

At the February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026, BoMA meeting, a statement made during public commentary by Dr. Matt Bennett said that he was asked, along with other members of the airport community, to be on a search committee for a new airport manager. Dr. Bennett claimed that the committee reviewed “dozens of resumes and interviewed the most qualified candidates.” He then claimed that the search committee unanimously selected a current employee to recommend for the role and presented their recommendation to the TAA for approval at their January 13<sup>th</sup> board meeting. It was approved by the TAA board, and those minutes are now posted to the city website for review.

He then accused City Administrator Jason Quick of rejecting their recommendation and further added that a pre-selected and unnamed alternate candidate was chosen outside of the process and there are ulterior motives surrounding control of the airport.

These are the facts:

- 1) **Memorandum of Agreement** - On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011, then-Mayor Troy Bisby entered into a contractual memorandum of agreement between the city and the Tullahoma Airport Authority, led by then-TAA Chairman John Miller. This document will be referred to throughout as the *TAA/City Agreement*. Section two of that document, labeled “Personnel” states the following:

## *2. Personnel*

*The City of Tullahoma’s Human Resources Director will provide assistance during the recruitment and selection of full-time and part-time airport personnel. The provisions of this agreement apply to the individuals listed in section 2(b) and to any subsequent personnel that are assigned to provide service to the Airport Authority.*

### *(a) Recruitment and Selection*

- i. *The recruitment and selection process will follow the policies outlined in the City’s Personnel Regulations, Chapter 3<sup>1</sup> – Recruitment and Employment, with the exceptions outlined in 2(a)ii and 2(a)iii.*
- ii. *The Airport Authority will be responsible for recruitment of the Airport Manager position. The Authority will provide a written recommendation of their preferred candidate to the City Administrator. The City Administrator will either approve or disapprove the candidate recommended by the Authority.*
- iii. *The Airport Manager will be responsible for the recruitment of part-time personnel. The Airport Manager will provide a written recommendation to the Authority of his/her preferred candidate. The Authority will either agree or disagree with the candidate selected by the Airport Manager. The Authority will*

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<sup>1</sup> In a subsequent revision of the City of Tullahoma Personnel Regulations in 2019, this is now Chapter 2

*forward recruitment documentation to the City Administrator for review and approval.*

*(b) Existing Personnel*

- i. Jon Glass, Airport Manager*
- ii. Michael Luckadoo, Grounds and Maintenance Technician*

This signed 2011 TAA/City Agreement is binding on any subsequent TAA boards. The current Airport Authority wrote a job description, convened a search committee, and conducted interviews for an Airport Manager without consulting or gaining approval from City Human Resources or City Administration. While that description was later posted to proper city channels after the fact, it was posted in other places for recruitment purposes by the Airport Authority prior to acceptance or approval by City HR.

**2) Candidates**

Once the position was properly posted on the City of Tullahoma platforms for job postings, 33 candidates applied. To date, no interviews have been scheduled or conducted by City HR, a violation of section 2.a.i. Also, no written recommendation by the search committee or the Authority has been presented to the City Administrator for consideration, a violation of section 2.a. ii.

Of the 33 applicants that applied through the correct and agreed upon channel, ten of those were deemed qualified by the Authority-written job description. The Authority-recommended candidate was not among those five qualified applicants, nor among the total of 33 applicants, a violation of section 2.3.a titled "Application Acceptance" of the City of Tullahoma Personnel Regulations, which in turn also violates section 2.a.i. of the TAA/City Agreement.

Furthermore, it is unclear if the Authority accepted or interviewed any or all the City HR-deemed qualified candidates, and it is unclear through which avenue the TAA-selected applicant applied through. In an email dated January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026, City Administrator Jason Quick addressed candidate recommendation concerns to the BoMA and City HR stating the following:

*While I have been verbally notified of their selection, TAA has not provided it in writing. I am confident it has not been submitted to me because I met with Karla Smith, TAA Board Chair, and told her I would not approve the candidate. TAA Board Chair Karla Smith scheduled a meeting for January 15th to discuss this candidate. Invited to the meeting were Cathy Manis, Hiring Committee Chair, Mayor Sebourn, and me. Surprisingly, prior to the meeting, City Attorney Worsham suggested to Karla Smith that she consider cancelling the meeting, "because of the complications involving the airport at this time." You were copied on an email I sent to Mr. Worsham to question why he would have suggested this, given that he is not the TAA*

*attorney. Since the cancellation, communications with TAA officials regarding the candidate have become quiet, yet it has been relayed that they remain adamant that this candidate will get approved.*

*My concerns about the candidate who was approved by TAA include:*

- 1. The candidate they selected never applied for the position through the formally established process by HR with the City of Tullahoma. All other candidates followed the online application procedure as instructed. Therefore, the City has no resume on file for the candidate.*
- 2. However, the candidate is an airport employee, and general information is known regarding his work background. Based on what is known about the candidate, he does not meet the minimum qualifications set forth in the job description approved by the TAA board prior to its posting. Further, as set out in Section 2.5, Rejection of Candidates, of the City of Tullahoma Personnel Regulations, an applicant may be removed from consideration if they do not possess the established qualifications. When discussing this regulation with Lori Ashley recently, the interim airport manager suggested the job description be rewritten to allow the candidate to meet newly created qualifications. Lori quickly explained that the City would not participate in doing this due to ethical and legal concerns.*
- 3. The candidate does not have a record of experience needed for oversight of an airport with this many critical problems that jeopardize the efficient operation of this entity. The City has over \$18M in fixed assets at the airport, which also poses our greatest liability risk and exposure. The recent fuel spill due to employee negligence is a prime example of our risk, along with the plane crash from last summer, and prior knowledge of two previous HR violations by former employees, provided to me by the TAA Board Chair, that placed the City at extreme exposure for significant risk. Furthermore, it has been relayed to several people that the interim airport manager, with years of experience and knowledge, considered quitting within two weeks of being on site due to the airport's dire situation. I cannot envision how a candidate who does not meet the minimum experience qualifications can be successful in this role.*
- 4. Should the candidate approved by TAA be hired, the City is opening itself up to multiple lawsuits based on age discrimination, hiring someone who does not meet the minimum job description qualifications, and not following the established recruiting policies and procedures for recruiting and interviewing, as outlined in the Personnel Regulations.*

*The easiest decision for me would be to just approve this candidate, whom I am very fond of, and move on. However, I take my role as City Administrator seriously, including making decisions in the City's best interests and protecting its resources. In good conscience, I cannot and will not approve this recommendation if presented to me in writing. It will set up both the airport and the*

*candidate for failure. Perhaps my stance is what has led to widespread public speculation that an agenda item introducing an amendment to the City's current MOU with TAA, removing the City Administrator from the approval process, will be added at the last minute to Monday night's agenda.*

*Best, Jason*

In a subsequent email from City Administrator Jason Quick sent on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026 after the rescheduled study Session that occurred on February 5<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Quick addressed the BoMA, City HR and City Finance with the following:

*All,*

*Thank you for a productive study session last night regarding the airport fuel spill payment. I also want to extend my appreciation to Sue for her diligent work in helping us to identify workable solutions to the problem. BRAVO! As we discussed, the airport plays a critical role in the economic development of our city and region. During the session, several concerns were raised regarding the airport's ongoing operational and financial challenges, many of which appear to stem from long-standing management issues. I am hopeful that the mayor's proposed Airport Steering Committee will be effective in strengthening overall operations and establishing greater financial stability.*

*A critical component of these efforts is the hiring of a qualified Airport Manager. As a reminder, the current interim manager's 90-day contract expires in 14 days, on February 19, 2026. My most recent understanding is that she plans to go month to month, with the ability to provide two weeks' notice if she decides to depart beforehand. In that context, the lack of urgency reflected in the **comment highlighted below in yellow** is difficult for me to reconcile with the current hiring status. The TAA hiring committee has been notified that I cannot support the previously selected candidate, as he does not meet the minimum qualifications outlined in the job description. My expectation was that this would result in renewed diligence by the committee to identify another qualified candidate. To my knowledge, however, that process has stalled. This suggests that the intent may be for the current interim manager to continue training the same unqualified candidate, with the aim of advancing him again later as a future candidate. Unfortunately, the training he will receive will still not make him eligible for hire as an Airport Manager because he does not meet the job description's minimum qualifications.*

*Given the City's impending investment related to the fuel spill and the shared acknowledgment that significant operational and financial challenges persist, it seems prudent to ensure qualified leadership is in place as expeditiously as possible. Attached are three resumes of qualified candidates that Lori Ashley, HR Officer, and I believe warrant consideration. Two candidates, Romanski and Morrison, appear to be well qualified and were previously interviewed. One of these individuals has reportedly been encouraged by members of the TAA hiring committee to consider an Assistant Manager role reporting to the unqualified TAA candidate. The other*

*interviewed individual was told he was overqualified and asked why he would want to relocate to Tullahoma. The third candidate, Braden, was not interviewed to our knowledge. I would have included the unqualified TAA candidate's resume for your review; however, he did not formally apply for the position, and no resume has been submitted or received by HR as part of the official process.*

*The airport is at a critical juncture, and the decisions made now will have long-term implications. As the City commits additional financial and operational resources to address existing issues, it is reasonable to expect that qualified leadership will be in place to work alongside the Airport Steering Committee to protect and grow that investment. Absent that, there is a significant risk of repeating the same history of poor airport management that has led us to where we are now.*

*I would appreciate guidance from BOMA on how best to address these concerns moving forward, so the airport can be best positioned for success.*

For context, the items mentioned that are marked in yellow are the following, sent in a response email to Administrator Quick, the BoMA and City HR from Mayor Sebourn on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026:

*Mr. Quick,*

*My apologies but I missed this email. I just found it last evening when working through my emails searching for another item.*

*In the future I would request that if I have not responded to an important email that you would either call me or text me to let me know there is an email requiring my response.*

*In relation to the Airport manager appointment, I thought that the airport selection committee had made a recommendation, but I did not know that the Airport Authority had actually approved it. Given that you have clearly stated you will not approve their selection, I guess we will have to work with the Authority to find a different path forward. **I don't think this constitutes an extreme emergency at this time since there is an interim director in place.** I will discuss further with the airport chairman and hopefully we can bring this to a resolution in the near future.*

*Respectfully,*

*Lynn Sebourn*

I did contact three candidates that were interviewed by the Authority in order to verify the interview process and if it followed established city policy for interviews. No mentions about employment were discussed. Based on these email messages and their timeliness, as well as violations of contractual agreements set forth in the TAA/City Agreement, Dr.

Bennett's accusations and innuendo stated during the public meeting on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026, are without merit and demonstrably false.