

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Friday, September 3, 2015

8:30 am

Airport Terminal Building

Members Present:

Doug Green, Chair
Bill Hutwelker
Clark Dexter
Robert Bergevin
Rod Thompson
Richard Kasper
Kevin Provost
Joseph Bendzinski
Peter Delaney

Staff Present:

Ed Mattern, Airport Director

Others Present:

Jason Horne

Mayor Kendall Lane

Members Not Present:

Kris Roberts, Councilor

1. Call to Order

Chair Green called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. He thanked everyone for coming.

2. Approval of Minutes – July 17, 2015

Mr. Delaney made a motion to approve the minutes of July 17, 2015. Mr. Hutwelker seconded the motion, which passed by a unanimous vote.

3. Election of Commission Chair

Chair Green stated that his term expired at the end of last year and they need to elect a new chair. He asked for nominations. Mr. Bergevin nominated Doug Green. Mr. Hutwelker seconded the motion. Discussion ensued. Several AAC members praised Chair Green's work. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

4. Review – AAC Role and Responsibility

Mr. Mattern distributed a handout – the portion of the City Code that includes the AAC's charge, membership requirements, and functions and guidelines. He stated that there is a requirement to have at least one member from Swanzey and a minimum of five from Keene. Other members can be from any other town, should the Mayor appoint them and the City Council approve of

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them. He continued that the code talks about terms, and the relationship to the Airport Department.

Mr. Mattern continued that the code talks about the responsibilities that the Airport and City Council expects from the AAC, such as taking an active role in the Airport Master Plan. They could probably do a better job of visiting the Airport Master Plan on a regular basis. As Airport Director, he will make every effort to make sure that happens. Other functions and guidelines include being advocates for the airport, and doing marketing and public relations, which sometimes they have a subcommittee to do. That subcommittee has had its ups and downs. There is another group now, comprised of interested parties, Beth Bendel (of Monadnock Aviation), and members of this group. He wants to make sure that continues and they are doing what they can to promote and educate people about the airport. Maybe the AAC can talk about one function and guideline per meeting, to make sure they are fulfilling their duties as outlined in the ordinance in the code. Today this is more for informational purposes and discussion.

Chair Green stated that several AAC members, many times, have mentioned feeling frustrated by the AAC's lack of meaningful authority or ability to have the City Council or The City Manager act in accordance with the AAC's recommendations. He continued that the consensus seems to be that the AAC takes their work seriously but does not always feel heard. One of the duties listed is to "make regular reports and recommendations to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee of the City Council," and "Perform other related functions as required by the City Council or as requested by the City Manager." How can their frustrations be addressed, other than possibly asking the City Council to change the City charter?

Kendall Lane, Mayor of the City of Keene, replied that to change the City charter, one would need to create a Charter Commission, and the Charter Commission could recommend changing it. He continued that that is about a three year process. Chair Green stated that years ago, the AAC's input was weighted heavily. He continued that it seems to have drifted away from that. The AAC would like to be back in the role of making recommendations that are listened to by the City Council.

The Mayor replied that Councilor Roberts is the City Council representative on the AAC and has not been attending for a long time. He continued that he cannot replace him but he can nominate an alternate to attend when Councilor Roberts is unable to. He has nominated Councilor Mitch Greenwald. He is vocal about the airport. He will sit in this year so there is more communication between the AAC and the City Council. The City Manager is retiring. He, the Mayor, is here today because the City Manager could not be. Once Councilor Greenwald starts coming to the AAC meetings there will be better communication between the AAC and the City Council. Chair Green stated that Councilor Roberts has been very involved and knowledgeable about the airport and other matters, due to his position with the City and the State. He continued that he has been a great asset over the years.

Mr. Bergevin stated that he has been on the AAC on and off since the commission was first formed. He continued that it used to be that anything that had "airport" in the language started with the AAC. Some topics took the AAC five minute to get through, while others took many hours. The AAC's recommendations were always recognized by the City Council, and 90% of

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the time or more, the City Council listened to the AAC's recommendations. That seems to have drifted away. People here are knowledgeable and work hard to make decisions not for their own personal gain, but for the good of the City, the airport, and the community. The Mayor stated that there are several things the City Council does not act upon until they hear from the AAC. He continued that regarding whether they will follow exactly what the AAC wants, that is up to the City Council. Neither he nor anyone can control what the City Council decides, but he knows that when decisions are being made regarding the airport, the City Council does pay attention to the recommendations of the AAC.

Chair Green stated that he understands that they are an advisory commission and not autonomous. The Mayor replied that the City has many advisory commissions and committees, and this frustration is felt by others. The commissions and committees do a lot of ground work and research. It is up to the City Council to decide whether or not to follow commissions' advice and input, so all the commissions can do is give as much input as they can.

Mr. Thompson thanked the Mayor for being here. He continued that part of his frustration is that the whole time he has been on the AAC, he has felt that the AAC's comments or recommendations never really got to the City Council. For the length of time he has been on the commission, there has been a City Council representative who was supposed to come to these meetings but did not. When the AAC makes recommendations to the City Council they never hear back. If there is a City Councilor here regularly to answer AAC members' questions, they will know they are in touch with the people who run the city. If he does not sense that communication with the City Council is solid he does not see the value of this group. He is glad to have the Mayor's assurance that a City Councilor will attend every meeting and respond to questions and share the feedback of the City Council so there is a two-way conversation.

The Mayor replied that people in City Hall are aware of that frustration. He continued that he spoke with the City Manager, and they are trying. Councilor Roberts was not physically able to come to meetings, but he does not want to resign, so they are trying to work around that. The City Manager came to some AAC meetings, and he (the Mayor) is a member but cannot vote or count towards the quorum. They made arrangements for Councilor Greenwald to be the alternate for Councilor Roberts.

Mr. Thompson asked if they can be assured that someone from the City Council will be at every meeting. The Mayor replied that he cannot guarantee every meeting, but Councilor Greenwald said he would be here regularly. Chair Green replied that Councilor Greenwald takes his job seriously, is diligent, and does his homework. The Mayor replied that Councilor Greenwald pays attention to airport issues, and is interested and knowledgeable. He continued that he is also the chair of the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee, and will be a good representative and the AAC's voice will be heard clearly at the City Council. Mr. Thompson replied that Councilor Greenwald sounds like a good person to have on the AAC.

Mr. Bergevin stated that he has talked with Councilor Greenwald. He continued that he agrees that he is a good choice – he thinks about the airport. Councilor Roberts is also good to have on the AAC. The Mayor replied that Councilor Roberts is especially good from an engineering standpoint; he was involved in the airport construction and management. But he has been out of

touch during the past year. Chair Green thanked the Mayor and stated that it sounds like Councilor Greenwald will be an asset.

5. Request to Sublease – Jason Horne

Jason Horne stated that he is working on getting his pilot's license. He continued that he purchased a hangar here and is working on getting a plane. In the meantime, he would like to allow his friend to park a plane in his hangar. Mr. Kasper asked which hangar. Mr. Horne replied George Trahan's old hangar.

Mr. Mattern stated that the existing hangar lease gives one the ability to sublease with the City's approval. He continued that his question was whether the intended purpose of the subleasing is aviation, and it is. There is a standard sublease agreement written by the City Attorney and would offer that to Mr. Horne to use.

Mr. Kasper made a motion for the AAC to recommend approval of Jason Horne's request to sublease his hangar. Mr. Bergevin seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

6. Potential Expansion of TIF District

Mr. Mattern reported that as part of the Master Plan update discussions, there has been a lot of conversation about enhancing the functionality and attractiveness of the airport. He continued that mentioned many times is the potential to expand the existing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district that Swanzey has established across the road. A TIF district takes the additional increment of property taxes paid as a result of development projects to make interim improvements to assist with additional development, such as road extensions or water and sewer lines. The TIF district is in Swanzey and does not extend to the airport. If extended, it would be subject to Swanzey's rules and regulations.

Mr. Mattern continued that in the context of the Master Plan update and in talking to Mr. Hutwelker about the timeline, it was determined that to get this on the town warrant to have Swanzey consider it, they would need a request in by November or December. Prior to asking the Town to do that, the City Council needs to determine if they want to request this. The first step is having the AAC discuss it. He hopes the AAC recommends to the City Council that they request the Town of Swanzey to expand the TIF district to include the airport or portions of it.

Chair Green asked which area(s). Mr. Mattern replied that they have not gotten to that point yet and need more discussion. He continued that he is not fully knowledgeable about what the expansion of the TIF district would mean – would there be unintended consequences? He would like to look into this further.

Chair Green asked if the expansion of the TIF district, were it to happen, would affect the airport's ability to get grants or cause them to lose grant money. Mr. Mattern replied that the grant obligations would remain and this would not affect their ability to secure grants. Chair Green asked if that means the TIF district would not need to be aviation-related and could include other types of businesses. Mr. Mattern replied that the FAA would not approve taking a good hangar site and not using it for a hangar. He continued that they need to meet the obligations of being an airport, which they do. Chair Green asked if they need to consider secure

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perimeter versus not. Mr. Mattern replied that there are hangar sites to the east of the terminal building, and if constructed, they would pay taxes to the Town of Swanzey. He continued that they do not have sewer lines. Future developers would have to do their own septic systems or connect to the line on Route 32. If the TIF district expanded here, the Town would use the tax funds collected to construct a sewer line, thus reducing the development costs for whoever wanted to build a hangar. That would be available for aviation or non-aviation, as he understands it.

Mr. Bendzinski asked if Mr. Mattern is recommending that the AAC approve the TIF district without first knowing what it is or where it would be. Mr. Mattern replied that the TIF district already exists and they are looking to have the City Council ask the Town of Swanzey to extend it. The Mayor clarified that all the AAC is being asked right now is to recommend the concept of including the airport in a TIF district run by the Town of Swanzey. He continued that Swanzey would be participating in future investments at the airport. The specifics would come back to the AAC in the future when they are determined. The size of the expansion and the use of the funds within the TIF district are still topics that are up in the air. They are just talking about the concept right now. It is different than what they have had in the past and allows a different type of investment than they have ever had. The question is whether the AAC agrees that this is a viable concept. If so, staff would look into the idea and talk with the Town and figure out which area(s) to include.

Mr. Kasper replied that he thinks everyone agrees that if this helps the airport and the Town they are in favor, but the proposal is premature. He continued that they do not know how the area, the uses of the funds, any regulations and how it would intersect with FAA regulations, and so on and so forth. As a voting citizen in Swanzey, he does not know what they would vote for in November or December. Probably citizens would have a lot of questions. He finds the concept interesting but no more than that. He is not opposed to considering it. Mr. Bendzinski replied that the AAC is being asked to consider the concept, not specifics. He continued that they need to decide whether to recommend starting this process.

Mr. Thompson replied that he cannot approve something he knows nothing about. He continued that he wants more details about what Swanzey has in mind, and how it would benefit the airport. It is clear in the ordinance that the AAC has a primary responsibility in marketing the airport, and before he approves this he wants to know more details.

Mr. Bergevin stated that he thinks the Airport Director is looking for them to say, "Yes, look into this, and see what it is all about." He continued that he is okay with that. That is all their vote today would be for. Mr. Mattern would return with more information. Chair Green agreed.

Ms. Bendel stated that the concept is interesting but they do not know the pros and cons. She asked if they can have a briefing. Is there someone who could educate them about this? She also wonders how the expansion of the TIF district would affect her as a property owner, if at all.

Chair Green stated that this is a concept. He continued that the AAC has talked for hours about how to market the airport and make it more financially viable. They have talked about the TIF district across the way and the businesses and how great it would be to have more corporate

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aircraft coming in and out of Keene. It is a good opportunity. He likes the idea of that and having infrastructure paid for that would benefit the airport, Swanzey, and Keene. That is a good thing. They are not locked in to which parcel. That is a discussion for another day. This is about whether the AAC can recommend to the City Council that they investigate this further. If the details come back and they are not comfortable with them they can have a different opinion.

Chair Green asked Mr. Hutwelker how the Town of Swanzey feels about this. Mr. Hutwelker replied that to clarify, this is not a Town initiative. He continued that this idea came up in the Master Plan discussions. They talked about how the TIF district benefits Swanzey and allowed for infrastructure improvements, most recently on Safford Drive. The district already extends onto the airport, but he does not know where the line is. What came up in the Master Plan conversation is the question of whether the City wanted to talk with the Town about extending the district further to help with the development of infrastructure. This is purely conceptual. If the AAC recommends that Mr. Mattern move forward with this, there would be a meeting with leaders from the City and the Town to see if there is viability. This would need to happen in November or December so it can be crafted as a warrant article for March. That needs to go through the Planning Board in Swanzey, then the budget session in January and February for further deliberation or modification, then to the Town Meeting in March. If the AAC is willing to move forward today he can ask Sara Carbonneau from Swanzey to come to their next meeting. They can have a discussion and she can show them where the district currently is.

Mr. Mattern stated that even if it were to extend over a runway it would have no impact. He continued that it could be an overlay that just applies to anything that could be developed underneath that. Mr. Delaney stated that he thinks it is about new construction and infrastructure only. He continued that if it were at the airport it would not mean tearing anything down.

Mr. Bergevin made a motion for the AAC to move forward with this to receive more information about the potential expansion of the TIF district before they make a final decision. Mr. Bendzinski seconded the motion.

Discussion ensued about the meaning of the motion. Mr. Bendzinski stated that he thinks they are more or less voting to start the process, so a plan can be developed. They are saying "Go ahead and look into it." Chair Green replied that that is not what Mr. Bergevin's motion says. Mr. Bergevin agreed. He continued that they need more information to move on, or to put this on more time. Chair Green asked for someone else to second Mr. Bergevin's motion, because Mr. Bendzinski had a different interpretation of the motion when he seconded it. Hearing no second for the motion, Chair Green declared the motion dead. Mr. Kasper asked what motion would be required so the Town and City can move forward to develop a plan.

Chair Green made a motion for the AAC to recommend to the City Council that the City investigate the concept of expanding the TIF district. Mr. Kasper seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 8 to 0. Mr. Hutwelker abstained.

Chair Green stated that they are looking to enhance the airport and its attractiveness to be a regional facility that will be used more. He continued that further development here or adjacent is a good thing.

7. Acceptance of FAA/State Grant Offers

Mr. Mattern reported that two projects that the Airport included in the CIP were approved by the City Council: the second phase of the Environmental Assessment (EO) for the obstruction clearing project, and obtaining a new snowblower. He continued that the Airport applied for both grants and has not yet received offers, but the Federal fiscal year ends in September and the grants need to be accepted by the City by the end of September if they are offered. The grant offers would need to go through the AAC and the City Council, and there was concern about whether there would be enough time for that process. Therefore, as the end of the fiscal year approaches, the City wants the authority to accept the grants if/when the offers come this month.

Mr. Mattern continued that the EO Phase 2 is a continuation of the obstruction clearing project. It is a study of four major areas that the first phase identified : the effects of the obstruction clearing project in regards to noise, socio-economics, property taxes, and visual impacts. It is a study to get information about those topics and to factor those issues into the design or approach the project uses. If the grant is offered and accepted, they have a contract ready to go. The total cost is \$128,000. It is funded 90% by the Federal government, 5% by the State, and 5% by the City. The City's share has already been approved and appropriated by the City Council.

Mr. Mattern continued that the other grant is for replacing the snow removal equipment. They have the bid results, and reviewed the submissions for compliance with the specifications. The low bidder was Team Eagle. The airport has been using other equipment from that company. The estimated cost is \$569, 820, funded 90% by the Federal government, 5% by the State, and 5% by the City. This, too, is already in the CIP and approved and appropriated. He continued that he is looking for the authority for the City Council to accept these grants.

Chair Green asked what happens to the existing snow removal equipment. Is it used as back-up, or liquidated? Mr. Mattern replied that that is a little tricky. If the value exceeds \$5,000 the money from the sale needs to go back into the grant – meaning, if they put it out to bid and accept a bid, 90% of the money would go back to the Federal government, 5% would go to the State, and the City would keep 5%. If they can use it in house, they can do that, but the repairs become much more costly. He is not sure it is worth the additional cost. It will be back-up for at least another year because this new snow removal equipment takes 280 days to construct.

Mr. Kasper asked how much Phase I of the EO cost. Mr. Mattern replied that he would have to check. Mr. Kasper asked if these issues Mr. Mattern is talking about were not addressed in Phase I. Mr. Mattern replied that the airport received 55 written comments in response to Phase I, so they need to look more closely at those items (from the comments).

Mr. Thompson asked if approving these grant offers would limit what they can do. Mr. Mattern replied no, the Airport works with the State and Federal government well before getting to the point of applying for a grant. He continued that they have a 7-year plan for the airport, anticipating projects and scoping them out well before with consultants, the FAA, the State, and the City, to understand what would be included and what are eligible and ineligible costs. The FAA fully supports the Airport's projects by the time they submit the grant applications.

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Mr. Thompson asked if there is a budget this would affect. Mr. Mattern replied that the Airport receives \$150,000 of entitlement dollars annually. He continued that that does not go far for these projects. The funding difference between the entitlement dollars and the actual project costs comes from appropriations from discretionary funds that the FAA has available that they give to the State to divvy out as they see fit. By maintaining a good relationship with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), the Airport can always take the opportunities to make the NHDOT aware of the importance of the projects.

Mr. Bendzinski made a motion for the AAC to recommend that the grants be accepted when they are available. Mr. Hutwelker seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 8 to 1. Mr. Kasper voted in opposition.

8. Request to Use City Property – Monadnock Pumpkin Festival

Jennifer Matthews stated that she is running the Monadnock Pumpkin Festival on October 24. She continued that when the Town of Swanzey issued the permit they required that the festival try to use parking space at the airport in addition to the fairgrounds parking lot. The parking at the airport would be run by a group that has done this before. She has vetted them and knows that they will keep the area clean, picking up litter and keeping it well maintained.

Mr. Kasper asked how they will control access, and what impact the parking has on airport businesses. Ms. Matthews replied that they would rope off the area and that could be widened if necessary. She continued that they would be using the field only, not the parking lot by the terminal building. Mr. Kasper asked about security or traffic control. Ms. Matthews replied that 8 or 10 people would be there to control where people are parking and make sure people do not go where they should not. Mr. Kasper asked if she has talked with Monadnock Aviation yet. Ms. Matthews replied no, Mr. Mattern told her that the next step was to come here to the AAC.

Chair Green asked if this request would go through the City, regarding insurance, liability, etc. Mr. Mattern replied yes. He continued that this request is almost identical to the one from Atlas Fireworks. There would be a license and indemnification agreement. He does not see any issues. This will not impact the airport operations. They do not know how many cars would come, and they want the ability to park cars under the approach if needed, and for that, they need to get NHDOT's okay. He does not see any major issues. Chair Green asked if parking would be limited to the field on the north end. Mr. Mattern replied outside the fence line. Chair Green asked if it is not on the McAdam portion. Mr. Mattern replied correct.

Ms. Bendel thanked Mr. Kasper for considering airport businesses. She continued that she and Ms. Matthews should talk, because Thomas Transportation has people who park here. Ms. Matthews replied that she has spoken with Thomas Transportation and they are on board. Ms. Bendel stated that she needs to be sure that her customers can get in and out of the parking lot. Ms. Matthews replied absolutely.

Mr. Bendzinski made a motion for the AAC to approve the request for the Monadnock Pumpkin Festival to be allowed to use airport property on October 24, subject to the conditions of the License and Indemnification agreement with the City. Mr. Bergevin seconded the motion.

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Mr. Provost asked if there is a fee associated. Mr. Mattern replied that they had not discussed that. He continued that they are using Atlas as an example. No one knows whether this parking will even be needed. Chair Green stated that when this gets to the City Manager and the City Attorney's Office it should be made clear that it does not extend to the terminal parking lot, and they need to ensure adequate security. Mr. Thompson asked about people's transportation from the airport to the festival. Ms. Matthews replied that there will be school bus shuttles every 10 to 15 minutes and they will probably pick people up on the street. She continued that they will work with whatever the permit recommends. Mr. Thompson replied that it could be a hazard if the shuttles use the blacktop area and he thinks that should not be allowed. Chair Green asked if people would seek shelter in the terminal building if it rains. Ms. Matthews replied no, they will have pop-up tents. Ms. Bendel thanked Ms. Matthews for putting this together.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

9. Airport Master Plan Update – Airport Director

Mr. Mattern reported that they are moving forward. He continued that the Planning Advisory Committee had a fruitful visioning session. He distributed a handout from that meeting. They are creating a survey for the AAC members then the general public, encouraging people to think about what could be here, categorized into six areas, to narrow the focus. They continue to seek ways to engage the public in the process.

Mr. Thompson asked for more advance notice of when these meetings will be, so he can better plan to attend. Chair Green asked if the next one is scheduled yet. Mr. Mattern replied no.

Chair Green spoke positively about his visit to the airport in Manistee, Michigan. He suggests people look at the terminal, which is beautiful. He gave more information about what that airport has. Brief discussion ensued.

10. Airport Director's Report

11. Announcements

Ms. Bendel reported that there is a Sonics fly-in on Saturday afternoon with presentations at the terminal. She also reported that Monadnock Aviation had another graduate from the Out of the Blue scholarship program and another person accepted to it. There is another scholarship coming online for veterans.

Chair Green stated that the next meeting is the normally scheduled one on October 16. Mr. Hutwelker replied that he will invite Sara Carbonneau.

12. Adjournment

Chair Green adjourned the meeting at 9:39AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker