. Government has offered the city a quarter of a million dollars for airport improvements.

"But," he said, "we don't have enough money available to meet the matching funds requirement to get the federal money. It's just sitting down there in Atlanta."

Only \$145,000 is included in the proposed 1969-70 Asheville budget for airport operations, \$100,000 short of the matching funds needed to get the federal money.

In an economy move, the city agreed not to appropriate \$54,643 for six cultural and health activities in Asheville.

They include Asheville Art Museum, Colburn Mineral Museum, Thomas Wolfe Playhouse, Tri-Hospitals Growth Fund and Park Avenue (Irene

Wortham) Day Care Center for retarded persons.

Anderson commented that the city is making an effort to stop being "sugar daddy for all of Western North Carolina."

He was referring to numerous facilities financed by the city, but used mostly by residents from other communities and counties.

Taylor said Asheville-Hendersonville Airport, and a land swap deal was made when it was decided to move the airport

to its present location west of Fletcher.

The entire airport is located on what was once Henderson county, but is now part of Buncombe County.

"Asheville owns only a small portion of the old airport," Taylor said, "perhaps 20 acres." The rest, he said, is owned by the City of Hendersonville and the County of Henderson.

Most of the airline traffic is generated from businesses

outside the City of Asheville. Much of it is located in close proximity to the airport in Buncombe County. Other industrial concerns that use airline services for both passenger and freight transportation are located in Henderson and other counties of the area.

Asheville does not originate enough passenger and freight traffic to offset the cost of operating the airport, Taylor said.

Commissioners Okay \$685,400 City Budget