

Local/Regional Press Coverage

Do you want to run for office? Your deadline to qualify is June 12

By LIZ HARDAWAY Staff Writer Jun 7, 2020 Updated Jun 7, 2020

Time is running out for those who want to become an elected official.

The deadline to file and qualify for a state or county position is noon, Friday, June 12.

Candidates can now only qualify via fee, as qualifying petitions were due May 11.

A handful of offices — nine in Charlotte County and four in Sarasota County — are running uncontested, with the only candidate filed for each being the incumbent.

Paul Stamoulis, the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections, is unsure why many local races are uncontested, “but the current lack of civility in the political environment may be preventing many good people for running for public office,” he said.

Monday was the start of the Pre-Qualifying, which just allows candidates to submit their paperwork early in the event that they won’t be here during qualifying week, according to Stamoulis. “We hold it for them and process them during Qualifying Week,” he said.

For anyone with questions on how to qualify to become a candidate, call the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections at 941-833-5400 or the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections at 941-861-8600.

How many offices are running unopposed?

There are nine Charlotte County offices and four Sarasota County offices currently with candidates running unopposed.

In Charlotte County, these are the Property Appraiser, Tax Collector, Charlotte County Commission districts 1, 3 and 5; School Board districts 3 and 5 and **Airport Authority** districts 3 and 5.

In Sarasota County, these positions are the Clerk of the Circuit Court, Property Appraiser, Tax Collector and the Supervisor of Elections.

How do I become a candidate?

First, you have to file a DS-DE 9 form with the Supervisor of Elections. Within 10 days of filing, each candidate must fill out their Statement of Candidate form, which acknowledges that they have been provided access to and have read the requirements of Florida statutes concerning campaign finance.

A candidate then has to qualify between June 8 and June 12.

How do I qualify?

Candidates can qualify one of two ways: by petition or by fee.

The petitioning method, which asks for signatures of 1% of the total number of registered voters for the last general election, was already due May 11.

The monetary method requires candidates to pay to the supervisor of elections a percentage of the annual salary of the office sought. For major party candidates, this is 6%; for nonpartisan candidates and offices, as well as minor party candidates, this will be 4%. However, if the minor party chooses to assess the party fee, the amount will increase to 6%.

Write-in candidates, however, are not required to pay a qualifying fee, nor collect petitions. A write-in candidate’s name will not be listed on the ballot, but a space will be available on the ballot where voters can write in that candidate’s name.



Viewpoint

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Starr best choice for Airport Authority

EDITOR:

As a Lee County resident I cannot vote for anyone running for the Airport Authority in Charlotte County. However, I rent a hanger at **Punta Gorda Airport** so I have a vested interest into anyone running for a position on the board.

Two candidates have filed and are running unopposed and District 1 has two candidates running. Bob Starr and Vanessa Oliver. From what I have gathered, Mr. Starr has been quite active in the community and a public servant for Charlotte County. Ms. Oliver works at her father's State Rep. Michael Grant's company Ambitrans ambulance business.

In the last election for the Airport Authority, people with clout tried to get Julie Price onto the board running a nasty campaign with a lot of PAC money coming from Tallahassee. Who is going to spend thousands of dollars for a seat when other seats go unchallenged? What is the hidden agenda for the airport no one knows about?

I think Bob Starr would be the better choice for District 1.

DAVID STERN
Cape Coral

LETTER: Is Sunseeker a parting gift to commissioners?

Jun 9, 2020

Editor:

Following is a modified excerpt from my letter to the editor sent Aug.18, 2018:

“Because everyone will be traveling to/from Sunseeker through Allegiant Air from **Punta Gorda’s Airport**” is the developer’s reason they did not need to meet the county’s own code requirements for parking! Insufficient parking on the property will cause congestion in the area of Edgewater, Bayshore and Tamiami Trail (U.S. 41) due to on street parking by residents of the development and patrons of their restaurants and stores.

"A truly independent traffic study would show just how much impact, the proposed development will have on the area. Their projected prices for the units are unrealistic but was done to “convince” our commissioners the real estate tax revenue from those units would be a windfall; so the commission would minimize the project’s impact fees.

You may: “remember Murdock”, when the prior county commissioners got played!

Let’s hold our current County Commission and their departments accountable now and force them to make Sunseeker step up and only approve; if it is fiscally sound and provides sufficient parking on site, traffic flow and public access to the entire waterfront.

And now the rest of the story: Allegiant is pulling the funding for the project, leaving a monument for Charlotte County. Making our community suffer the consequences of a project, poorly conceived and approved by County Commission and staff; benefiting only the developer. Commissioners come and go, but residents are here forever!

*Richard C. Russell
Port Charlotte*

Englewood man files against Airport Authority incumbent

By **LIZ HARDAWAY**
STAFF WRITER

The **Charlotte County Airport Authority** could potentially have two new faces on the board next year.



ANDREWS

Paul Andrews, the Republican incumbent of the District 3 seat, now has a no-party affiliate opponent Haven Ratcliff.

Since the two are filed under separate parties, the winner of the District 3 seat won't be decided until the Nov. 3 general election.



RATCLIFF

Originally from Virginia, Ratcliff has been an Englewood resident for 40 years and is currently retired, but he offers a part-time driving service. Ratcliff served in the U.S. Air Force between 1965 and 1968 during Vietnam, and shortly after worked for Boeing in maintenance

for two years. He was self-employed for 25 years, owning a car dealership for a couple of years in Winter Haven, running a rental car service for 25 years.

Though he does not have his pilot's license, he did own a Cessna 172 aircraft with friends in Lakeland.

"I've always been interested in (the aviation industry)," he said. "I'm just a local person ... If I can help out with the airport authority, all I've got is life experiences."

Ratcliff filed for his candidacy Monday, according to Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections Paul Stamoulis.

Andrews has been serving on the Airport Authority since 2012 and is also a real estate broker. Before that, he had over 20 years of airline flying experience and served in the U.S. Air Force, the Air National Guard and U.S. Air Force

AIRPORT

FROM PAGE 1B

Reserve. Additionally, he is a licensed Airframe and Powerplant Mechanic, an FCC-licensed avionics technician and professional flight engineer.

If re-elected, Andrews hopes to “continue operating in the same

cost effective and efficient manner that we were recognized for in a 2018 Financial Feasibility Study,” Andrews told the *Sun* in an email.

“As a result of our cost effective and efficient manner the airport entered the downturn in a much stronger financial position than many airports in the U.S.”

Andrews continued: “Currently we are coming

out of an economic downturn and I have absolutely no doubt that we will recover and recover strong. What I also believe is that as a result we are going to go through change, and change brings new economic opportunities.”

The airport is currently in the process of spending \$18 million on a new general aviation facility and opening the north

side of the airport for more growth and opportunities to attract new business.

“What I see over the next five years is the airport being in a strong position to attract new businesses, adding new jobs to our community and increasing its economic impact,” Andrews said.

Airport Authority board members are paid

an annual salary of \$7,500 for their four-year term and have to pay a \$25 fee to file for office. The deadline to qualify for office is noon Friday.

Current board chair, Pamella Seay, decided not to run for office again this year after serving for 24 years, and Republican candidates Vanessa Oliver and Bob Starr are vying for her seat. Unless a candidate files under a

different party, the new board member for District 1 will be determined in the primary election Aug. 18.

James Herston, the Republican incumbent of the District 5 chair since 2008, is running unopposed as of Thursday. He currently serves as the board’s vice chair.

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Charlotte Commission stays the same

By LIZ HARDAWAY Staff Writer Jun 12, 2020

As the qualifying period came and went, all Charlotte County commissioners up for reelection gained another four years in office Friday simply because they had no challenger.

This included Republican candidates Ken Doherty of District 1, the board's current chair Bill Truex of District 3 and Joe Tiseo of District 5.

Two Charlotte County School Board members, Robert W. Segur of District 3 and Wendy M. Atkinson of District 5, as well as **Airport Authority** member James Herston of District 5, Property Appraiser Paul Polk, Tax Collector Vickie Potts, Supervisor of Elections Paul Stamoulis, and Punta Gorda City Council members Jaha Cummings, Debby Carey and Lynne Matthews, were also reelected Friday due to a lack of opposition.

The qualifying deadline was noon Friday, finalizing a list of people to study for the upcoming election season. This election might be slightly different, though, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's difficult to predict the level of enthusiasm of the voters to vote in a Primary Election under the current conditions," Stamoulis said. "But I will bet the ranch that there will be a good turnout for the General Election in November."

Some races voters can find on their ballots this fall include the Charlotte County Sheriff, the Clerk of the Circuit Court, the School Board's District 1 seat, and the Airport Authority's District 1 and 5 seats, as well as the federal and state seats.

Voters have until July 20 to register to vote for the primary election, and until Oct. 30 to register for the general election.

A majority of the races will be settled at the general election Nov. 3. However, the School Board District 2 seat and the Airport Authority District 1 race will be decided at the primary election Aug. 18.

Below are candidates who qualified Friday:

U.S. House of Representatives

District 16 (Sarasota County and parts of Manatee County)

Vern Buchanan, Republican (Incumbent)

Margaret Good, Democrat

District 17 (Charlotte, DeSoto, Hardee, Glades, Highlands and Okeechobee counties)

Allen Ellison, Democrat

Theodore Murray, no party affiliation

Greg Steube, Republican (Incumbent)

State Senator

District 23 (Sarasota County and part of Charlotte County)

Joe Gruters, Republican (Incumbent)

Robert Kaplan, no party affiliation

Katherine Norman, Democrat

State Representative

District 74 (Part of Sarasota County)

James Buchanan, Republican (Incumbent)

Lisa Stortstrom, Democrat

District 75 (Charlotte County)

Michael Grant, Republican (Incumbent)

David G. Jones, Democrat

Charlotte County

Sheriff

Bill Prummell, Republican (Incumbent)
Clarence "Dale" Ritchhart Jr., no party affiliation
Andrew Bryant Sheets, write-in candidate

Clerk of the Circuit Court

Roger Eaton, Republican (Incumbent)
Jeffrey Alan Rapkin, no party affiliation

Property Appraiser

Paul L. Polk, Republican (Incumbent)

Tax Collector

Vickie L. Potts, Republican (Incumbent)

Supervisor of Elections

Paul A. Stamoulis, Republican (Incumbent)

County Commission, District 1

Ken Doherty, Republican (Incumbent)

District 3

Bill Truex, Republican (Incumbent)

District 5

Joseph Tiseo, Republican (Incumbent)
School Board

District 2

Kimberly S. Amontree, no party affiliation (Incumbent)
Joseph B. Williams, no party affiliation

District 3

Robert W. Segur, no party affiliation (Incumbent)

District 5

Wendy M. Atkinson, no party affiliation (Incumbent)
Airport Authority

District 1

Martin Robert Dorio, write-in candidate
Vanessa Oliver, Republican
Bob Starr, Republican

District 3

Paul R. Andrews, Republican (Incumbent)
Haven Ratcliff, no party affiliation

District 5

James Herston, Republican (Incumbent)
Punta Gorda City Council

District 1

Jaha Cummings (Incumbent)

District 2

Debby Carey (Incumbent)

District 4

Lynne Matthews (Incumbent)

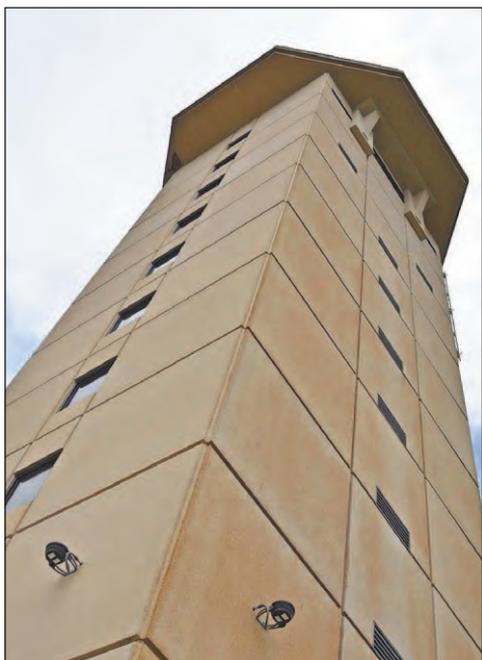


PHOTO PROVIDED

The Punta Gorda Airport air traffic control tower.

Punta Gorda Airport slowly recovering

Projects scheduled, rent relief available for tenants

By **LIZ HARDAWAY**
STAFF WRITER

PUNTA GORDA — Things are slowly getting back to normal at the **Punta Gorda Airport**.

With flights typically teetering between 80% to 100% full, this quickly dropped to approximately 70% in March amid closures spurred from the coronavirus pandemic, and fell even further to roughly 30% in April.

However, things are looking up, with flights being roughly 60% full in May, with 63,314 passengers. This is still a 48% decrease from May 2019, though.

“Allegiant,” the sole airline at Punta Gorda Airport, “is trending back up faster than all the major (airlines),” said PGD CEO James Parish at Thursday’s monthly Airport Authority meeting.

PGD has tentatively planned for flights to get back to 60% full by October, and back up to 80% in February.

AIRPORT

FROM PAGE 1B

Those estimates are conservative, however, as June has seen, so far, a 69% load factor for flights.

The airport is also going forward with construction of an expansion of 1,000 spaces to its long-term parking lot.

“We are seeing some resurgence in parking,” Parish said, plus it would benefit the local economy. “We have the funds available and we have the contractor standing by

... These are things that we could get people working right away.”

With the Airport Authority’s approval, construction will probably start in July and be completed around March 2021.

Last month, the Airport Authority was also looking into a tenant relief program, which would defer March, April, May and June rent and the tenant would have until Dec. 31 to repay the rent without late fees.

Though three tenants initially inquired about rent relief, and staff notified the

airport’s almost 40 tenants of the opportunity, no tenant has actually applied, according to airport spokesperson Kaley Miller. Tenants have until June 30 to apply.

The board also approved another improvement to the airport Thursday, which would bring cell service to the Bailey Terminal.

“If you have been in our terminal, you’ll notice that we don’t have cell service,” Parish said. “It is a dead zone.”

PGD staff received an unsolicited bid from the American Tower Corporation

to install an antenna system to bring cell service to the airport at no cost. Once installed, the airport would receive an additional \$50,000 from each of the first two cell service providers to sign on, and at least \$10,000 annually.

“It could be just a few months or up to three years before passengers start receiving cell service,” Miller said, and it depends on how quickly the company installing the tower can get two cell service providers to sign on.

The Charlotte County Airport Authority will not

be having a meeting nor a workshop in July. The board will have a workshop starting at 9 a.m. Aug. 6 to discuss the budget and other matters, and have a meeting at 9 a.m. Aug. 20. Both the meeting and workshop will take place in the Airport Authority Board Room at 7375 Utilities Road, Building 313, in Punta Gorda.

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SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2020 | YOURSUN.COM | SECTION C

Will Airport Authority primary be open or closed?

Address of write-in candidate who closed Charlotte County race is in Sarasota County

By **LIZ HARDAWAY**
STAFF WRITER

CHARLOTTE COUNTY — The August primary for an Airport Authority race could be closed to only registered Republican voters — but this is still up in the air.

This is thanks to Martin Dorio, a write-in candidate from Englewood. Dorio's candidacy closes the primary, meaning only registered Republican voters can vote for the two other candidates: Vanessa Oliver and Bob Starr.

Dorio did not respond to multiple requests for comment from the *Sun*. Both Starr and Oliver denied knowing Dorio.

However, Dorio does not appear to live in Charlotte County.

According to property records, Dorio's listed address with the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections is in Sarasota County, and not Charlotte County. Dorio's address resides in the 545th precinct in Sarasota County, according to the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections website.

Under Florida law, though, **Charlotte County Airport Authority** candidates must reside in their district.

"Each candidate for the office of commissioner of the authority must reside in the district from which such candidate seeks election for at least 6 months immediately before the time of qualifying to run for that office," the law states.

Punta Gorda Airport spokesperson Kaley Miller is not aware of a geographic conflict like this occurring in the Airport Authority's past. "We will have to look into it to see if any further action is recommended at this point," she said.

Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections Paul Stamoulis sent an email to Dorio Thursday morning, informing him of the statute and asking if he has any additional information which would satisfy the residency requirement. And if Dorio does not, Stamoulis asked if he would voluntarily withdraw his candidacy.

Without a response from Dorio as of Friday morning, it is pending whether the primary will be closed or not.

Florida law does not allow county supervisors of elections, nor his office, to determine whether the papers are accurate when a candidate submits their qualifying documents.

PRIMARY

FROM PAGE 1C

When a candidate is qualified for office at the Supervisor of Elections, “our duty is ministerial and we are certifying that all required paperwork has been filled out, and the proper number of petitions or fee amount submitted,” said Stamoulis.

“We have no authority in the law to investigate the accuracy or efficacy of the information provided,” he continued. “It is generally left to the candidates themselves or to the Authority itself to challenge violations.”

The Charlotte County Airport Authority is considered a special district, which was created under the Florida Legislature. “As such, it has the duty and responsibility under Florida law, to conduct its own elections,” Stamoulis states on the Supervisor of Elections website.

The current representative of District 1 in the Airport Authority and current chair of the board, Pamela Seay, decided not to run for office again this year after serving for 24 years. Seay has put her support behind Oliver, according to past reports.

More than 45% of voters in Charlotte County are registered as

Republicans, according to data from the Charlotte Supervisor of Elections as of Wednesday. This leaves 79,446 registered voters, either Democrat or other, barred from voting for their District 1 representative at the Aug. 18 primary election.

Then, whoever wins the primary will face off against the write-in candidate.

The Airport Authority District 3 seat is also up for election. Incumbent Paul Andrews faces no-party candidate Haven Ratcliff. Voters do not have to live in that district to vote for a representative, as any registered voter in the county can vote for all open offices within the Airport Authority.

If the primary does end up being closed, Starr said, “It does not help me any more than my opposition.”

“As I see it, the other party needs to step up and field candidates,” Starr continued. “Then they have a choice of candidates who have the same philosophy as they do.”

If Oliver wins the primary, she hopes to reach out to all voters to discuss her platform and “hopefully earn their support in November,” she told the *Sun* Thursday.

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Can the Airport Authority challenge write-in candidate's eligibility?

By DANIEL SUTPHIN Staff Writer Jun 23, 2020

PUNTA GORDA — The **Charlotte County Airport Authority** is holding an emergency meeting today and will discuss Martin Dorio's write-in candidacy for the upcoming Airport Authority race.

Dorio, of Englewood, filed to run for Airport Authority District 1 — which encompasses eastern Charlotte County — but his listed address with the Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections is in Sarasota County. Florida law requires Airport Authorities must live in their district.

Although he's a write-in candidate whose name won't appear on any ballot, Dorio's status in the race would significantly affect the number of voters choosing the District 1 winner.

Only two candidates qualified to appear on the ballot for the District 1 race: Vanessa Oliver and Bob Starr, both Republicans.

Florida election law opens a primary to all voters when the only candidates are from the same political party. But a loophole allows a write-in candidate to "close" the primary, which, in this case, would shut out any voter who isn't a registered Republican.

This would leave almost 80,000 Charlotte voters barred from voting for the District 1 representative in the Aug. 18 primary election.

Whoever wins the primary would technically face the write-in candidate in the November election, although the write-in's name won't appear on the ballot.

When asked if the Airport Authority can do anything about Dorio's eligibility, Punta Gorda Airport spokesperson Kaley Miller said they don't have any answers yet, which is why this agenda item was added to the meeting.

"Chair Pam Seay (current District 1 representative) has asked our Board Attorney Darol Carr to provide legal advice (regarding Dorio)," Miller said.

Seay chose not to run for office again this year after serving for 24 years.

Dorio could not be reached for comment despite multiple attempts.

Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections Paul Stamoulis told the Sun last week his office is not allowed, under Florida law, to investigate the accuracy of information provided by candidates but rather, "it is generally left to the candidates themselves or to the Airport Authority itself to challenge the violations."

The meeting begins at 9 a.m. at Punta Gorda Airport, 7375 Utilities Road, Building 313, Punta Gorda, FL.

https://www.yoursun.com/puntagorda/news/can-the-airport-authority-challenge-write-in-candidates-eligibility/article_3cef9c82-b563-11ea-bd06-cfe33e5eae.html



Airport Authority calls emergency meeting

Authority to discuss write-in candidate's eligibility

By **DANIEL SUTPHIN**
STAFF WRITER

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Airport Authority opts not to challenge candidate's eligibility

Seay: 'He's not qualified' to run

By **DANIEL SUTPHIN**
STAFF WRITER

PUNTA GORDA — **Airport Authority** members said a write-in candidate for the District 1 seat doesn't appear to meet the residency requirement, but they must leave it to others to challenge whether he qualifies for the November election.

Martin Dorio, of Englewood, filed to run for Airport Authority District 1 — which encompasses eastern Charlotte County — but his address listed with the Charlotte County

Supervisor of Elections is in Sarasota County. Florida law requires airport authority commissioners must live in their district.

At an emergency meeting Wednesday, the Airport Authority approved a motion authorizing Airport Authority Attorney Darol Carr to notify “Florida elections oversight organizations,” such as the Florida Elections Commission, of the board’s concerns regarding Dorio’s candidacy and qualifications.

“What we are doing is putting (this issue) in the lap of the organizations responsible for elections to say evaluate, assess and determine,” said Airport Authority Chairperson Pamela Seay.

The issue came to light in a *Sun* report about Dorio’s residence.

“I have spoken with the Supervisor of Elections on this, I have spoken with our attorney,” Seay said at the meeting. “I have spoken with the FEC. I have spoken with the general counsel for the Florida Department of State Elections Division and all of them are saying, ‘Yeah, he’s not qualified but the only ones that can challenge that are those who have an interest ... (are) an interested party.’”

WHO’S CONSIDERED ‘INTERESTED’?

Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections Paul Stamoulis told the *Sun* last week his office

is not allowed, under Florida law, to investigate the accuracy of information provided by candidates: “It is generally left to the candidates themselves or to the Airport Authority itself to challenge the violations.”

Carr said county voters would also be considered as interested parties.

The inability to investigate a candidate’s qualifications — like that of the Supervisor of Elections — led Carr to say he believes there is a “gigantic black hole” in the state’s electoral laws in dealing with enforcement.

Going forward, Carr said, “We could implore our state legislatures to correct this issue. We could ask the state elections office, we could ask

the state attorney general to fix this huge black hole of who has to do what.

“It seems incongruent that we as an elected body be charged with enforcing the laws of the state of Florida that somebody (like Dorio who) is, in my opinion, flagrantly violating.”

WHO MIGHT BE AFFECTED?

Although he’s a write-in candidate whose name won’t appear on any ballot, Dorio’s status in the race would significantly affect the number of voters choosing the District 1 winner.

Only two candidates qualified to appear on the ballot for the

AIRPORT

FROM PAGE 1B

District 1 race: Vanessa Oliver and Bob Starr, both Republicans.

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case, would shut out any voter who isn’t a registered Republican.

This would leave almost 80,000 Charlotte voters barred from voting for the District 1 representative in the Aug. 18 primary election.

Whoever wins the primary would technically face the write-in candidate in the November election, although the write-in’s name won’t appear on the ballot.

“(When he filed to run) he effectively closed the election to qualified voters in Charlotte County,” Seay said.

Carr said he and Stamoulis have made multiple attempts to contact Dorio but got no response.

Dorio also has not responded to the *Sun* after multiple attempts.

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Viewpoint

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Oliver has skills for Airport Authority

EDITOR:

I have known attorney Vanessa Oliver, a candidate for Airport Authority, for over 20 years. She is energetic, intelligent, and an accomplished attorney, businesswoman, and mother who has been an active and supportive member of our community.

Vanessa has practical, current experience with budgeting, regulatory compliance, commercial tenancies, contracting, and employee management — all necessary skills for a member of the Airport Authority. Most importantly, she has the vision and drive to help our community through this economic slump.

She plans to strengthen our local economy by working with our school department to bring more practical aviation training to students, helping them to obtain well-paying jobs in Punta Gorda, as well as seeking more private investment in the Airport Park to increase employment opportunities. While her opponent wants to decrease flights in and out of the **Punta Gorda Airport**, Vanessa wants to attract additional commercial airlines to keep prices low for us. I encourage you to vote for Vanessa Oliver on August 18.

DENISE HENRY
Punta Gorda

Column:Punta Gorda City Manager candidates given a tour of the city

By Howard Kunik Punta Gorda City Manager Jun 25, 2020

It was "explore Punta Gorda day" for the city manager candidates on June 22. With temperatures reaching a high of 93 degrees the candidates boarded a van for a six-hour tour of Punta Gorda. The intent of the tour was to acclimate the group with the assets, challenges and opportunities of the community they were vying to lead.

The water plant and wastewater facilities were the first stops of the day. It was important for the candidates to see the physical infrastructure and understand the capacity of the systems. Of particular interest was the new reverse osmosis plant where leading-edge technology is changing the way the city services our utility customers. We will have a totally redundant water supply for our customers, in that in cases of emergency we can shift from surface water to groundwater or vice versa. It was also important to highlight the entire utility service area so the candidates could have a full picture of all the areas served by the plants.

Next we were off to visit a key economic driver for the community, the **Punta Gorda Airport (PGD)**. James Parish and Kaley Miller shared insights with the group. It was interesting to learn that PGD is recovering at a decent pace after the dismal spring with May passenger counts up over 500% over April. PGD is the recipient of C.A.R.E.'s act funding that will help the airport maintain viability over the course of the next four years. From there the tour moved southwest a bit to Jones Loop. Discussion centered on the value that the Jones Loop Forcemain brings to future economic growth in the area and the potential of the area to house commercial or mixed-use developments.

The unique character of Seminole Lakes, Burnt Store Isles and Burnt Store Meadows were of interest to the participants as we pointed out these neighborhoods.

The Public Works/Utilities campus tour showcased the divisions responsible for providing services in the areas of maintenance, construction, operations and engineering support for the city's roads, parks, rights of way, canals, sanitation, water and sewer lines infrastructure. The unique seawall replacement work program and the magnitude of the seawall responsibility were of interest to the candidates. This was only half the day and the group welcomed the chance to digest all of the information over a brief lunch at the campus.

The afternoon brought visits to parks, Historic District and Punta Gorda Isles neighborhoods. Guests were warmly greeted by Callie Stahl at the Peace River Wildlife Society and Patti Allen at Fishermen's Village. Stops were made to see Fire Station 3, Ponce Park, West Henry attractions (History Park, Hounds on Henry and Punta Gorda Library), the downtown business district, the Military Heritage Museum, Gilchrist Park, Laishley Park/Veterans Park, Blanchard House, Andrews House, and Cooper Street Center. Kelly Gaylord shared the history and important work of the Punta Gorda Historic Mural Society. A stop at Nature Park revealed the beautification efforts of the Punta Gorda Isles Green Thumbs. Richard Polk shared this positive story of volunteerism at the park. A drive by of Gulf Breeze affordable housing and the public schools provided the candidates with a snapshot of the housing authority and school district efforts to enhance the community post-Hurricane Charley.

We traversed the Boca Grande neighborhood to highlight the pending drainage project and worked our way to our final stop – Public Safety Building. The candidates were provided a tour of both fire administration/station 1 and police headquarters. It is safe to say that there is a lot to explore in Punta Gorda. Learn more about the city of Punta Gorda at www.CityofPuntagordaFl.com and explorepuntagorda.com.

https://www.yoursun.com/charlotte/news/column-punta-gorda-city-manager-candidates-given-a-tour-of-the-city/article_af50d00a-b722-11ea-9ea5-c7835987b394.html

LETTER: Oliver has skills for Airport Authority

Jun 25, 2020

Editor:

I have known attorney Vanessa Oliver, a candidate for Airport Authority, for over 20 years. She is energetic, intelligent, and an accomplished attorney, businesswoman, and mother who has been an active and supportive member of our community.

Vanessa has practical, current experience with budgeting, regulatory compliance, commercial tenancies, contracting, and employee management — all necessary skills for a member of the Airport Authority. Most importantly, she has the vision and drive to help our community through this economic slump.

She plans to strengthen our local economy by working with our school department to bring more practical aviation training to students, helping them to obtain well-paying jobs in Punta Gorda, as well as seeking more private investment in the Airport Park to increase employment opportunities. While her opponent wants to decrease flights in and out of the **Punta Gorda Airport**, Vanessa wants to attract additional commercial airlines to keep prices low for us. I encourage you to vote for Vanessa Oliver on August 18.

*Denise Henry
Punta Gorda*

https://www.yoursun.com/charlotte/opinion/letters_to_editor/letter-oliver-has-skills-for-airport-authority/article_64065dec-ada7-11ea-b87c-cbbeb0bc3622.html



Viewpoint

OUR VIEW

Bad law makes airport race a sham

OUR POSITION: *A very bad law and an irresponsible person might prevent 80,000 or so Charlotte County residents from having the chance to vote on an Airport Authority seat.*

Martin Dorio, where are you? You are being called names. You could be charged with a crime. It's time to step up and show yourself. Be brave. Be bold. Tell us why in the world you want to run for a seat on the **Punta Gorda Airport Authority**. Save yourself while you can.

Or, maybe it's already too late.

Today is the deadline for any changes on Charlotte County primary ballot. If you haven't read about it already, there is a controversy in the race for a seat on the Airport Authority.

Pam Seay is retiring from the board after representing District 1 for 24 years. Two Republicans, Bob Starr and Venessa Oliver, have qualified to run for her seat. Dorio, from out of nowhere, announced he was running as a write-in candidate. The problem is, he doesn't qualify. He lives in Sarasota County.

A terrible Florida law allows a write-in candidate, who does not have to pay a fee, get signatures or do anything else to qualify, to close Independents and members of another party from voting in the primary if the only other candidates are both from the same party. Simply put, no one but Republicans will now be able to vote for Starr and Oliver. That leaves about 80,000 voters in Charlotte County out in the cold. They will have no say on who represents them on the Airport Authority — all because someone who isn't even eligible put his name in as a write-in candidate.

It's a very bad law that only the state Legislature can fix. And they have no stomach for fixing it — with many lawmakers actually enjoying the chance to sometimes close a primary to members of the other party.

Authority lawyer Darol Carr addressed the board at an emergency meeting Wednesday and said there is little they can do. Members of the board did authorize Carr to notify the Florida Elections Commission (again) of the problem.

The whole scenario angers Seay.

"It is despicable, what (Dorio) has done," she said. "We have a person coming from another county to disrupt the process and our election."

Seay said the Authority, Charlotte County Supervisor of Elections Paul Stamoulis (and the *Sun* newspaper) have tried to contact Dorio with no luck. The candidate is either hiding or gave false information how to contact him.

He may not be aware he could be in violation of the law, Seay said.

"In his sworn oath he said he swears and affirms he is qualified to run for the Airport Authority," Seay said. "But, he's not. If it was a mistake, then he needs to fix it because our statute says you must be a resident in the district you are running for six months prior to qualifying."

Stamoulis has to pass along his primary ballot to the printer in order for it to be available to send overseas to those serving in the military. That means today is the final day to fix the problem.

Seay is concerned if the primary happens and someone challenges it being closed after today, it could mean the entire election would face a do-over.

All this because some irresponsible person decided he would throw his name into the election — although he obviously has no intention of mounting a campaign.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Airport Authority seat a popular target

EDITOR:

Who is backing who and why? I am encouraged that I am not the only one asking this question.

A while back, "Our View" ran an editorial in the Charlotte *Sun* asking many questions about Charlotte County elections. Of interest was the **Punta Gorda Airport Authority** which has an unknown allure to State Rep. Michael Grant.

In the last election thousands of PAC dollars (dark money) from Tallahassee funded an unscrupulous opposition research trying to unseat Robert Hancik by supporting Julie Price, a close friend of Grant.

Now, Vanessa Oliver, Grant's daughter, is a candidate for a seat vacated by her friend, Pam Seay. Fortunately Bob Starr has stepped up and given us a choice over "politics as usual" and the "good ol' boys."

CHARLES CRAWFORD
Punta Gorda

EDITORIAL: Bad law makes Authority race a sham

Jun 26, 2020

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*Charles Crawford
Punta Gorda*

https://www.yoursun.com/charlotte/opinion/letters_to_editor/letter-airport-authority-seat-a-popular-target/article_d49698c0-b247-11ea-9ff2-bf04d823d180.html

Punta Gorda City Manager candidates given a tour of the city



HOWARD KUNIK

Punta Gorda City Manager

technology is changing the way the city services our utility customers. We will have a totally redundant water supply for our customers, in that in cases of emergency we can shift from surface water to groundwater or vice versa. It was also important to highlight the entire utility service area so the candidates could

have a full picture of all the areas served by the plants.

Next we were off to visit a key economic driver for the community, the **Punta Gorda Airport (PGD)**. James Parish and Kaley Miller shared insights with the group. It was interesting to learn that PGD is recovering at a decent pace after the dismal spring with May passenger counts up over 500% over April. PGD is the recipient of C.A.R.E.'s act funding that will help the airport maintain viability over the course of the next four years. From there the tour moved southwest a bit to Jones Loop. Discussion centered on the value that

the Jones Loop Foremain brings to future economic growth in the area and the potential of the area to house commercial or mixed-use developments.

The unique character of Seminole Lakes, Burnt Store Isles and Burnt Store Meadows were of interest to the participants as we pointed out these neighborhoods.

The Public Works/Utilities campus tour showcased the divisions responsible for providing services in the areas of maintenance, construction, operations and engineering support for the city's roads, parks, rights of way, canals, sanitation, water and sewer lines infrastructure. The unique seawall replacement work program and the magnitude of the seawall responsibility were of interest to the candidates. This was only half the day and

the group welcomed the chance to digest all of the information over a brief lunch at the campus.

The afternoon brought visits to parks, Historic District and Punta Gorda Isles neighborhoods. Guests were warmly greeted by Callie Stahl at the Peace River Wildlife Society and Patti Allen at Fishermen's Village. Stops were made to see Fire Station 3, Ponce Park, West Henry attractions (History Park, Hounds on Henry and Punta Gorda Library), the downtown business district, the Military Heritage Museum, Gilchrist Park, Laishley Park/Veterans Park, Blanchard House, Andrews House, and Cooper Street Center. Kelly Gaylord shared the history and important work of the Punta Gorda Historic Mural Society. A stop at Nature Park

revealed the beautification efforts of the Punta Gorda Isles Green Thumbs. Richard Polk shared this positive story of volunteerism at the park. A drive by of Gulf Breeze affordable housing and the public schools provided the candidates with a snapshot of the housing authority and school district efforts to enhance the community post-Hurricane Charley.

We traversed the Boca Grande neighborhood to highlight the pending drainage project and worked our way to our final stop — Public Safety Building. The candidates were provided a tour of both fire administration/station 1 and police headquarters. It is safe to say that there is a lot to explore in Punta Gorda. Learn more about the city of Punta Gorda at www.CityofPuntagordaFl.com and explorepuntagorda.com.

Howard Kunik is the Punta Gorda City Manager.



SUN

Viewpoint

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tired of old, bring in the new in Oliver

EDITOR:

Who would make a better **Charlotte County Airport Authority** commissioner?

A grumpy old man who lives in the past? Or an intelligent young woman-wife-mother-lawyer who looks to the future?

I'm an 86-year-old woman, not grumpy, who is concerned about the future of Charlotte County and its airport.

I'm tired of being in quarantine, wearing a mask, breathing in fresh air and expelling old, used-up air. It makes me weary.

Bob Starr is like that tired old air. He doesn't like planes flying near his property. He lobbied legislators to cut federal funding for runways and critical airport improvements. He publicly bashes Allegiant, PGD's only commercial carrier. Do you want a noise-complaining, airline bashing commissioner who doesn't want critical federal grants for airport improvements? Then Bob Starr's your man!

As for me, I want an Airport Authority commissioner who fosters the economic recovery and the continued success of PGD. Join me in voting for Vanessa Oliver for District 1. She supports Allegiant and growing commercial airline service at PGD. Vanessa is an active, well-respected attorney and leader in the business community who is ready to take on new challenges and opportunities at PGD.

Vote for a positive role model who will help lead the Airport Authority to a bright future, not a negative retiree who wants to go decades back in time.

My mask is off! I'm breathing in a breath of fresh air. Won't you join me? Cast your vote for Vanessa Oliver!

Learn more at OliverforPGD.com.

JET WORTH-DUGAN
Port Charlotte

LETTER: Tired of old, bring in the new in Oliver

Jun 28, 2020

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*Jet Worth-Dugan
Port Charlotte*

https://www.yoursun.com/charlotte/opinion/letters_to_editor/letter-tired-of-old-bring-in-the-new-in-oliver/article_b5f97dc4-b4a9-11ea-add2-cf7b11588c92.html

Out-of-Market Press Coverage

Allegiant Air Keeping Springfield Route

Jun 8th, 2020 By Brenden Moore

Allegiant Air's seasonal service out of Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport won't be departing the Springfield market anytime soon.

The Nevada-based budget airline provides twice-weekly service between Springfield and **Punta Gorda**, Fla., a popular destination for leisure travelers and snowbirds in central Illinois.

While a report last week included Springfield on a list of cities Allegiant was seeking to cut service, airline officials and the Springfield Airport Authority clarified that the flight status was seasonal.

Officials said the airline received an exemption from the U.S. Department of Transportation that will allow it to put the Springfield route on the hiatus it typically takes in mid-August and September while still being eligible for Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds.

Unless granted exemptions, airlines receiving taxpayer funds are required to maintain a minimum level of service to the markets they serve.

"While the DOT established a threshold level of service for airlines receiving CARES Act support, it didn't take into consideration our historical service patterns, which are very seasonal," said Allegiant spokeswoman Sonya Padgett. "We requested, and were granted, a waiver so that we could have some flexibility in certain cities, including Springfield, to operate under the DOT minimum requirements from time to time."

Mark Hanna, executive director of the Springfield Airport Authority, characterized it as "a technical thing."

He said Punta Gorda was "a very, very popular local leisure destination."

More than 34,000 utilized the route in 2019, according to the Springfield Airport Authority.

The Springfield airport also has daily service from American Airlines to Dallas-Fort Worth and United Airlines to Chicago.

Passenger numbers at the airport totaled 155,764 in 2019, a slight dip from 158,406 in 2018 and 187,977 in 2017, according to airport authority numbers. The airport hit a 12-year high of nearly 192,000 in 2016.

Hanna said it's been a tough few months for the airline industry, and Springfield is not immune.

"We've seen a huge dip in traffic and it's pretty much lockstep with what we've seen across the country," he said.

American, which typically offers two daily flights between Springfield and Dallas, has temporarily cut back to one during the month of June.

United in recent months has combined its Springfield and Decatur routes to Chicago, with capital city passengers flying non-stop to Chicago but having a 30 minute layover in Decatur before returning to Springfield.

Hanna said it was one of the "creative solutions" airlines have come up with to maintain routes will waiting for demand to return.

"There's many, many other situations around the country where they're having these flag stops and tagging cities just to keep service viable and going because quite frankly, no one wants to see a company flying around empty airplanes and taking taxpayer money and then end up going broke here at the end of the late fall," Hanna said.

In the meantime, Hanna said the airport was taking advantage of the downtime to get its capital improvements done.

Among the improvements are an expanded area for passenger security checks, a new façade on much of the terminal, some heated sidewalks to keep snow and ice at bay, and an expanded hallway to the baggage claim area.

Additional roadway and parking improvements are also in progress.

https://www.aviationpros.com/airlines/news/21141255/allegiant-air-keeping-springfield-route?utm_source=AIRB+E-Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=AVVDB200608003&o_eid=2661H1181645I3Q&rdx.ident%5Bpull%5D=omeda%7C2661H1181645I3Q&oly_enc_id=2661H1181645I3Q

Norfolk airport traffic dropped 87% in May, but scheduled flights rising in July

By KIMBERLY PIERCEALL JUN 12, 2020 AT 3:04 PM



A passenger wears a mask and gloves while walking through Norfolk International Airport on Wednesday, April 15, 2020, in Norfolk, Va. (Karin McKeown / The Virginian-Pilot)

NORFOLK — Norfolk International Airport continued to see a steep drop in passenger traffic in May as the COVID-19 pandemic has discouraged travel, but there are signs of improvement.

Despite traffic dropping 87.2% from May 2019, to 45,712 passengers, the numbers were slightly better than April, and airlines appear to be adding more departures in July. Still, a year ago, the airport had 356,894 passengers fly in and out during the same month.

In April, just 18,687 people traveled through the airport, a 94.2% drop compared with the year prior. Richmond International Airport reported similarly dire numbers, with traffic there dropping 96.3% in April to 13,560 travelers. Traffic at Newport News-Williamsburg International Airport dropped to 1,932 passengers in April, down from 17,178 in March.

So far, traffic at Norfolk airport is down by nearly half for the first five months of the year, with 769,034 travelers using the airport in that time versus 1.5 million a year ago.

Travel appears to be picking up, though.

The number of scheduled departing flights out of Norfolk International Airport in July, so far, is 997 — up from 593 in May and 756 in June, according to departure data from the airport.

Frontier Airlines appears to be reviving its flights to Denver this month and next month, but isn't flying to Raleigh-Durham despite seven departures in May. Allegiant Airlines is also adding monthly departures from Norfolk, except to **Punta Gorda Airport** in Florida where no flights are scheduled.

From Norfolk, American Airlines and Delta still aren't offering nonstop flights to New York's JFK and LaGuardia airports, and United Airlines still has no scheduled departures to Denver and Houston. Southwest also isn't flying nonstop Norfolk-Denver and Norfolk-Chicago this month and next, but it's reviving departures in July to Nashville and Orlando.

The number of people traveling nationwide finally exceeded 500,000 in one day on Thursday, according to data the Transportation Security Administration posts daily, a number that hadn't been reached since March 21. At its lowest point, just 87,534 people went through TSA checkpoints at airports nationwide on April 14.

Traffic is still far from pre-pandemic levels. While 502,209 people went through TSA checkpoints Thursday, 2.67 million had done so on the same weekday a year ago.

<https://www.pilotonline.com/news/transportation/vp-bz-coronavirus-norfolk-airport-may-20200612-h2lfx2zmhjh7bfq3eo35k52m2a-story.html>

Allegiant driving passenger traffic recovery

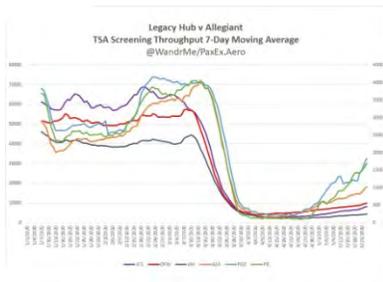
15 JUNE 2020 BY SETH MILLER

Total air traffic numbers are down in Spring 2020. There is no doubt this is true. But some airports are suffering more than others. An examination of TSA Screening Throughput data shows the impact with greater detail, bringing some interesting patterns to light. And one airline, in particular, is shifting the balance of traffic across the USA.

A review of the per-airport screening data for May 1-23, 2020* shows throughput dropped approximately 92.5% across all the 400+ airports where the Agency oversees screening services. But the average can be a misleading statistic. Only ~15% of airports saw checkpoint numbers drop that much. That some of them represent much larger typical passenger count skews the data.

Allegiant bucks the trend, and brings its airports along

For some markets the less significant drop in passenger numbers can be directly attributed to one airline. **Punta Gorda (PGD)** and Clearwater/St. Petersburg (PIE) both operate as key Florida airports for Allegiant. Phoenix-Mesa (AZA/IWA) serves the same role in Arizona. That carrier has been far more aggressive about operating its flights in recent weeks and the numbers reflect this increase in market share.

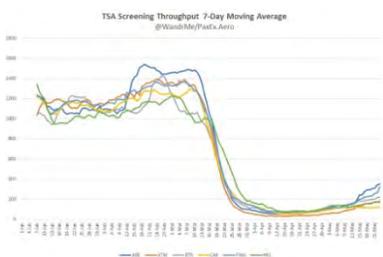


The speed of rebound at those airports is even more pronounced when compared against the relative recovery pace at large hubs for the “Big 3” legacy carriers. Allegiant reported that ~8% of all traffic on Memorial Day Weekend was carried on its planes. That reflects a massive boost over its typical 1.5% share. Still, the absolute numbers for the three Allegiant airports remain below even the “bad” levels for the legacies.

Rickenbacker International Airport (LCK) on the outskirts of Columbus, OH sees plenty of cargo traffic, but Allegiant also operates from the field. Its traffic dropped by only about half during the observed timeframe. Similar numbers for Rockford, IL (RFD); Belleville, IL (BLV); and Portsmouth, NH (PSM) reflect the power Allegiant has in keeping traffic numbers relatively higher at the small airports it serves.

Allegiant can also deliver a boost to larger airports, such as Flint, MI or Des Moines, IA. In both of those cases the carrier boosted its market share and saw a much more limited drop in passenger count compared to other carriers. The Flint example is further emphasized by the fact that Saginaw, Michigan sits about 45 miles away and shows some of the steepest drop in passenger count. But Saginaw does not receive Allegiant service to help prop up the numbers.

Comparing Allegiant to the Majors at smaller airports



The six airports compared above all saw checkpoint numbers between 33-36,000 in January 2020. Harlingen, Texas (HRL) was slower to shed passengers, presumably related to its popularity as a Spring Break destination. But Allentown and Fayetteville are recovering more quickly than the others in absolute numbers while Appleton is coming off the bottom reasonably quickly. All three of those airports see multiple weekly flights on Allegiant.

Traffic remains down significantly at these airports; Allegiant is simply doing better than the others in getting closer to matching its previous traffic numbers.

Other changes across the USA

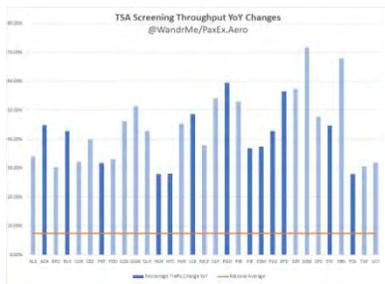
Beyond the Allegiant data other trends emerge. Several of the airports showing the largest drop were either closed or severely restricted traffic. These include island destinations such as Ponce and Aguadilla, Puerto Rico; Kahului, Lahaina, Lihue, and Lanai, Hawaii; Pago Pago, Guam and Saipan. Provincetown and Nantucket, Massachusetts also showed steep drops, as those communities effectively sealed off from outsiders.

Countering those steep drops were remote stations in Alaska, such as Barrow, Deadhorse, Adak Island, and Kotzebue, Alaska showing significant increase in total share of passengers. Adak and Deadhorse reported true increases in passenger numbers for the date range, though against a low comparison.

Mixed results across the Lower 48

New York City showed massive drops in passenger count. JFK, LaGuardia and Newark are among the worst performers, as are White Plains and Newburgh/Stewart. Boston and San Francisco are two other major hub airports that join the list.

Other airports showing strong performance are generally tied to Essential Air Service contracts where flights are not cut at all as operations remain subsidized by the US Department of Transportation. There are more of those than Allegiant winners, but it is a close race.



The lighter blue represents airports where EAS service has helped keep flight frequencies, and passenger levels higher. Darker bars attribute the less bad performance to Allegiant's operations at the airport.

**This is the most recent data for which the TSA has shared the per-checkpoint screening details as of publication time.*

<https://paxex.aero/2020/06/allegiant-driving-passenger-traffic-recovery/>



23-Jun-2020 8:32 PM

Allegiant Air 'cautiously optimistic' about recovery and return to 'normal' operations: CEO

Allegiant Travel Company chairman and CEO Maurice Gallagher Jr reported (23-Jun-2020) Allegiant Air has "led the industry in percentage of schedule available for sale and flown" during the past 60 days, with approximately 77% of its schedule available for sale in May-2020. During this period, the carrier operated nearly half of its scheduled 2020 departures and operated a 47% load factor. He noted five main markets, including Punta Gorda Charlotte County Airport (US) and Destin-Fort Walton Beach International Airport, are "doing well", although Las Vegas McCarran International Airport and Orlando Sanford International Airport "have been laggards because of their delay in reopening". Less than USD500,000 in daily deficit was recorded in May-2020, including USD11.5 million in debt service. "We are cautiously optimistic about the pace of the recovery and our ability to move back to a 'normal' operation", Mr Gallagher stated.

<https://centreforaviation.com/news/allegiant-air-cautiously-optimistic-about-recovery-and-return-to-normal-operations-ceo-1006561>