

Profile: Marty Lenss says airport vital to pushing economic development

Employment diversity key to air service



Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette Marty Lenss became director of The Eastern Iowa Airport in January. Lenss has 20 years of airport management experience with facilities in Minnesota, Oklahoma, Wisconsin and Wyoming,

George C. Ford, The Gazette

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Marty Lenss, who became director of The Eastern Iowa Airport this past January, remembers the first time he boarded an airplane.

“I took my first airplane ride when I was 13, and I went with my parent to visit my sister, who was living in Newfoundland, Canada,” he said.

Later, when he started attending the University of North Dakota, Lenss pursued “the professional pilot side of the curriculum. Late in my sophomore year, I switched majors to airport administration. I graduated with a degree in airport administration and business management.”

Lenss, who had interned at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport,

joined the airport after graduation, working in the facility's noise abatement operations.

After several months, he took a position as an operations officer at the Tulsa Airport Authority in Tulsa, Okla.

"Airport operations involved runway inspection, airport safety, wildlife management, snow and ice control and similar things," Lenss said.

"About nine months after I arrived, airport law enforcement was combined with airport operations. I went to the police academy and became a state certified peace officer."

Lenss left Tulsa to become the assistant airport director in Cheyenne, Wyo. After stints at airports in Appleton and Madison, Wis., he became executive director for the Rochester Airport Co. in Rochester, Minn.

That's where he was when he heard about the director's job in Cedar Rapids.

"Shona (his wife) and I came down a couple of weeks before my interview," he said. "We found the community to be very impressive, and the people we met were very positive about the area.

"The diversity of employment opportunities is particularly important for air service development."

Lenss, now 44, arrived as the airport terminal is undergoing a five-year, \$48 million remodeling project,

"The airport is well positioned in terms of supporting economic development," he said. "We've had excellent fiscal management and we realize that we need to be good stewards going forward.