Baird new chairman of airport commission

June another record month for air travelers

Passengers at the ticket counters in the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids on Tuesday, June 23, 2015. (Stephen Mally/The Gazette)

George C. Ford, The Gazette
JULY 27, 2015 | 4:03 PM

The former president and chief executive officer of AEGON USA, now Transamerica, has been elected chairman of the Cedar Rapids Airport Commission.

Pat Baird joined the commission on July 1, 2011, and previously was vice chairman. Baird's term expires on June 30, 2017.

The five-member commission, appointed by the mayor of Cedar Rapids, operates The Eastern Iowa Airport, which is owned by the city of Cedar Rapids. The commissioners are appointed from throughout the Cedar Rapids-Iowa City Corridor.

Marsha Rogers was elected vice chairwoman at Monday's monthly commission meeting and David Yeoman was elected secretary. Former Chairwoman Carroll Reasoner continues as acting secretary.

Baird succeeds Josh Schamberger, who will continue as a member of the commission.

Heather Wilson, director of marketing and communications, told the commission that June was another record month for travelers using the airport.

A total of 101,668 passengers used The Eastern Iowa Airport last month, up from 101,627 in June 2014.

The commission voted to terminate the existing leases of five farmers who grow crops on 2,047 acres of land owned by the airport. The terminations, which will take effect Feb. 29, 2016, are typical for land with development potential, according to Roger McEowen, professor in agricultural law, and director of the Iowa State University Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation.

“The landowner does not want to be locked into a farmland rental rate for more than a year given the increase in land values over the last five to 10 years,” McEowen said. “Those leases usually are negotiated each year and reflect market conditions.”

The airport is one of the largest owners of farmland in Linn County. The land is farmed on a cash rent and custom-contract basis.