

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

**AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, November 27, 2018**

**9:00 AM**

**Dillant-Hopkins Airport Terminal**

**Members Present:**

Curt Hansen, Chair  
Rick Blood  
Peter Delaney  
Councilor Mitch Greenwald  
Nathan Jacobs  
Bill Hutwelker

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager  
Jack Wozmak, Airport Manager

**Members Not Present:**

Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair  
Joe Bendzinski  
Brian Johnson

**Kendall W. Lane, Mayor**

**1) Call to Order**

Chair Hansen called the meeting to order 9:05 AM.

**2) Approval of Minutes – October 23, 2018**

Councilor Greenwald moved to approve the minutes of October 23, 2018, which Mr. Delaney seconded and the Airport Development and Marketing Committee carried unanimously.

**3) Old Business**

A subcommittee is needed for the spring runway celebration.

**4) New Business**

Mr. Wozmak introduced Bill Tomcich, who he met via Dubois and King Consultants. Their initial conversations prompted Mr. Tomcich to attend this meeting while visiting the area. Mr. Wozmak shared the history of the airport and previous development and marketing strategies with him before this meeting: the history of corporate jets and

recreational aircrafts, the desire for more charter and corporate operations, interest in freight and commercial operations if possible. Keene is located centrally for companies like UPS and FedEx; there is sufficient airport land developable for freight warehouses.

Mr. Tomcich has more than twenty-five years of experience in the unique field of incenting and attracting airlines into ski resort communities. Under his leadership as president of Stay Aspen Snowmass from 1998 - 2018, this central reservations service is now a healthy and profitable operation that is essential to the resort community. Even more vital to Aspen Snowmass is the success he has demonstrated in developing commercial air service into the Aspen/Pitkin County Airport (ASE), and what is now one of the strongest direct flight programs of any mountain resort airport. While now operated and owned by Aspen Skiing Company through a delicate transition orchestrated by Mr. Tomcich, Stay Aspen Snowmass will continue to operate in the spirit of collaboration with the lodging communities of Aspen and Snowmass – a cooperative model unequalled in the mountain resort industry.

Mr. Tomcich is also the air service development contractor for Fly Aspen Snowmass, a consortium comprised of Aspen/Pitkin County Airport, Aspen Skiing Company, the Aspen Chamber Resort Association, and Snowmass Tourism. His expert knowledge and analytical understanding of both the ski and hospitality industries, along with the airline industry, has commanded respect within the Aspen Snowmass community and throughout the Colorado ski industry. He sits on the boards of the Aspen Chamber Resort Association, as well as the Colorado Ski and Snowboard Museum and Hall of Fame, and is actively involved with regional and statewide air transportation issues. He is best known as Aspen's foremost commercial aviation expert and local spokesperson on all issues related to airlines and hospitality metrics, and created a consulting practice recently under the name Tomcich Travel Consulting, LLC. Fly Aspen Snowmass remains his primary client along with other new clients from CA to VT. Prior to being recruited by Aspen Skiing Company in 1995, he held the position of air transportation manager for Vail Associates, where he was instrumental in developing the direct flight program that now exists at the Eagle County Regional Airport.

Mr. Tomcich shared his experiences with airports similar to Keene (far from the nearest airport, wind and fog, a lot of developable space, aircraft size restrictions) and discussed one he would begin consulting on the next day in CA. Now that he is an independent consultant, he can help guide communities like Keene in airport development and marketing. Based on feedback about the airport from the Committee, their ideas and goals for the future of the airport, and the geographical strengths and limitations of Keene, Mr. Tomcich shared the potential opportunities he can explore that might be logical for Keene:

- Opportunities with Epic and Icon ski passes: a lot has changed in the ski industry recently, with a wave of ski resort consolidation. Vail Resorts now has the Epic Pass, which includes access to many ski resorts on the west and east costs, including Stowe Mountain Resort in VT. An Icon Pass was introduced recently that includes even more ski resorts. These amassed connections of resorts allow them to offer passes at reasonable costs. Thousands of skiers in New England

want these passes because they make the activity more affordable. There have been limited studies on recreational airline travel to east coast ski resorts; there was one study on Tradewind operations into Stowe, VT. The passes are generating significant revenue already and it will be interesting to see how demand changes on the east coast because of the passes. The Committee agreed there could be opportunities to explore a marketing focus on the ski community.

- Air service development opportunities: Mr. Tomcich shared his extensive experience researching and developing incentive packages to bring airlines to airports, including a recent deal with American Airlines to begin flights into Aspen. Developing these incentive packages and airport connections takes time; a minimum of one year typically. New studies are needed for Keene. The recommendations in past studies from 2012 are outdated because regional consolidation is no longer the focus of the aviation industry. Many airlines are merging and there are only three global network carriers now: American Airlines, Delta, and United. Southwest also has a major and growing presence in New England and may be interested in increasing their New England hubs for 50-70 person jets. Keene has the third longest runway in NH and can accommodate a Gulfstream 650. He thinks, with the right data, a key airline could be convinced to expand their service if there is an opportunity for profitability. Mr. Tomcich listed steps he can take to explore air services opportunities for Keene:
  - Synthesize existing data to understand how United, American, Delta, and Southwest are operating in Manchester and Hartford (minimal focus on Boston because it will likely be a less meaningful connection possibility for Keene). He will follow-up on this with some of his contacts in the data industry.
  - Analyze the data to identify demand, top markets for local businesses and residents traveling out of Keene, and options to connect major airlines from Keene to major hubs like Newark, Chicago, or Atlanta.
  - Update the marketing and leakage studies (to understand where demand from this region is going instead of Keene) to determine if there is enough frequency and connectivity to incentivize a commercial airline hub in Keene.

The Committee agreed it is harder to market an airport like Keene because there are no major local attractions (concert venues, casinos, etc.) to generate regular service. While Keene has attributes like the colleges, businesses, Mt. Monadnock, the Flight Deck, and fall foliage it can still be hard to market compared to other regions. Keene has a lot of opportunities, though, because it is a small convention area and close enough to highway 91 to make meaningful connections; for example, Keene could become a sister airport to a larger, congested airport in the region. There are also opportunities for corporate fractional jet ownership if the leakage studies show the incentive. Keene is attractive to businesses that want to avoid busy airports and increase opportunities for sales and connections. Keene is lucky to have C&S, which flies differently than most businesses. Mr. Tomcich agreed with Mr. Delaney that Keene is likely too remote and small for airlines to justify it as a maintenance location.

Mr. Tomcich said the best outcome of this meeting was identifying a strong appetite to resume commercial air service in Keene. Now, he can help the Committee to take steps toward that goal. He will consult with colleagues to develop a proposal for new studies. He said it will be easy to sell an airline on the ease of flying to Keene; it will be harder to find the data to show them how to justify it.

Mr. Wozmak will contact Carol Newola at NH DOT to explore possible funding for these new studies. The City Manager said this meeting was informative and helpful to give this Committee direction. She looks forward to seeing a proposal from Mr. Tomcich and exploring potential funding sources with Mr. Wozmak.

**5) Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Hansen adjourned the meeting at 10:11 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker