



City of Naples

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March 19, 2026

Via Email and Hand Delivery

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

RE: Veto HB 4005 - City of Naples Municipal Airport Authority and request for a meeting with City delegation

Dear Governor DeSantis:

The Naples City Council respectfully requests your consideration of the City's concerns regarding HB 4005, which was recently enrolled and will soon be presented to you for consideration.

The City's newly seated Council previously requested additional time from the Collier County Legislative Delegation for local review and collaboration with the delegation, our constituents, and the Naples Airport Authority prior to final legislative action. Nonetheless, the bill has advanced through the legislative process and will soon be before you.

The impact of HB 4005 is to usurp the Naples City Council's proper and necessary governance and oversight of the City's largest and most significant tangible asset, the Naples Municipal Airport, along with the land on which it is located. The legislation provides no demonstrated public necessity and instead introduces significant risk by opening the door to external influence over one of the City's most critical assets. The loss of local control creates the potential for incompatible decisions regarding land use, intensification of airport operations, and policy direction that may not reflect the values or best interests of the City of Naples community.

Given the irreparable impact of this legislation, the City respectfully asks that you carefully consider our concerns outlined below and **veto HB 4005**.

We also request the opportunity for a meeting between your Office and a City delegation to discuss these concerns in greater detail. The City delegation is available at your convenience to provide

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additional context and to work collaboratively toward a path forward that respects local governance and the interests of our residents.

HB 4005 presents the following concerns:

1. Naples Airport Authority (NAA)

The NAA was first created in 1969 through a special act requested by the City of Naples. The intent was, and has always been, that the City-owned Naples Municipal Airport would be controlled by the City, through the operation of the NAA, a dependent special district of the City. Knowing and relying upon the premise that the NAA was under the control of the City, in 1969, the City leased the Naples Municipal Airport to the NAA for a \$1.00 per year, for 99 years which was paid in advance more than five decades ago. By taking away governance and the appointment authority from the City and converting the NAA into a independent district, this bill would frustrate the purpose of the lease. The current arrangement reflects the City's longstanding commitment to the airport and the expectation that the City would retain a meaningful role in its governance.

2. Defective Notice

HB 4005 is a Special Law subject to the notice requirements of the Florida Constitution. In the absence of a referendum, the law requires a valid and meaningful public notice that clearly communicates the chief purpose of the proposed legislation in unambiguous terms.

In this instance, the published notice was general in nature and failed to convey the most consequential element of the bill - specifically, the change to the residency requirements of the Naples Airport Authority members and the transfer of appointment authority from City-elected representatives to electors of the entire County. As a result, the notice did not adequately inform the public of the profound governance changes proposed and their direct impact on the City of Naples and its residents. Because these constitutional notice requirements were not meaningfully satisfied, HB 4005 raises serious concerns as an improperly noticed Special Law, especially in light of its impact on the City's ability to locally govern the airport.

3. Governance Structure

The proposed changes disrupt the longstanding balance between the City of Naples, its residents, and the NAA. This bill proposes to change the way the NAA board members are chosen, from being appointed by the Naples City Council to the highly unusual method of being elected Countywide by all voters in Collier County. Out of the 31 Airport Authorities in Florida we researched, only two (2) are elected and *both are county not municipal airports* (emphasis added). For more than fifty years, the current appointive structure has allowed the airport to operate successfully while maintaining local accountability and ensuring that qualified individuals with relevant expertise serve on the NAA. HB 4005 represents an unprecedented and targeted intrusion into municipal governance. The bill would transfer authority of approximately 8% of the City's land, our largest public asset valued in the hundreds of millions to over \$1 billion, from locally accountable elected officials to a governing body selected by County electors twenty times the size of the City's electors. This shift undermines the City's Comprehensive Plan, City Charter, and land development regulations, and removes local oversight of decisions that directly affect the health, safety, and quality of life of our residents.

4. City Charter Provisions

The bill eliminates key safeguards established under the 1969 Airport Authority Act that ensure airport governance begins and continues with municipal consent. These provisions protect operational quality and community interests. While the airport originated as a remote military airfield during World War II, it is now surrounded by urban land uses. The City retains building, planning, and zoning authority over the airport property and is responsible for balancing airport operations with adjacent property rights and public safety. This raises concerns about provisions within this legislation that would undermine the City's Charter and the Council's ability to ensure the City's governing documents are adhered to.

5. Qualifications

The unprecedented and highly restrictive qualifications for office as a board member of the NAA deprive many tax paying citizens who may want to serve from running and would deprive voters from electing the candidates of their choice. For example, barbers, teachers, attorneys, waitresses, stay-at-home parents, regular airport users and many others would be deprived of their constitutional right to run for office merely because they have not been engaged for five years in financial management, small business operations or aeronautics. This specificity could result in a lack of quorum with only a few citizens qualifying.

6. Operational Success and Stability

The Naples Municipal Airport is one of the most successful small airports in the country and remains the most valuable asset owned by the City of Naples. The power to operate the Naples Municipal Airport currently vests with the City, through its dependent district. HB 4005 would transfer the power to operate the Naples Municipal Airport away from the City to the now independent district without a referendum approval from the people. In addition to this conversion without referendum, HB 4005 also failed to address some of the statutorily mandated "minimum requirements" that must be included in order to create an independent district under Chapter 189, Florida Statutes. For example, the method of amending the charter of the district, the maximum compensation of a governing board member, and the applicable financial disclosures, noticing and reporting requirements. The current governance structure has enabled the airport to operate successfully while balancing community interests, surrounding land uses, and public safety.

7. Diluted Vote

Even though the Naples Municipal Airport is owned by the City and was paid for by its taxpayers, HB 4005 extends voting eligibility to all Collier County residents for the election of Naples Airport Authority members, diluting local oversight of a City-owned asset. This means that the voting power of the Naples voters would be highly diluted and **will represent less than 5% of the total potential voters**. This radical change is contrary to the longstanding intent of the City and the NAA. Replacing the current appointive structure with countywide elections risks disrupting the careful balance between airport operations, surrounding land uses, and public safety. Such elections are likely to become contentious and may shift the Authority's focus toward growth and expansion rather than maintaining the balance between airport operations and the rights of adjacent property owners. The existing governance structure has been instrumental to the Airport's success, local accountability, and the protection of community interests.

The Naples Municipal Airport operates on land owned by the City of Naples and located within the City's boundaries. For more than five decades, the existing governance structure has supported the airport's operational success while maintaining appropriate local accountability and protecting the interests of surrounding neighborhoods and property owners.

For these reasons, the Naples City Council requests that you veto HB 4005. This legislation disrupts a long-standing, effective governance model and improperly removes local oversight of a significant City asset. A veto does not suggest that there are no legitimate issues to be addressed between the City and the Naples Airport Authority that impact our residents and Collier County. Rather, it preserves the opportunity for continued local coordination and ensures that any future legislation is developed through a transparent, collaborative process that properly protects the interests of the voters of the City of Naples.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Mayor Teresa Heitmann
and Members of the Naples City Council

cc (via hand delivery):

Jason Weida, Chief of Staff

Leda Kelly, Director of Policy & Budget

Jack Rogers, Director of Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs

cc (via email):

The Honorable Kathleen Passidomo

The Honorable Adam Botana

The Honorable Lauren Melo

The Honorable Yvette Benarroch

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