




**City of Long Beach**  
Working Together to Serve

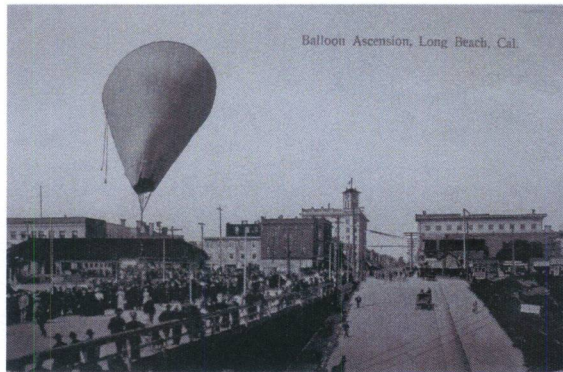
**R-16**  
**Office of Gerrie Schipske**  
**Councilwoman, Fifth District**  
**Memorandum**

Date: September 14, 2010  
To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
From: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District 

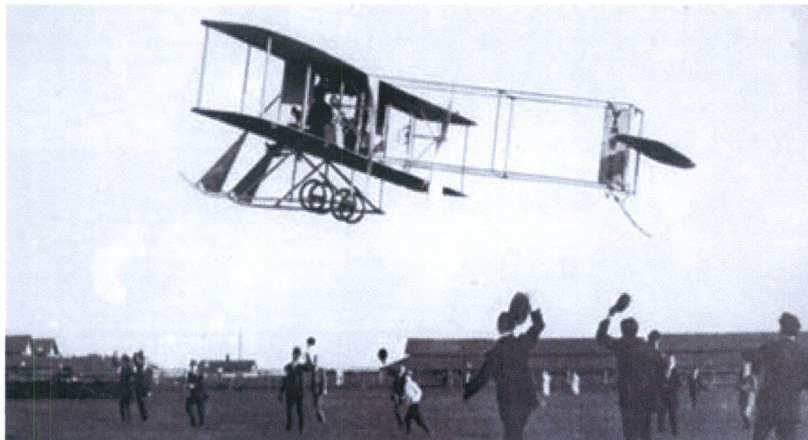
Subject: AGENDA ITEM: Request of Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and U.S. Postal Service to Assist the City of Long Beach in Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the completion of the first transcontinental air flight in the surf near the former Pine Avenue Pier on December 10, 1911.

**Discussion:**

In the early 1900's, Long Beach was a choice site for aviators. Our long stretch of hard sand and surf were perfect for early aviators to launch or to land their balloons and flying machines. Aviators swooped over the Pike and bathhouse. Stunt performers jumped out of balloon baskets onto the sand thrilling thousands who lined up near the beach to watch.



Long distance flights were unheard of until 1911. Just 8 years after the Wright Brothers flight at Kitty Hawk, Calbraith Perry ("Cal") Rodgers completed the first transcontinental flight from Sheepshead Bay, New York, in the surf of Long Beach, California on December 10, 1911.



William Randolph Hearst offered a \$50,000 prize to the first aviator completing a flight coast-to-coast within 30 days. Rodgers, the son of naval hero Oliver Perry, convinced the Armour Company to finance his race, and in turn, he displayed a "Vin Fiz" advertisement

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

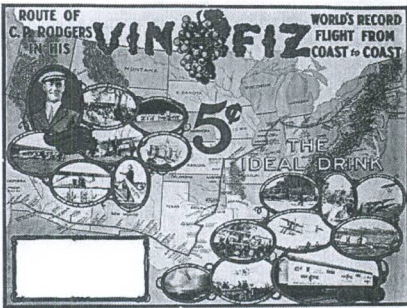
Request of Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and U.S. Postal Service to Assist the City of Long Beach in Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the completion of the first transcontinental air flight in the surf near the former Pine Avenue Pier on December 10, 1911

Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District

September 14, 2010

Page 2

(Armour's news grape soft drink) on the wing of his Wright Model EX-1 pusher plane.



Rodgers trip was full of mishaps and crashes and he missed Hearst's deadline of 30 days to complete the trip and win the prize money. So when the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce contacted him in Pasadena (where he was recovering from crash injuries) and offered him \$1,000 (some stories say as much as \$5,000 was paid by the LB Chamber of Commerce) to finish his flight in Long Beach, Rodgers accepted.

More than 50,000 people (with the Long Beach Municipal Band playing in the background) lined up to watch Rodgers drop into the surf as his friends (and Long Beach aviators) Frank Champion in a Bleriot monoplane and Beryl "Byrd" Williams with passenger Earl Daugherty in a Curtiss-type plane, flew out to meet Rogers as he passed Dominguez Fields and gave him an escort into Long Beach. All three airplanes circled the water and landed on the sand and water near Pine Avenue Pier. Rodgers used crutches when he got out of his plane because of his numerous injuries.



Rodgers also carried an "aerial mailbag" from Pasadena that he dropped in Long Beach before landing. (Airmail would not officially

start in the US until 1918.) The bag was signed by several Long Beach aviators (Earl Daugherty and Frank Shaffer as well as the great-grand father of Mike Duree, Squire DuRee who promoted flying events in the city.

The landing in Long Beach is so significant to aviation history, that a replica of Rodgers' "Vin Fiz" and the actual mailbag are on display at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

<http://collections.nasm.si.edu/media/full/A19340060000CP04.jpg>



Centennial Planning Committee:

The 100th Anniversary of this important event will be celebrated in the City of Long Beach with appropriate festivities and activities to mark the significance of not only the historic event but the role Long Beach played in early aviation. A planning committee was launched several months ago by Councilwoman Schipske and includes numerous aviation and historical stakeholders.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

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September 14, 2010

Page 3

The committee has been tasked with developing a calendar of events that will promote and celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first transcontinental flight and the importance of the involvement of Long Beach and its Chamber of Commerce in encouraging the growth of aviation in this country.

Following the death of Cal Rodgers in 1912 (he hit a seagull off Pine Avenue pier and crashed into the water), the City of Long Beach promised to erect a marker commemorating the flight of the "Vin Fiz." The marker was never erected but will be as part of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year.

The planning committee recommends that the City of Long Beach contact the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and request that the Smithsonian work with Long Beach in planning this event as well as possibly allowing the City of Long Beach to display the replica of the "Vin Fiz" from September to December 2011 (the time period in which the flight took place). Additionally, the committee recommends that the City of Long Beach contact the U.S. Postal Service, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee requesting that a commemorative stamp be designed that includes "Long Beach, California" as the final destination of this historical event.

**Recommendation:**

Request that the City Manager direct the Director of the Airport, Mario Rodriguez, to contact the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and the U.S. Postal Service Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee concerning their participation with Long Beach in the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Transcontinental Flight that began in Sheepshead Bay, New York and ended in the surf off Pine Avenue in Long Beach.