

Pitkin County Announces New Appointment for Director of Aviation



John S. Kinney, C.M.

ASPEN, CO – Pitkin County has named John S. Kinney, C.M., as the new Director of Aviation at the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport (ASE) in Aspen, Colorado.

The current Director of Emergency Management for Los Angeles World Airports: LAX, Van Nuys and Ontario International Airport, Kinney is expected to start his new position beginning December 15th.

The job became available in September when former airport director Jim Elwood left his post for a similar position in Jackson Hole, Wyo., after 13 years at the helm.

Kinney brings 28 years of aviation management experience to the job, including stints at Long Beach, California and as Airport Director in Scottsdale, Arizona. He also worked for the Transportation Safety Administration and was Deputy Manager of Aviation at Denver International Airport for six years.

He said that his time in Scottsdale paid a “huge dividend” and has prepared him for taking on the job of airport director in Aspen.

“It’s similar to Scottsdale, where tourism is the No. 1 industry,” Kinney said on Monday. “It’s affluent, with heavy corporate aviation, and the community’s involvement was huge ... you need to find that elusive balance [in the airport plan] between your responsibility to business and the community.”

“Our interview process was very thorough and the feedback I got from the community, airport tenants and airport employees was very helpful in making this important decision,” said County Manager Jon Peacock. “It’s a big job, particularly over the next decade, and we are pleased to have attracted a candidate of John’s caliber. We had a great pool of candidates but John stood out as the most experienced,” Peacock said.

Kinney, a licensed pilot since the early 1980s, is familiar with the Aspen area, and his experience working in resort areas was a factor in his hiring, Peacock said.

“John has experience in resort airports,” Peacock said. “He’s been in communities that show similar concerns about both the benefits and impacts of local airports ... he’s excited to engage in our lifestyle here. He’s just a really good match.”

And Kinney believes that Aspen is the right place for him and his wife, Joy. Their three adult children live in Colorado.

"I am very excited about the opportunity to join Jon Peacock's team and work with an impressive group of professionals serving the citizens of Pitkin County and surrounding communities," Kinney said.

"Returning to Colorado is simply coming home. My wife is a third generation native of Colorado and we have made many great memories with family and friends in the Roaring Fork Valley and Aspen over the past 30 years," Kinney said.

The county is currently working on its three-part Future Air Service Planning Study, which will determine the airport's future layout and expansion.

It's a project that Kinney can't wait to get involved with.

"After 10 years at large airports, I've learned big is not best," Kinney said. "[The layout plan] is a great and complex issue. It's not a short-term relationship ... it's a 10- to 15-year agenda and will be challenging work. But the staff there is great and the community is vibrant. The improvements have to be complementary to the community."

Peacock said Kinney's experience working with the Federal Aviation Administration will help greatly at the airport.

"It's really going to be good to have him here," Peacock said. "He's worked closely in master planning processes and fixed-base operations. He also has a really good handle on grant programs for capital-based projects."

Kinney holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Aviation Management from Metropolitan State College in Denver, Colorado and he is a Certified Member (C.M.) with the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE). Kinney is the recipient of several industry awards, and has been a speaker at numerous industry conferences.

This search was conducted by ADK Executive Search, a retained executive search firm specializing exclusively in searches for the airport management community.

Source: Pitkin County and AspenDailyNewsOnline