

# Durango Doings

## Chapter 18: Durango's Airports

### A brief chronology

Todd Ellison, Records Administrator, City of Durango (revised 7/21/2020)

#### Historical note

The **Durango-La Plata County Airport** is co-owned by the City of Durango and La Plata County. All are welcome to call the airport and ask for a tour. The Airport has been managed by the City of Durango since 2003, when the City took over airport operations and maintenance. Prior to that, its staff were considered employees of La Plata County; the County managed operations but the City was in charge of capital, such as the building and equipment. Historically, the County was responsible for the airport, the Durango swimming pool (next to the Fairgrounds; the City took that over in 1982), and the County Fairgrounds and the 55+ Senior Center. Nowadays, the County is only responsible for the Fairgrounds and the Senior Center, whereas the City has the Airport, the Library (which originally was its own entity with its own Board of Trustees from about 1904 until 1987) and the Community Recreation Center.



Durango is fortunate to have an airport with such a long runway: 9,201 feet (and 150 feet wide). Given its 6,685 feet elevation, that length offers added safety. When an air show was held here many years ago, the world's most expensive aircraft at the time, the billion-dollar B1 Bomber, landed here. The airport receives approximately 50 inches of snow annually, on average. The airport uses three large plows (22-foot blades), two 20-foot broom sweepers, two rotary snow blowers that can move 3,500 tons of snow per hour, a rotary snow blower that moves 2,000 tons per hour, a 20-foot wing plow and a 14-foot wing plow (mounted on front loaders), and other smaller equipment to clear snow from the facility.

The **Durango Municipal Airport**, formerly in town atop what later became known as College Mesa, was the predecessor of the Durango-La Plata County Airport. The following are some notes pulled from minutes and other primary sources that document the progression toward the development and progression (to the current day) of the jet-capable airport in the midst of Southern Ute tribal lands, about a dozen miles southeast of the city of Durango and 18 miles from City Hall.

## A brief historical chronology from the City's records

**The City was making arrangements for airplane landings in Durango in 1927.** At the Council meeting on April 5, 1927, "the City Manager ...brought up the matter of perfecting arrangements for a landing for Airplains [sic] and the Council took the matter under advisement."

**Durango was selecting the site for its municipal airport in 1929.** On May 7<sup>th</sup> representatives of the Lions Club-American Legion and the Durango Exchange (predecessor of the Durango Chamber of Commerce) appeared before Council, "asking the City's cooperation in securing an Airport for the City of Durango." The Commissioners agreed to appropriate \$350 to pay a professional "who would come here and make a complete examination and report." On June 4<sup>th</sup> Mr. Jeneks [sic] of The International Airport Corporation presented his report to Council, recommending Reservoir Hill as the site for the Durango airport. The City selected Reservoir Hill (the later site of Fort Lewis College) for the Durango airport. The City bought 600+ acres of land there from various owners.

On October 12, 1929, **the City opened the Durango Municipal Airport with an airshow.** It was one of less than 30 public airports in Colorado at the time. There was no daily air service for Durango until after World War II (11/27/1946).

**The City was fencing off the in-town airport landing strip on Reservoir Hill in 1936.** At its April 21, 1936 meeting, Council agreed to fence the airport grounds on Reservoir Hill as soon as possible, at an expense not to exceed \$200, "on account of livestock roaming, and automobiles running at random on the Airport grounds making it unsafe for the taking off or landing of Airplanes."

Read about it in the actual minutes by visiting the public records access portal on the City's website at <https://www.durangogov.org/Records/>. Click the blue button to do an **Advanced Search**. For the Document Type, select Minutes; Meeting Type: City Council Regular Meeting, meeting date **4/21/1936**, and click to search.

At its regular meeting on April 9, 1940, Durango's City Council heard **complaints of noise** by airplanes at the City's municipal airport. It responded by requesting that "flyers eliminate as much noise as possible."

**The City started collecting an airplane tax in 1942.** At the Council meeting on November 17, 1942, "It was suggested by the Council that a reasonable fee would be charged for any planes operating for revenue or otherwise from airport, this could be arranged by City installing gasoline pump at airport selling all planes their gasoline at a reasonable profit per gallon. / Guard or some reasonable person being held responsible for all gasoline delivered to airport."

Read about it in the actual minutes online by going to the City's Documents Search Page at <https://www.durangogov.org/190/> and doing a **Search by Record Type**. Select Minutes, Meeting Type: City Council Regular Meeting, meeting date: **11/17/1942**, and click to search.

**The City was still staffing the airport on Reservoir Hill in 1946.** City Council's January 22, 1946 minutes note that "organizations that contribute to the salary of the Municipal Airport caretaker were in favor of paying Mr. Parsons an increase in salary from \$50 to \$60 per month." Council agreed.

**By the middle of 1946 the City of Durango and La Plata County were preparing to build an airport.** On May 7, 1946, City Attorney Hatfield told the Council about a deal for acquiring land for the Airport and that it would be necessary for the City Council to meet with the County Commissioners and Mr. McSnedden of the Indian Service. City Council adopted a resolution to pay \$12,000 to John Cameron for 420 acres located on Ute Indian lands about 12 miles south of the City of Durango, as the site for the new Durango airport. The new airport's first terminal building was a former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) barracks building that was moved to the new site from the Mesa occupied by Fort Lewis College. It served as the terminal building until late 1952 when the core of the terminal building (eventually replaced by the new building in 1985) was built (per narrative history of the Airport for 6/10/1985 joint meeting of City/County Planning Commissions, in the Project Files electronic documents).

To read about it, search the [Public Records Access Portal](#) using Minutes - INDEXED SEARCH as your Search Type, selecting City Council Regular Meeting from the dropdown menu for the Meeting Type, and entering the Meeting Date that was mentioned above.

**The move from Reservoir Hill to the Southern Ute Reservation was gaining momentum in 1946.** On May 8, 1946, Council adopted a resolution to pay \$12,000 to John Cameron for 420 acres located on Ute Indian lands about 12 miles south of the City of Durango, as the site for the new Durango airport, amidst the Southern Ute Reservation, off of Colorado Highway 172 near Oxford, Colorado.

On June 5, 1946, "City and county officials ... announced the **acquisition of 420 acres** of Indian land near Oxford for use as a joint city-county airport"—a triangular parcel east of Florida River, north of Salt Creek. The land was acquired by exchanging private land for the Southern Ute property, with approval by the Southern Ute Council, at a cost of \$12,000 that was shared equally by City of Durango and La Plata County, with work on the new airport to begin immediately (*Durango Herald-Democrat* front-page headline article, 6/5/1946).

The August 13, 1946 City Council meeting minutes reported on progress on the City/County airport and a meeting with Monarch Air Lines in Durango the next day regarding signing a contract—which was considered and adopted on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

At its regular meeting on dated September 10, 1946 City Council agreed to **lease unused portion of the Airport** to Harry Fassett for farming purposes, and heard an application from Bruce Lund for his appointment as the Airport Manager and appointed him,

subject to a contract to be drawn up by the City Attorney. Lund also served as the agent for Monarch Air Lines at the Durango-La Plata County airport.

To read about it, search the [Public Records Access Portal](#) using Minutes - INDEXED SEARCH as your Search Type, selecting City Council Regular Meeting from the dropdown menu for the Meeting Type, and entering the Meeting Date that was mentioned above.

**Scheduled commercial airline service** came closer to reaching the new airport at La Plata Field when, at its meeting on October 15, 1946, City Council made an agreement with Monarch Air Lines (a precursor of Frontier Airlines) for air service to the new airport located approximately 14 miles south of Durango, and agreed to buy and install two 4,000 gallon underground gasoline storage tanks for fueling the Monarch airplanes.

**The new airport was functioning enough to host its first airshow on Sunday, October 27, 1946.**

The Basin Air Show, viewed by more than 2,000 persons, was held on Sunday, October 27, 1946 "at the City-County Airport, near Oxford" (*Durango News* front page article dated 11/1/1946).

To view the *Durango News* article dated 11/1/1946 online at the City's [Documents Search Page](#), select News Articles as your Search Type. Enter 11/1/1946 as the date, and then click to search.

At the end of 1946 **the City was arranging the funding for building the new airport.** On November 12, 1946, Council adopted a Resolution re: the sale of \$60,000 in Airport bonds because "until such time as further construction can be proceeded with on the new City-County Airport it is necessary to secure from the sale of such bonds the sum of ...\$25,000."

On December 1, 1946, **Monarch Air Lines made the first commercial flight to Durango**, arriving at and departing from the new City-County airport on Florida Mesa, near Oxford. The plane flew there from Denver via Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Canon City and Monte Vista – nearly 4 hours from Denver to the final destination at Durango. This was the beginning of regular mail and passenger service at the new airport (*Durango Herald-Democrat*, 12/1/1946). The inaugural flight had been previously scheduled for November 27 (in addition to a number of earlier dates), but the plane was unable to continue on to Durango from Monte Vista on that day due to the wet field in Durango.

Page 144 of Duane Smith's book, *Rocky Mountain Boom Town*, has a photo of a plane taxiing, with this caption: "Monarch Airlines initiated daily service at the La Plata airport in November, 1946, a year before this landing. A one-way ticket to Denver cost \$18.35." (Duane's date apparently was slightly off, as mentioned above.)

On page 168, Professor Smith writes, "Despite promises by Western Air Lines and others, Monarch was the first line to fly in with regular service. Organized in 1946, it soon landed DC-3's at the local field. Three years later Monarch merged with two other companies to become Frontier. It did not take long for the field on top of the mesa, with its limited

runways, to become outdated. The airport was moved southeast of town to the Florida Mesa and, with several enlargements and modernization, is the present La Plata Field."

Although Dr. Smith's writing on page 168 would seem to indicate that Monarch's first daily flights landed on Reservoir Hill in town, what we have seen in the newspaper articles of the time and in the City Council minutes indicates that they were landing at the City/County airport from the first. Also, it is doubtful that the in-town air strip would have been referred to as "the La Plata airport."

**DURANGO HERALD-DEMOCRAT** SUNDAY Section One, 10c

VER. 11, NO. 279 DURANGO, COLORADO SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1941

**PATTERSON ASSES MILLIONS DP Aid Costly to Armies in Europe**

ATLANTA, Oct. 31. (AP)—The Secretary of War, General George C. Marshall, today said that the cost of the \$1,000,000,000 program of aid to the United States Army in Europe is being estimated at \$1,000,000,000.

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**Government Acts To Fine Strikers**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 31.—(AP)—The House today passed a bill to fine strikers who violate the National Labor Relations Act.

The bill, known as the "Taft-Hartley Act," was passed by a vote of 342 to 107.

**Lewis Counsel Maps Appeal If Case Lost**

ATLANTA, Dec. 31.—(AP)—The attorney for the United States in the case of the Lewis and Clark expedition is expected to file an appeal if the case is lost.

The case involves the rights of the Lewis and Clark expedition to the land on which they were exploring.

**German Army Leaders Die For Massacre**

BERLIN, Dec. 31.—(AP)—The German government today announced that it had executed several German army leaders for their part in the massacre of Polish officers in Katyn.

The names of the executed leaders were not disclosed.

**Monarch Makes First Stop Here**

DURANGO, Dec. 31.—(AP)—The Monarch Airlines plane, piloted by Captain Lewis, today made its first stop here on its route from London to Denver.

The plane arrived in Durango at 10:30 a.m. and departed for Denver at 11:30 a.m.

**Quonsets May Be Ready for Tenants Dec. 5**

DURANGO, Dec. 31.—(AP)—The new Quonset huts at the Durango Army Airfield are expected to be ready for tenants by December 5.

The huts will be used for the storage of military equipment.

**Shopping Days To Christmas**

DURANGO, Dec. 31.—(AP)—The Christmas shopping season is expected to be a busy one for Durango merchants.

Merchants are expected to receive a large volume of business during the next few weeks.

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*Back to the City Council minutes:*

On December 17, 1946, Council received a \$19,876.50 bill from Burnett Construction Co. for work done on the City-County Airport.

On July 7, 1947, Council heard a report of a joint meeting with the La Plata County Commissioners on 7/18/1947 re: graveling the City and County Airport; Council agreed to sell \$15,000 of its Airport Bonds to pay for its share of the expense. ( On September 14, 1948 the Council heard a report that **graveling at the City-County Airport** was nearing completion and would be finished within two weeks.)

On August 26, 1947, City Manager Wigglesworth asked Council about having **electric lights** installed at the City and County Airport.

On November 18, 1947, Council instructed the City Manager to offer rental space in the Municipal airport headquarters building on Reservoir Hill to the Navy Reserve, on the same basis currently in effect with the Civil Air Patrol. (Thus, the in-town airport seems to have still been in use at that time.)

On March 16, 1948, the furniture at the airport on the mesa already needed repairs: the City Manager asked the Council about having some furniture at the City-Council Airport re-upholstered at a cost of about \$125.

On April 13, 1948, Vern Carlson, the Monarch Airlines Station Manager at the City & County Airport, told Council about the recent improvements and redecorating at the Station and asked the City to purchase another settee and chair for the waiting room at the station, and Council agreed.

On May 25, 1948, Mr. Carlson asked Council about fixing up the **living quarters at the City & County Airport** so he could live there; Council agreed to furnish the materials and pay for the plumbing if Carlson would do the remainder of the work and pay rent not exceeding \$30 a month.

On August 10, 1948, City Manager Mair brought up the subject of **heating** at the City and County Airport, but Council decided nothing definite at this time.

On August 31, 1948, Monarch Airlines volunteered to increase their rent by \$15/month and Airport Manager Vern Carlson volunteered to increase his rent by \$5 per month if the City would provide heat at the County and City Airport; Council agreed to install propane gas, lease a tank, and buy the necessary equipment.

On September 20, 1949, Council approved an **airshow** scheduled for October 9, 1949 at the City-County Airport.

On December 13, 1949, Council agreed to draw up a two-year lease of the City and County Airport to **Monarch Air Lines Inc.**

On January 10, 1950, Council approved a written **agreement between the City and La Plata County** to continue the operation and maintenance of the City/County airport southeast of Durango on the same basis as before.

On February 28, 1950 Council accepted the two-year renewal of the agreement between **Monarch Air Lines Inc.** of Denver and the City and the County to continue the former agreement that had expired on February 1, 1949.

On July 14, 1950, Council agreed to an application to the Federal Government to provide 53.31 percent of the \$46 thousand that the City and the County would share equally on the balance of 46.69 percent or \$10,000 each for needed **improvements to the runway and apron** at the City/County Airport.

On January 23, 1951, Council denied the Basin Amusement Co.'s request to install a pinball machine in the administration building at the City and County Airport, on account of limited space there at that time.

On April 22, 1952, **the City decided to abandon the in-town Reservoir Hill municipal airport.** On that day, "Council advised Floyd Gregg and Ralph Burress that the municipal airport would be left to the management of individual plane owners under their own management ...with privelege [sic] to move to City and County Airport at any time, as Municipal airport will be abandoned." [City Clerk William Horther was not noted for

In March of 1954 City Council agreed to convey to the State Board of Agriculture 193 acres on Reservoir Hill (**former site of the former municipal airport**) for the use of the branch of the Fort Lewis Agricultural College at Durango, for a token sum of \$8,400. The agreement states that if the lands ever cease to be used for educational purposes, the City has the right and option to purchase the lands, "together with all improvements thereon situate and all rights and privileges thereunto appertaining, for the sum of \$8,400 cash in hand."

**Some issues pertaining to the Airport have been perennial.** Maintaining properly functioning toilet facilities in the **airport restrooms** (especially in the men's room) was an ongoing challenge dating back to at least 1962 (and only ended with the Airport's switch to waterless urinals, and its 2020 remodels of the restrooms, which seem to have conquered the problem of a half a century). **Doing a keyword search of the Airport Commission minutes using the words urinal, toilets, and/or rest rooms or restrooms pulls up numerous results back to 1962.**

To read more about it, you can search the Minutes, Meeting Type: Durango La Plata County Airport Commission. The men's rest room urinal facilities were found to be inadequate on January 13, 1964; seven years later, on July 17 of 1971, the Durango-La Plata County Airport Commission decided to pay Roseberry Plumbing and Heating \$220 to install a new urinal. In 2013 the airport

faced a new challenge of providing adequate toilet facilities in the secure \$600,000 departing passenger holding/storage area that is utilized by American Express and houses a snack bar.

On September 5, 1963, the Durango-La Plata County Airport Commission rejected a bid of \$525 for **blacktop work at the Airport**. The cost was considered too high in relation to its benefits.

1964 April: Some things were simpler (and less expensive) half a century ago. The Airport Commission adopted a **shrubbery plan** at its meeting on 4/13/1964, at a cost of \$215. According to the minutes of 8/13/1964, the eventual actual cost was only \$174.50. As Lady Bird Johnson was wont to say, "Beautify America: plant a shrub, a tree, or a bush."

1966 September: **The airport's runway pavement needed work, half a century ago.** Publicly accessible documents on the City's [Documents Search Page](#) include reports, which were generally produced by a third party and may have broad public and historical interest. Search by that Search Type, Reports, with the Date 9/20/1966, and you can read a short (13-page) report of an investigation of the failure of the runway pavement at the Durango-La Plata County Airport, 53 years ago. The conclusion was that the runway pavement did not meet the design requirements for taxiway use. Consistent use of the runway as a taxiway was identified as a part of the cause of the failure of the asphalt. This has long since been corrected.

1967 January: **The airport hired its first custodian half a century ago—and we know a fair amount about him from the City of Durango's meeting minutes.** On January 9, 1967, the Airport Commission decided to hire Robert Woods as the airport's first custodian and maintenance man, with living quarters and utilities provided by the Airport. In its meetings on July 17 and September 21 of 1970, the Commission decided the position should be made full-time and that "adequate" and "decent living quarters" should be afforded. (Apparently, the original housing arrangements had been found inadequate.) A Keyword Search of the indexed minutes for \*airport custodian\* brings up a number of results, 1972-1978, mentioning Woods' successor, Robert (Bob) Davis.

**50+ years ago, City Council used eminent domain to purchase 19 acres of land from the McCaws for the Airport.** At its February 7, 1967 meeting, City Council resolved to condemn 19.48 acres owned by Merle McCaw and Blanche McCaw after several months of negotiations failed. The City and the County offered \$11,825 for the land and .35 acres of aviation easements, along with certain farming privileges and mineral rights for the McCaws, but the McCaws rejected the offer and did not make a counteroffer.

To read about it, search the [Public Records Access Portal](#) using Minutes - INDEXED SEARCH as your Search Type, selecting City Council Regular Meeting from the dropdown menu for the Meeting Type, and entering the Meeting Date that was mentioned above.

**The airport's operating budget grew by 244 percent from 1971 to 2013.** The DRO budget for 1971 was \$11,550—an increase of \$3,550 “to provide decent living quarters” for the airport custodian and to make the position full-time so that the necessary maintenance work could be accomplished—as noted in the Airport Commission minutes of September 21, 1971. The City's Airport Fund 2013 budget was \$2.67 million—an increase of more than 244 percent (but down 26% from 2012). (This did not include the Airport Capital Construction Fund, much of which derives from federal tax dollars and was \$7.3 million for 2013.)

**The City's annual budgets are also all viewable online** among the public records (change your Document Type selection to Financial Reports and Budgets), and the current budget is also directly accessible on the City's public website.

**Weather modification programs have been operating from the Airport for half a century.**

The August 20, 1971 Airport Commission minutes mention leasing land at the airfield to E.G. & G., Inc. for that purpose. (For a more recent discussion of cloud seeding, change your search to Water Commission and pull up the 5/6/2013 minutes.)

**The idea of a regional airport and Farmington's plans for a new jet airport near Farmington without waiting for other cities seem to have propelled the Durango Airport into the jet airplane age.** At its meeting on April 10, 1972, the Airport Commission agreed to proceed immediately with plans to upgrade the Durango airport to jet capability and to do a public survey of La Plata County residents for their sentiments regarding that undertaking.

In the early 1970s the Durango-La Plata County Airport was using its **custodian** for various additional functions, including serving as a deputy sheriff to provide airport security on the passenger loading ramp thirty minutes before a Frontier Airlines flight. Frontier was having problems complying with FAA security requirements to keep gates to the ramp locked. Pilots and passengers of private aircraft were jumping the fence and criticizing Frontier employees for making access to the restrooms so difficult. Deputizing the Airport custodian was the solution for keeping the gates open. This created a new problem: he would have to work seven days a week. At the June 26, 1972 Airport Commission meeting, Bob Davis (the custodian) stated that he had only had six days off since October of 1971. The Commission authorized him to ask a Frontier employee or his brother about hiring a relief man at \$3 an hour, who would also have to be deputized. You could also read the minutes of August 18, 1972, which continue the saga of the multi-tasked airport custodian, Robert (Bob) Davis.

August 3, 1974 was the date of the first of a number of **Master Plan** studies of the Durango-La Plata County Airport, calling for staged development of the Airport.

1982 December: The City approved the purchase of an x-ray device to **screen carry-on baggage** at the Durango-La Plata County Airport, as recommended by Frontier Airlines. This was on the agenda for the regular Council meeting on 12/7/1982.

1986: **Air traffic** at DRO was up 7.1 percent, setting an all-time high mark (a total of 190,949) of passenger boardings (96,370) and deplanements. The busiest airline was United Express (formerly Aspen Airways) at 41% of the Durango market, followed by America West (34%), then Continental Express (formerly Trans Colorado) at 12%, and Mesa Airlines at 2%.

On January 19, 1988, in the **worst airplane crash in the history of La Plata County**, a Continental Express plane crashed near Durango, killing both pilots and 7 passengers who were seated in the front portion of the little plane. The co-pilot had failed to tell the FAA of his prior conviction for drunken driving.

March 19, 1988 was the date of the dedication of the **new 36,329-s.f. \$2.5M terminal**, replacing a 10,000-s.f. terminal building just to the south of it on the west of the runway.

1992 was the year for the construction of the **ARFF/SRE (Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting / Snow Removal Equipment) Building**.

In 2018, the Airport purchased from Kois Brothers Equipment Company a half-a-million-dollar Power Broom all-wheel steering **snow removal truck**, which uses 520HP to power a 20' wide steel bristle brush that can clean the runway bare of snow and also of the rubber from the tires of landing aircraft. The purchase was timely, just prior to the ample snowfalls of early 2019.

On June 17, 2019, the Airport bought itself **expansion** room, through a lease-to-own purchasing mechanism authorizing the Durango-La Plata County Airport to buy 12.5 acres of land with two buildings on it just northeast of the existing terminal for about \$3.9M. Before a year had passed, the City and the County had completed the purchase, which was funded by existing fees from the Passenger Facility Charge, a \$4.50 fee assessed to every airport passenger.

In November of 2019, the Airport completed a \$1.6M **upgrade of its air terminal building** to increase its functionality and to consolidate the Transportation Security Administration's baggage-screening operations. The project renovated and expanded 5,000 square feet of interior areas and included the installation of a new baggage-conveyor system. It was wholly funded by airport enterprise funds—the fees and other charges the Airport issues to its users, principally airlines, passengers and general aviation pilots. This was the largest upgrade to the terminal since it was built in 1988. These steps were taken after the November 2016 defeat of a ballot proposal to issue \$40.4 million in bonds to build a new terminal on the opposite side of the runway. That measure was rejected by a wide margin: 18,541 no votes to 11,556 yes.

**DRO had a record number of passenger enplanements in 2019.** This article in the 1/16/2020 *Durango Herald* provided the details:

“Commercial passenger traffic at the Durango-La Plata County Airport increased to almost 400,000 arrivals and departures, making it the airport's busiest year on record.

Passenger traffic increased to 390,506 combined arrivals and departures in 2019, which is about 12,000, or 3%, more passengers than in 2018. The airport has grown into the primary regional airport for the Four Corners, and it is making moves to continue expanding its services.

‘Last year was outstanding for us. December alone saw a 6.8% increase in passenger traffic over the previous year – easily a record for the month,’ said Tony Vicari, the Director of Aviation, in a news release issued Thursday by the City of Durango. He added that records also were set in the months of March, June and July.

The airport has seen a 120% increase in commercial passenger traffic since 2003 and a 32% increase from 2009 to 2019, Vicari said in an interview.

In 2019, it offered daily nonstop flights to Dallas, Denver and Phoenix. It also offered summer nonstop service to Los Angeles, and two new markets – Chicago and Houston.”

**Coronavirus concerns in 2020 brought a drastic reduction in air travel—but due to federal bailouts the Airport continued to do well financially.** Articles in the 4/10/2020 and 4/19/2020 issues of the *Durango Herald* reported that DRO airport travel had been nearly obliterated; passenger traffic was down nearly 95 percent. The parking lots were nearly empty. This was the greatest drop-off in passenger enplanements in the history of aviation. DRO was better able to withstand this unexpected development than most entities, thanks to its healthy financial reserves and an award of \$2.5 M in coronavirus emergency aid via the Federal Aviation Administration from \$10 billion in economic aid the Trump Administration authorized for daily operating expenses of eligible US airports. (The Albuquerque airport received \$19.7M; Denver was given \$269M.) As of the summer of 2020, DRO was only offering three or four commercial airline departures per day. Much of its air traffic was due to its role as an air tanker base for fighting forest fires, which was especially important due to the drought through the first half of the year.

## A list of Airport-related Deeds, 1929-:

Grantor	Grantee	Start Date	Year	Deed Subject
Van Kleeck-Bacon Investment Company, The	City of Durango	10/15/1929	1929	Warranty Deed [labeled #1 Airport] for 157.81 acres, in the SE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of Section 20, and Lots 5, 12, and 13 in Section 21, all in Township 35 North, Range 9 West.
Durango Land and Coal Company, The	City of Durango	11/5/1929	1929	Warranty Deed [labeled #2 Airport] for land in the NE 1/4 of Section 29, Township 35 North, Range 9 West--as specified in the legal description in this Deed, signed by W. A. J. Bell and H. B. DeLange for the Durango Land and Coal Company.
Annie Smith	City of Durango	6/3/1930	1930	Warranty Deed [labeled #4 Airport]. Land in a portion of the SE 1/4 of the NW Section 21, Township 35 N, Range 9 West--as specified in the legal description in this Deed--and also see the attached map.
H. B. DeLange	City of Durango	5/21/1931	1931	Warranty Deed [labeled #5 Airport] for all land in the NE 1/4 of Section 29, Township 35 North, Range 9 West--beginning at the n.e. corner of the intersection of 8th Avenue and 8th Street -- with City Clerk Joe McGuigan's letter (on City letterhead).
Mary O. Washburn and Daisy W. Lewis	City of Durango	11/1/1932	1932	Warranty Deed [labeled #3 Airport] for 5 acres: a portion of the NE 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Section 29, Township 35 North, Range 9 West (see deed for full legal description, and also the map).
Mary O. Washburn and Daisy W. Lewis	City of Durango	3/19/1935	1935	Warranty Deed [labeled Airport #2]. Lots 3 -5 of Section 28... and a portion of Section 21, in T 35N, R 9W. See Deed for full legal description. Excepting 2 tracts of ca. 70 acres as described there also.
Laura A. Vosburgh	Marion Jenkins	8/6/1941	1941	Quit Claim Deed (re: Municipal Airport). A tract of land in Section 21, Township 35 North, Range 9 West--see legal description on Deed. Jenkins sold this tract to the City 2 months later (Rec. No. 167542); became part of Hillcrest Golf Course.
City of Durango	Marion Jenkins	10/13/1941	1941	Commissioner's Deed (re: Municipal Airport). A tract of land in NE 1/4 of SE 1/4, and SW 1/4 of SE 1/4, in Section 21, T 35N, R 9W, with exceptions noted in the legal description on page 2 of this Deed. Cf Rec. No. 167188 Deed dated 8/6/1941.
City of Durango	E. E. Jenkins	10/13/1941	1941	Material for a Deed (re: Airport) [no actual Deed here] for 65.34 acres, being a portion of Lots 10, 14 and 15 in Section 21, Township 35 North, Range 9 West [re: Airport]-- et al.
John C. Cameron and Olive E. Cameron	City of Durango	1/14/1947	1947	Warranty Deed. Airport land deed. Tract One at the Durango-La Plata County Airport (see deed itself for the legal description) [note: this deed is also in the Airport Archives with the Office's land records]

**Deeds, continued: 1959-1979:**

L. E. Graham and Henry Etta Graham, also known as Henryetter Graham	Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County, and the City of Durango	4/29/1959	1959	Warranty Deed. Airport land deed: Airport Tract Two (see deed for full legal description) [note: the clearer, darker copy of this deed is in the Airport Archives in the Office's land records]
Blanche McCaw and Merle C. McCaw [spelled Merl McCaw on this Grant]	City of Durango and Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	6/19/1959	1959	Warranty Deed. Airport Ingress and Egress. See page 2 of this Grant document for full legal description, and the map that is Exhibit A (profile and plan).
L. E. Graham	City of Durango and Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	12/15/1959	1959	Warranty Deed. County Road relocation at NE edge of Durango-La Plata County Airport (see legal description on the deed, and on the attached related agreement dated 10/22/1959)
Blanche McCaw and Merle C. McCaw	City of Durango and Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	12/15/1959	1959	Warranty Deed. Airport Ingress and Egress. NW 1/4 of Section 29 in T 34 N, R 8 W (see page 1 of deed for full legal description) [this--the color scan here-- is also in the Airport's archives--Land acq.]
Blanche L. McCaw and Merle McCaw	City of Durango	8/1/1967	1967	Airport Clear Zone easement; see deed for legal description [note: also scanned both in its black on white version, which the City has, and the white on black, which the Airport has; both versions only contain pages 1 and 2; neither has page 3]
Leon Graham, as Administrator of the Louis E. Graham Estate	City of Durango	3/1/1968	1968	Administrator's Deed re: County Road relocation at NE edge of Airport (see deed for full legal description) (scanned both versions: black on white--which is what the Airport archives have--and white on black)
F. B. Dashner	County of La Plata, Colorado	12/5/1978	1978	76.441 acres [a copy of this Warranty Deed and the accompanying Deed of Trust is also in the Airport Office's file, Parcel "F" (Dashner)]
Aspen Springs Development Company	Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	12/28/1978	1978	52.764 acres for the use of the Airport [Note: this document is also in the Airport Archives in the Office land records drawer, in a folder labeled Parcel "I" (Aspen Springs)--with Special Power of Attorney attached]
John W. Gale and Georgia B. Gale	Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	1/2/1979	1979	72.048 acres for the use of the Airport (Parcel "E") [this deed is also in the Airport Office's land records-- with 10/24/1978 Agreement of Purchase and Sale, and 1/2/1979 Amendment to Agreement]
F. B. Dashner	La Plata County, Colorado	5/26/1979	1979	50' water drainage easement and right-of-way for a drainage ditch [Note: a copy of this deed is also in the Airport Office's land records, in a folder labeled Parcel G&H (Dashner)]
F. B. Dashner	County of La Plata, Colorado	12/31/1979	1979	0.976 acres [Note: a copy of this Warranty Deed is also in the Airport Office's land records drawer, in a folder labeled Parcel "G&H" (Dashner)]

**Deeds, continued: 1980-2019:**

Elva C. Dashner and F. B. Dashner	La Plata County, Colorado	2/11/1980	1980	Special Warranty Deed: 61 acres for Durango-La Plata County Airport; the City paid half the cost of the appraisal. For legal description, see Exhibit A of the Deed; and cf. related City/County deed 3/19/1980, Reception No. 441563
La Plata County, Colorado	La Plata County and City of Durango	3/19/1980	1980	Quit Claim Deed re: Durango-La Plata County Airport A tract of land, 61 acres. For legal description, see Exhibit A of the Deed. See also related deed dated 2/11/1980 (Dashner), Reception No. 440819.
F. B. Dashner, Trustee	La Plata County, Colorado	9/24/1982	1982	Special Warranty Deed: 0.976 acre for the Durango-La Plata County Airport (revision of 12/31/1979 deed; for legal description, see the deed) [Note: deed is also in Airport Office's land records, in a folder labeled Parcels G&H (Dashner)]
High Country Emporium, Inc., operating at Durango - La Plata County Airport	Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County and the City Council of Durango	2/20/1988	1988	Deed of Trust, designated as Room #103 at the La Plata County Airport is Owned by the Airport, Promissory Note, Gift Shop, designated as Room #104 at the La Plata County Airport.
Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	City of Durango, Colorado	2/10/2003	2003	Quitclaim deed, Durango-La Plata County Airport Parcels E, F, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, and Q; see Deed Exhibits A through L for full legal descriptions [Location note: as of 2016, this deed is also in the Airport office's land records file drawer]
Carolyn L. Watson	City of Durango and Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	2/25/2010	2010	Quit claim deed for grazing easement at Durango Airport by Carolyn Watson of 778 Salt Creek Road (see document for full legal description)
Keith R. Fassbender	City of Durango and Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	3/18/2011	2011	Special Warranty Deed re: agricultural interest related to or near to Airport property (Fassbender to City/County; see Exhibit A for full legal description)
Keith Fassbender and Mary Fassbender	Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County and City of Durango	3/29/2011	2011	Special Warranty Deed re: 103.34 acres near Airport (City/County to Fassbender; see Exhibit A for full legal description)
Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County	Board of County Commissioners of La Plata County and City of Durango	3/29/2011	2011	Correction of Quitclaim Deed re: Airport property (see Exhibit A for full legal description)
Koinonia Properties, LLC	U.S. Bank, National Association	6/17/2019	2019	Re: City's lease/purchase of 820 Airport Road for expansion of Durango-La Plata County Airport [Koinonia deeded to US Bank; City lease/purchased

## A list of Airport-related Ordinances by the City, 1946-2014:

Ordinanc Number ▲	Ordinance Title	Search Terms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> -	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> -	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> -
O-1946-0746	An Ordinance Providing for the Issuance by the City of Durango, Colorado, of its Negotiable Coupon Bonds in the Aggregate Amount of Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$60,000.00) to be Denominated Airport Bonds, for the Purpose of the Acquisition, ...	airport improvements financing, airport improvement bonds, DRO, City of Durango revenue bonds, bond issue ordinance, debt incurred, indebtedness
O-1946-0746	Construction, Improvement and Maintenance of Airports, Prescribing the Form of Said Airport Bonds and Providing for the Levy and Collection of an Annual Tax to Pay the Same, Principal and Interest, Repealing All Ordinances, Resolutions, or ...	airport improvements financing, airport improvement bonds, DRO, City of Durango revenue bonds, bond issue ordinance, debt incurred, indebtedness
O-1949-0788	An Ordinance concerning the Operation of Aircraft over the City of Durango, Colorado, and Upon and From the City of Durango Airport, and Providing for Permit Fees, and Providing Penalties for the Violation Thereof	aircraft, Durango Airport, permit fees
O-1958-0929	AN ORDINANCE CREATING AN AIRPORT COMMISSION	Airport Commission
O-1971-1142	AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE II, CHAPTER 4, SECTIONS 2 AND 9, OF THE OFFICIAL CITY CODE OF THE CITY OF DURANGO, COMMONLY KNOWN AS SECTION 2-4-2 AND SECTION 2-4-9, INCREASING THE MEMBERSHIP ON THE AIRPORT COMMISSION FROM THREE MEMBERS TO FIVE MEMBERS	Durango-La Plata County Airport Commission membership requirements
O-1977-1232	AN ORDINANCE REPEALING AND REENACTING CHAPTER 4 OF TITLE II OF THE OFFICIAL CITY CODE OF THE CITY OF DURANGO, COLORADO, ENTITLED "AIRPORT COMMISSION", AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY	Durango-La Plata County Airport Commission
O-1986-0018	OF AN AIRPORT TERMINAL AND OTHER AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS, INCLUDING CERTAIN INCIDENTALS AND APPURTR NANCES THERETO; PRESCRIBING THE FORM OF SAID BONDS; PROVIDING FOR THE APPLICATION AND PLEDGE OF THE REVENUE DERIVED AND TO BE DERIVED BY...	Airport terminal bonds, airport construction financing, DRO terminal expansion, City of Durango revenue bonds, bond issue ordinance, debt incurred, indebtedness

**Airport Ordinances by the City, continued,  
to recent:**



O-1995-0008	AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 5-17(a) OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF DURANGO FOR PURPOSES OF INCREASING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE DURANGO-LA PLATA COUNTY AIRPORT COMMISSION FROM SIX TO SEVEN AND DECLARING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.	La Plata County Airport Commission
O-2002-0006	AN ORDINANCE REPEALING ARTICLE II (DURANGO-LA PLATA AIRPORT COMMISSION), ARTICLE IV (CEMETERY COMMITTEE), ARTICLE VII (LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD), ARTICLE X (TRANSIT ADVISORY BOARD), AND ARTICLE XI (WATER COMMISSION) OF	Airport Commission, Library Advisory Board, Transit Advisory Board, Water Commission, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Board, Land Use and Development Code Board of Appeals, Design Review Board, City of Durango boards and commissions
O-2005-0013	AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING DURANGO-LA PLATA COUNTY AIRPORT COMMISSION TO GRANT LEASEHOLD INTERESTS IN AIRCRAFT STORAGE HANGARS AT THE DURANGO - LA PLATA COUNTY AIRPORT AND DECLARING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.	leasing of aircraft storage hangars at the Durango-La Plata County Airport
O-2007-0032	AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE EXCHANGE OF PROPERTY INTERESTS WITH CAROLYN WATSON TO FACILITATE THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TAXIWAY EXTENSION AT THE DURANGO-LA PLATA COUNTY AIRPORT, AND DECLARING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.	airport taxiway extension
O-2010-0018	AN ORDINANCE GRANTING EASEMENTS TO LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INC., ACROSS PROPERTY AT THE DURANGO-LA PLATA COUNTY AIRPORT AND DECLARING AN EFFECTIVE DATE	La Plata Electric Association, LPEA, easement, Durango-La Plata County Airport, Reception No. 1027130
O-2013-0014	AN ORDINANCE GRANTING AN EASEMENT TO LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INC., ACROSS PROPERTY JOINTLY OWNED BY THE CITY OF DURANGO AND LA PLATA COUNTY, FOR ELECTRIFICATION OF A GAS WELL LOCATED ON PROPERTY NEAR THE DURANGO-LA PLATA COUNTY AIRPORT	easement for electrification of natural gas well near the airport; recorded 9/5/2013, Reception No. 1071191
O-2014-0045	An Ordinance GRANTING AN EASEMENT TO LA PLATA ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INC., ACROSS PROPERTY JOINTLY OWNED BY THE CITY OF DURANGO AND LA PLATA COUNTY, FOR ELECTRIFICATION OF PROPERTY LEASED BY THE DURANGO-LA PLATA COUNTY AIRPORT ...	La Plata Electric Association, LPEA, easement, Durango-La Plata County Airport, Reception No. 1090200