

**City of Keene**  
***New Hampshire***

**AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Friday, October 16, 2015**

**8:30 am**

**Airport Terminal Building**

**Members Present:**

Doug Green, Chair  
Kris Roberts, Councilor  
Bill Hutwelker  
Clark Dexter  
Robert Bergevin  
Rod Thompson  
Richard Kasper  
Joseph Bendzinski

**Staff Present:**

Ed Mattern, Airport Director  
Rebecca Landry, IMS Director &  
Assistant City Manager  
Sarah Miller, IMS  
Mike Moriarty, Airport Maintenance and  
Operations Manager

**Others Present:**

**Members Not Present:**

Kevin Provost  
Peter Delaney

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Green called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. He stated that City Council member Mitch Greenwald will be an alternate when Councilor Roberts cannot be here. He continued that he is glad to see Councilor Roberts today.

**2. Approval of Minutes – September 3, 2015**

Mr. Hutwelker made a motion for the AAC to approve the meeting minutes of September 3, 2015. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**3. Election of a Chair**

Chair Green stated that he appreciates people's confidence in him but under the rules of the City charter his term is long over. He continued that he stayed on until some other slots were filled. Mr. Mattern checked with the City Attorney and the City Clerk and found that he cannot be on the committee anymore. They need a new chair who is a resident of Keene: either Mr. Thompson, Mr. Dexter, Mr. Bendzinski, Mr. Delaney, or Councilor Roberts. Councilor Roberts replied that this December he will have been here eight years and thus cannot. Mr. Mattern replied that the City Clerk says that City Council members are exempt from term limits.

Mr. Bergevin nominated Mr. Dexter as Chair of the AAC. Mr. Hutwelker seconded the motion. Mr. Bendzinski and Mr. Thompson spoke in favor of Mr. Dexter as chair. Chair Green agreed. Mr. Dexter nominated Mr. Thompson for chair. Chair Green asked if there were any other nominations. Hearing none, he asked for a vote on Mr. Dexter as Chair.

The motion passed by a vote of 7 to 1. Mr. Dexter was opposed.

4. **Airport Master Plan Update – Airport Director**

Mr. Mattern reported that the Master Plan process of gathering inventory and doing forecasts is underway. He continued that the Planning Advisory Committee met and developed focus areas and goals to use as a primary discussion point in the production of the Master Plan. The primary focus of the next meeting, November 9 at 3:00 PM in the terminal building, will be developing ways to engage the general public in the discussion and get their input on the major topic areas identified in the visioning process. Historically, engaging the public has been very difficult, and the committee welcomes advice on how to do this. The AAC members are welcome to attend.

Chair Green asked Mr. Mattern to give an overview of the Master Plan, for people who are new here. Mr. Mattern did so. Chair Green asked if there is a deadline. Mr. Mattern replied no, but typically it takes 10 to 14 months. They anticipate completion in June or July.

Mr. Thompson asked if there is a copy of the current Master Plan available. Mr. Mattern replied yes, on the website. Chair Green asked if the TIF district would be part of the Master Plan or if that is outside of the scope. Mr. Mattern replied that it does not necessarily show up on the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) but it would be part of the discussions. He continued that if it can be done with the compliance of the standards of the ALP they might include it. Mr. Bendzinski asked who is working on this. Mr. Mattern replied that Stantec Consulting and the Planning Advisory Committee (13 members) were working on the project. Mr. Bendzinski asked if the Master Plan is ever reviewed in between updates to see what progress has occurred and if the goals have been met. Mr. Mattern replied that typical Master Plans list projects, such as infrastructure improvements and runway constructions, associated with dollar amounts, but do not give dates that they must be accomplished. They are trying to give goals and focus areas this time, rather than just waiting until something happens. For example, typical Master Plans are written with the perspective of: “When someone wants to build a hangar, here is where to put it,” but what they want this time is: “Here is where we can put a hangar; let’s do something to make it happen.” Master Plans are reviewed annually with the State and FAA in terms of funding, but they want to develop a more proactive approach to implementing things in the Master Plan. Councilor Roberts stated that the plan is not built in concrete. He continued that things will change. For example, more development outside the airport impacts the airport. Mr. Mattern replied yes, if circumstances change drastically within the ten years they can update it.

Rebecca Landry, Assistant City Manager and IMS Director, stated that she has been asked to help out – there is a lot going on, with the lease agreements, Stantec agreements, Master Plan, etc. She continued that she appreciates Mr. Bendzinski’s questions regarding the Master Plan. Mr. Mattern does a great job coming to the City Council with Master Plan updates, but she suggests the AAC Chair also report yearly or quarterly to the City Council with where they are with the planning process. The City Council often hears requests for funding and wants more information about why and where things stand. Mr. Mattern added that the City Clerk has established annual updates to the City Council from all City committees. He continued that the AAC is scheduled to give that update soon, but he does not have the exact date.

### **5. Expansion of Swanzey TIF District – Discussion**

Mr. Mattern stated that at the last meeting they had a discussion about requesting that the City Council authorize them to request that Swanzey expand the TIF district or establish one to include some airport development areas, in hopes that this would provide additional financial incentives to someone to develop the sites. He continued that there were a lot of questions. The AAC requested that this be on the agenda today to get more information on what a TIF district is and how it might help the airport and the Town. He met with Mr. Hutwelker and Steve Bittel from Swanzey, as well as some others that had a background in TIF districts. He has copies on some basic information on what a TIF district is. There is a map showing the existing district and what the Town warrant was when it was adopted. TIF districts help developers bring down the cost of development and produce tax-paying entities for the long term.

Chair Green stated that the AAC voted unanimously in favor of the concept and exploring what it would mean. He continued that they had a lot of questions about it, which is why they asked someone from the Town to be here to advise them.

Mike Branley, Town Administrator from Swanzey, stated that essentially a TIF district means segmenting off part of a community and drawing it as a district. He continued that the additional value created goes to pay for infrastructure improvements necessary to improve it. They take out a bond and run water, sewer, etc., so that when businesses come in, they pay the same tax rate but the taxes pay for the improvements. Then when the improvements are paid off the taxes go to the Town's general fund. The additional value created in the district goes back to paying for the improvements. Keene has done this very well.

Steve Bittel, Chair of the Economic Development Advisory Committee in Swanzey, stated that Swanzey has already expanded the TIF district once and it may be expanded for this contemplated process, which simplifies the process. He continued that to do that, several things would have to happen. They would have to draw up an economic plan, which has to meet certain requirements under various RSAs. It would be a plan of finance, saying that the airport wishes to do XYZ, e.g. bringing a sewer line from Rt. 32 to somewhere past the present C&S hangar that would serve the proposed hangars east of this building and other various things. The plan of finance would then be approved by the Swanzey revenue district advisory group then go to the Select Board and eventually go before the town body as a warrant article, which is a once a year thing. If all of that happens, the plan of finance would specify, say, half a million dollars to build a sewer line into the airport and would authorize bonding up to that amount of money. If that is voted on by the public of Swanzey, once the airport had the capability of demonstrating to the Town that the tax increments over a period of time would be adequate to repay the bonds, Swanzey would issue the bonds. Swanzey could issue the bonds earlier but he does not think that would happen until there was a viable way of paying for the bonds. There is an easy formula – how much in tax incremental value do we need to service XZY? It is a pretty well-traveled path and there is generally a good market for this type of bond.

Beth Bendel of Monadnock Aviation asked if Mr. Bittel indicated that Swanzey would likely not move forward on this unless there was assurance that this would happen, and if he is saying that it is not a “Build it, and they will come” situation. Mr. Bittel replied that that is not up to him. Ms. Bendel replied that she understands, but asked if he is saying, in general, that this is not

speculative. Mr. Bittel replied that it could be, but that is not his call. Mr. Branley replied that you could potentially set it up in the hopes and then authorize the bonds when you had potential development agreements – i.e. they could put the plan together speculatively but not necessarily run the sewer lines or spend the money. Mr. Bittel stated that they could either have a new project for people to look at, or wait about ten years and let property values build up, build up some cash, and then do the bonds. That is what Swanzey did for building Safford Drive, although it took about 20 years.

Mr. Bergevin stated that he is confused. He indicated an area on the map. Mr. Hutwelker stated that all that is in gray and red is current. The TIF district already is in the airport. Mr. Bergevin asked what they can do with the property already in the TIF district. He continued that it does not seem like they can do anything with it. Mr. Mattern replied very little. He continued that they have some hangar sites in the Master Plan and the TIF district could be used for that. It does not really include the bulk of the developable sites. Mr. Hutwelker replied that there has been substantial development in the left portion, such as the solar field and Frazier Furniture, which are both part of the TIF district. He continued that there has been development in the red area. It is not all on the airport. This is unfortunate that the map came this way. He would have made the grey and red areas all one color and then they could look at what would be proposed for the expansion.

Mr. Hutwelker continued that just to clarify, the Town of Swanzey does not need anyone's approval to expand the district. This is a good opportunity for Keene and Swanzey to work together, but it is Swanzey's decision. The Advisory Commission might say they do not want it, but if Swanzey wants it, they can do it, because they own the land. They are looking at this in a cooperative way because it could be a good project for both communities.

Ms. Bendel asked if her existing hangar is in the TIF district, because on the map, it looks like it. Chair Green and Mr. Mattern agreed. Mr. Hutwelker added, and the one she is about to lease.

Chair Green asked if the first approach is to try and solicit uses that would be compatible or acceptable, and then, when they have prospective folks lined up, build a hangar or FBO or business and then the Town would say, "Okay, that would generate X number of dollars in taxes so now we can fund the bond." Mr. Bittel replied that that would be up to the Select Board, but the process he would see is a multi-step one – they would probably want to go ahead and form the TIF district, and to do that they need a plan. The plan would be in two phases – one, the cost of bringing in whatever the service is (an estimate), and two, what level and broadly identifying what possible projects there are within this new district, which would essentially run down Airport Drive and fill in some land to the north and south to the extent of probably the secondary runway. That would be fiddled with. Then they would take those various projects and get a dollar amount for possible ones and say, okay, if they bring in one hangar, you can get so much incremental revenue which can service so much debt. The process then would probably be to authorize the TIF district, when you have a demonstrable plan showing the utilities that would be brought in and what sites you have. That would take you closer to marketing those sites. If you start from scratch, when you finally have the project you are probably behind the eight ball. The TIF district takes a vote of the town of Swanzey to authorize it. It could be a year off, at least, assuming it gets through the revenue advisory board, the selectmen, and then the voters.

Councilor Roberts stated that people might be thinking of new projects, but there is also the possibility of existing businesses expanding their current facilities. He continued that there are numerous upgrades that can happen. For example, Monadnock Aviation might say, "If you get us sewer and water, we will expand our hangar and increase its value." He gave other examples.

Mr. Thompson asked if this changes the hierarchy of who authorizes what. Does Swanzey expanding the TIF district mean that Swanzey will have the authority to limit what Keene can do? Mr. Bittel replied that the only thing that the TIF district is empowered to do is serve a financial function. He continued that it does not have any planning function. It would supervise the building of whatever it is, but there is no governance issue other than issuing the bonds, which are obligations to the Town of Swanzey. He does not see any land use issues or permitting issues different from what is already in place.

Mr. Kasper asked if the inclusion in the TIF district does not change the assessment value. Mr. Bittel replied that the moment it becomes part of the TIF district is the marking point of the baseline of the incremental value. Values can go up or down. Swanzey's values went down last year. Mr. Kasper replied that then it is a chicken versus egg situation. He continued that it seems difficult to make the objectives of both municipalities congruent, or to at least coordinate them. It would be easier if Swanzey was in control of the property that is part of the TIF district. There are so many regulations at an airport and for a development plan on an airport. It makes it a difficult balancing act. Mr. Bittel replied that he does not think it is that complex.

Chair Green stated that he is looking at the map of the existing district and Safford Drive looks great. He continued that he is hearing that the district that was expanded about 12 years ago almost encompasses almost all of runway 0-2 on the west side of Route 32. Have they ever utilized that to promote any kind of project? Has anything been proposed in the past 12 years that would justify the addition of the infrastructure? He thinks the answer is no. Mr. Mattern replied that the sewer extension was installed in this area. He continued that he is not sure if that was financed through the TIF district. Mr. Bittel replied yes. He continued that Safford Drive was done in two chunks. That included only sewer and water and that is all that has been spent.

Mr. Mattern stated that he mentioned that the Town would issue bonds after the citizens approved it. He asked if that requires Town Meeting or if the Selectmen can do it without a Town Meeting. Mr. Bittel replied that once it is approved by a Town Meeting, it is a Selectboard call. Mr. Mattern replied that that would narrow down the time frame.

Mr. Mattern asked about the additional increment of a million dollars that Mr. Bittel mentioned. Mr. Bittel replied that that is just an example. Mr. Mattern replied that if someone spent a million dollars on a corporate hangar, that would put them over the break even point. Mr. Bittel replied that it would be close, but he does not know because he has not run the numbers.

Councilor Roberts replied that this is Swanzey's call and Swanzey's risk. He continued that Swanzey is just informing Keene as good neighbors. This gives Keene the ability to go forward and say, this is what is possible. Swanzey is 100% in control of everything.

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Ms. Landry stated that she wants to emphasize that the expansion of the TIF district would not layer on a level of authority. She continued that what it does is provide a potential opportunity to get infrastructure to make the airport's Master Plan possible. The TIF district does not have to be engaged; it just provides a funding opportunity.

Chair Green asked if it makes sense to expand a TIF district if you are not even utilizing the one that already exists. He continued that there is a large area on the west side of Route 32 that is already in the TIF district and is not being utilized, other than a pumping station. Does it help or hurt to expand it, when there is nothing on the drawing board? Mr. Bittel replied that bringing the sewer and water down did benefit the airport.

Mr. Hutwelker stated that the topic of the possible expansion of the TIF district came up at the Planning Advisory Commission meetings about the Master Plan. He continued that this idea did not come from the Town. The hope is that they can work together to make it happen. Regarding developable land, C&S is already planning a second hangar. Running sewer lines in can only help facilitate development. This area is more developable than the area already in the TIF district. Mr. Bittel stated that if they are going to expand the TIF district it would be wise to do it before C&S builds their second hangar. Chair Green replied that that is a good point.

Chair Green asked if there were any more questions. Hearing none, he thanked Mr. Bittel and Mr. Branley for coming today.

Chair Green stated that they have a request for a renewal of a land lease, which was not on the agenda. He asked for a motion to suspend the rules of order so they can address this item.

Councilor Roberts made a motion for the AAC to suspend the rules of order to address a request, from the Jehovah's Witness Church, for a renewal of a land lease. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion. The motion passed by a roll call vote that included all present members except for Mr. Hutwelker, who had temporarily stepped out of the room.

Chair Green reported that the Jehovah's Witness Church has been leasing airport land since 1984. He continued that their lease is up for renewal and they would like to renew on terms to be negotiated with the City. Mr. Mattern stated that the lease is about \$2,100 per year, and the church uses the land for overflow parking. He continued that it is land that is not really at risk of being developed in the near future. He recommends that they approve this. Mr. Bergevin asked if there has ever been a problem. Mr. Mattern replied no. Chair Green asked if this would be negotiated with the City and the church. Mr. Mattern replied yes.

Mr. Bendzinski made a motion for the Airport Advisory Commission to recommend that the City Council authorize the renewal of the Jehovah's Witness Church's land lease for their parking lot. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

## **6. Airport Director's Report**

Chair Green stated that last month, the AAC passed a motion recommending acceptance of two grant offers they were expecting by the end of September. He asked if that happened. Mr. Mattern replied yes, they are off to the State. He continued that the State does a thorough review

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before forwarding it on to the Executive Council for approval. Subject to Executive Council approval the grants come back and can be spent.

Chair Green asked if Mr. Mattern knows what the cost was for phase I of the environmental assessment for the obstruction clearing project, per Mr. Kasper's question at the last meeting. Mr. Mattern replied that it is about \$130,000. Chair Green asked if phase II's cost is similar. Mr. Mattern replied yes.

Mr. Mattern asked Mr. Hutwelker to give an update. Mr. Hutwelker stated that there are four possibilities for the restaurant. He continued that it could be a combination of all four, or none. He continued that Mr. Provost brought someone in that he and Mr. Mattern met with. That person, and also a catering business, thought this restaurant space would be too big for them. They have a couple other prospects. They are hopeful that either three or four of these people would come together and make it work. It would be a buffet.

Mr. Thompson asked that they emphasize the importance of serving breakfast. Mr. Hutwelker replied yes, they have made that comment to everyone they have met with. He continued that they are also looking at how they are marketing and whether they could expand the reach.

Mr. Dexter asked if "too big" means too expensive, or too large of an area. Mr. Hutwelker replied too large of an area. He continued that they have not made connections with operators who could appreciate the scope of what could be done here. The people they have met with have run smaller operations. Introducing breakfast would really be a challenge for some of them; others were only interesting in doing breakfast and lunch.

Ms. Bendel stated that she is asked about the restaurant space all the time. She continued that it would be helpful to have a sign in the window saying that the space is available. Gene O'Neil stated that the restaurant here was so dear to many people in the early days. He asked if anyone could get pictures and show the apron full of airplanes and the restaurant full of smiling faces. He continued that those pictures are worth their weight in gold from a marketing perspective.

Mr. Mattern reported that Green River Aviation has been asked to vacate the hangar by November 2. He continued that the City needs to move forward with negotiations with Monadnock Aviation. He will have more to report at the next meeting. Chair Green asked if problems with access have been the issue. Brief discussion ensued.

## **7. Announcements**

Mr. Thompson introduced Gene O'Neil, whom he and his wife met when they were at a restaurant recently. He continued that Mr. O'Neil is from Newfane but experienced with the Keene airport. He has many credentials, including FAA, and he runs a large marketing firm. He invited Mr. O'Neil to come to the meeting today. Maybe the AAC could pick his brain or somehow make him a part of what the AAC is doing.

Mr. O'Neil stated that his firm has had Fortune 500 clients and they have been doing this for 17 years. He gave more information about his business and his aviation credentials. He ran a flight school here many years ago and has been running others. He spoke positively about what a great

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resource the Keene airport is. He continued that from a pilot's perspective, for anyone who has to do business in northern MA or southern VT, this is the place to go. There are many opportunities here. He has been flying out of here for decades and wants to see this airport take off. He has ideas for how to revitalize the website, and how it should be a standalone website, not a part of the City's. He spoke of the benefits of airports for local youth and how youth can help promote the airport. He noticed that on the website there is no mention that this airport also serves the southwestern VT community and that would be important to note. Mr. O'Neil continued that he has done a lot of non-profit work. He would be happy to help push the AAC's agenda forward to spread the word about the opportunities that exist here now.

Chair Green thanked Mr. O'Neil and stated that some of what he mentioned, the AAC has been talking about for a long time. The AAC Marketing & Development Subcommittee has done some work. They would be happy to have Mr. O'Neil's support. Mr. Thompson spoke positively about Mr. O'Neil's involvement.

Ms. Landry stated that regarding the website, the City's IMS Department has the tools, the know-how, and the people, such as Sarah Miller. She continued that what the IMS Department needs is the content. She, Ms. Miller, and others are ready to go, once the AAC tells them what they want on the website.

Mr. Thompson stated that Mr. Mattern had mentioned that the City is against the airport having its own website. Mr. Mattern replied that he was going off of the computer usage guidelines. He continued that they were cautious about pushing this forward because they were not sure if there was enough support in the IMS Department or if the airport had the ability to make sure the website was continually updated. Former AAC member Mike Hoefler had begun creating an airport website on behalf of the City but then had to resign when he moved out of Keene.

Mr. Thompson asked Ms. Landry if they can do this. Ms. Landry replied yes. She continued that for example, the Keene Public Library (KPL) is part of the City but has its own website. There are different ways in which the airport could have its own website, too, once they know what they want. For \$10 a year they could have their own domain name, or have a website that is an arm or a leg of the City's. The KPL has daily staff that manages and edits content. There are possibilities.

Mr. Kasper stated that the problem is that the AAC does not know what they want and they do not have a budget. He continued that they need to pay someone with expertise to make this happen. Chair Green replied that they have \$5,000 in their budget for marketing. Mr. Mattern replied yes, that is something they can draw upon. He continued that their caution has been the fact that this website is not a one-time expense – it would need to be maintained regularly. Mr. Kasper replied that maybe if they have results, that would give the City the incentive to finance it further. They have to do something. It does not work to have a part-time commission that does not know what it wants; they are not marketing people.

Ms. Landry replied that they already have Stantec on board. She continued that they are being paid a lot of money for the Master Plan process. The City can bring this topic up with them. Getting a Facebook page and website up and running is their plan. That is a starting place.



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There are people lined up in the IMS Department that can publish content if the airport gives it to them – e.g. meeting minutes, photos, stories of what happened recently at the airport, and so on. The airport needs a plan. The IMS Department cannot say what the airport’s mission is.

Mr. Thompson stated that he feels strongly that they need their own website that people can get to without going to the City’s website, although it can link to the City’s website. Mr. O’Neil stated that like Ms. Landry said, it could just cost \$10 a year to have a domain name. He continued that regarding updating the website, someone needs to be in the community and understand what is relevant or not. Everything that Ms. Landry mentioned, minus the meeting minutes, would be interesting for people checking out Keene. People looking into the Keene airport’s business opportunities want to see a splashy website. Right now it is underused but has much potential. He spoke more about how it would be relatively simple to build a website.

Mike Moriarty, Airport Maintenance and Operations Foreman, stated that having a restaurant that severs breakfast is very important, which the nonflying public does not understand. He asked how frequently someone asks Ms. Bendel if there is a restaurant. Ms. Bendel replied about three or four times a week. Mr. Moriarty continued that they need to keep working to educate the public about what effect the non-aviation entity of the restaurant has on the aviation community. For example, Thomas Transportation could have an early bird special with breakfast included, if there was a restaurant.

Councilor Roberts stated that they have been talking about the website for at least eight years. He continued that the IMS Director just gave the final answer: the AAC was unsure if the website could be maintained, and the IMS Department just said they can do it. Now there is no reason they cannot talk with Ms. Landry in the next month about getting the website up. Mr. Thompson replied, but it is on the City’s website. Councilor Roberts replied that it does not matter – she can do it either way. He continued that previously, they had no one to maintain a website and were afraid to put up a website that could not be regularly updated. But now it can be done. Chair Green agreed and stated that this is exciting. He continued that it is more than has happened than in the past couple years.

Mr. Bendzinski asked if the AAC ever gets a summary about every six months on the progress of the airport, such as whether hangars are full, how rentals are going, how fuel is moving, and so on and so forth. He continued that that would be a good indicator of whether airport interest is going up or down. Chair Green replied that all of that information is available; it is just a matter of reporting it out. Mr. Bendzinski replied that he would like them to receive a report.

## 8. Adjournment

Chair Green adjourned the meeting at 9:49 AM.

Respectfully submitted by  
Britta Reida, Minute-taker

Edited by  
Ed Mattern, Airport Director