

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

9:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Curt Hansen, Chair
Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair
Rick Blood
Bill Hutwelker
Nathan Jacobs

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Director

Members Not Present:

Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Brian Johnson
Cory Watkins
Joe Bendzinski

George S. Hansel, Mayor

Chair Hansen read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency.

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hansen called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2) Adopt Meeting Minutes – June

Chair Hansen stated that last month there was no quorum for a meeting, so they did not approve the June meeting minutes.

Mr. Jacobs made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 23, 2020. Mr. Blood seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Community Outreach

Mr. Hickling stated that last month there was no quorum and he was expecting more members today. He asked that if members know they will not be able to join the meeting to please let him know so they can ensure a quorum.

He continued that when he began as he Airport Director and had his first meeting with this committee it was expressed to him that the committee wanted to be more involved. He has ideas for what he wants to do going forward, and is now reaching out for input/response from the committee. One of his goals is interacting with the community to inform about and advocate for the airport, so the community is aware of the value of the airport. Speaking engagements would be a great way to do that. COVID-19 has delayed these efforts. He has been waiting for COVID-19 to pass so he could meet with people face to face but does not think that will be a possibility soon. So they will move forward and use Zoom or something similar.

Mr. Hickling asked where the committee thinks he should go with this message and what message he should bring. He continued that last month he spoke with people as part of the Chamber of Commerce's "Coffee and Conversation," and it went very well. Also, through the process of getting Monadnock Choppers' operating agreement, there was opportunity there as well to talk about the airport.

Chair Hansen stated that it is really about educating people. He continued that many people do not even know the airport exists. He suggests Mr. Hickling start with how the airport began, what it costs, what it brings in, what its cash flow is, the benefits it brings to the community, and so on and so forth. There are people flying in spending money at Monadnock Aviation, restaurants, hotels, and elsewhere in the community. Regarding service to the community, he does not know if there are "angel flights," but that is a possibility, and of course there are medical flights. He could lay that out and get people to understand the value of the airport and its potential for the future, regarding commercial flights, training for pilots, and so on and so forth.

Ms. Bendel stated that it is clear that he thought through how to present the airport and she appreciates it. She continued yes, there are airlift services for patients, animal rescue flights, and lots of community relations things, like tours with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and bereavement flights to scatter ashes. There is a lot that supports the community. Not to mention the charitable contributions. There is an airplane in the museum in Keene, which came from here.

Chair Hansen replied that he did not know bereavement flights happened. He continued that all of these things have to be brought forward so people understand. And it is not just the City of Keene – it is also Swanzey. All communities in the catchment area benefit from the airport. Even Brattleboro, VT. Mr. Hickling replied yes, this airport services the entire region. Yes, all of Chair Hansen's points are good. They can expand upon the topic of the airport as an economic asset – he talked with Mr. Hutwelker a while ago about providing information on the services that are available that could be used as part of any proposals or efforts in attracting new

businesses to the area. The airport was a key player in attracting C&S, it may be other companies could be attracted here because of the airport as well.

Mayor Hansel stated that maybe a reoccurring marketing could be done, like a cool “picture of the month” from the airport, so people could tune in on a regular basis. That might have more of an effect. Maybe there could be a standing radio show. They could start building up a following for the airport. Mr. Hickling asked if he sees that happening through social media. Mayor Hansel replied yes, or maybe a regular feature with the Sentinel, or a standing radio interview, or something similar. Mr. Hickling replied that he is not great with social media beyond Facebook but can manage the Facebook page. He continued that he needs help growing the social media following. He does not know if a marketing consultant would help with that. Mayor Hansel replied that it does not have to be that complicated. Just authentic, original, and fun. Mr. Hickling replied that he has the content; he is just not sure how to grow the following and reach more people. At the last airport he worked at, where there was commercial air service, there were foam airplanes that they named and gave to kids to bring on trips, and told them, “Take a picture of it when you go somewhere and we’ll post it on Facebook,” and that went very well. They also had an annual Halloween event – kids would come to the airport in costume and parents would share the photos and it grew the following. They need something like that to do here. Mayor Hansel replied that video is where it’s at, maybe a picture contest, and engaging young people. It would be great to have a 30- to 60-second video with compelling content, on a regular basis, so people are looking forward to it and following what is happening.

Mr. Blood suggested putting together a “Did you know...?” campaign. He continued that they could be short video pieces run on Cheshire TV and social media. That could be done very simply at the airport, like Ms. Bendel saying “Did you know we do bereavement flights?” Or it could be as in-depth as profiling folks who have done the honor flights. Mr. Hickling replied that he likes the idea. He continued that there is plenty of stuff going on here; it is just a matter of capturing it - one example is last week when they had the fly-in, the airport was very busy, the apron was covered with airplanes. It is a matter of getting the videos and knowing how to get them out there. He may lean on Mr. Blood for that.

Ms. Bendel stated that she does marketing all the time. She continued that they need to know what the goal is. Mr. Hickling replied that the goal is for the community to have a positive outlook about the airport and for people to know it is here and know its value. Ms. Bendel asked, is that not the case? Mr. Hickling replied that like Chair Hansen said, many people do not know the airport is here, others think the airport is just for rich people to fly their toys around. They do not realize the full economic impact of the airport and all that happens here, so when tax time comes, and they look at the cost of the airport to the community, they do not see that they have any benefit from it. Some people who are not personally using the airport do not think the airport has benefit to them. He wants them to see indirect benefits, and how the airport contributes to the community even for people not directly using the airport. Ms. Bendel thanked Mr. Hickling. She continued that she markets from a business point of view and sometimes forgets the City’s point of view. All of that is really valuable to hear. Mr. Hickling replied that

it can be twofold; it would be great to market to bring more business in as well. It is in the airport's best interest that businesses at the airport do well. Part of the marketing is increasing awareness of what potential the airport has for future development.

Mr. Jacobs asked does the airport do any type of job shadowing with students from Keene or Swanzey, so they could learn about airport management. Mr. Hickling replied no, but that is a great idea. He asked if local schools have career days. He continued that that would be another opportunity that he would jump on. He can talk to multiple career opportunities in the aviation industry.

Mr. Jacobs asked, regarding the recent day that Mr. Hickling was talking about when the ramp was busy, if there was community involvement that day. He asked how people can know about days like that. Was there advertising? Mr. Hickling replied no, but they could talk about that as well. He continued that the restaurant was so busy he is not sure they could have handled more. But it would be great to have people come and see the planes. Mr. Jacobs asked if this was something the City put on, or if Monadnock Aviation put it on. Ms. Bendel replied that Monadnock Aviation and the NH Pilots Association team up and do a fly-in every six weeks or so, basically to support the restaurant. She continued that they did not advertise it to the public, due to the COVID-19. The terminal is still closed to the public and just open for business only, so this was just for the pilot community.

Mr. Hickling replied that it is the same thing with the aerobatic practices. He continued that they have not put any notice out of the aerobatic schedules because they do not want to draw a big crowd of people standing by the fence next to each other. Mr. Jacobs asked if the City is using any of those aerobatic practices to market the airport. Mr. Hickling replied that they put out notices last year. He continued that they cannot advertise the aerobatic practices because it is not an airshow, but you can put out an FYI notice that it is happening, so people who see planes flying abnormally they will know what is going on. In the past this has also drawn people to come to watch. This year they were quiet about it because of COVID-19. They could, however, use it to promote the airport next year should the COVID-19 be a thing of the past. Ms. Bendel stated that the COVID-19 situation is hard right now. She continued that sometimes the terminal gets really crowded. It is a touchy situation. The City might not want to encourage more people in the terminal. Mr. Hickling stated that they all hope next summer will be more normal and they can do more.

Mr. Hickling asked if anyone is willing to join him in the presentations, especially anyone who has an economic or business interest in the airport. He continued that he expects to talk more with the Chamber – that is a great audience to bring the message to. Ms. Bendel replied that she is always happy to join him for any presentation. Mr. Hickling thanked her.

Mr. Hickling stated that they talked a bit about the possibility of a marketing consultant, and they do have some money in the budget for that, but most marketing people are trying to sell a commodity. Trying to sell an image might not be where their expertise is. He talked with

Monadnock Broadcasting – someone from there contacted him, wanting to do a marketing plan for the airport. She would like to speak with this committee, if the committee is interested in hearing those thoughts and a proposal. Mayor Hansel stated that Mr. Hickling should first run it by Jeff Titus, the City’s Purchasing Agent, to make sure they would not be violating City policy by bringing in a potential vendor like that. He continued that otherwise, he does not have a problem with it. Mr. Hickling replied okay, he will do that.

4) Airport Promotional Materials

Mr. Hickling stated that another thing he wants to work on is creating promotional materials, more toward future business development, on what the airport has to offer. He continued that he is thinking of producing something which would give information about the airport that economic development organizations could use when soliciting new businesses or when they are presenting to a potential new company coming in. He asked if anyone had thoughts for what content they thought should be included. Some thoughts are airport data such as runway lengths, approaches and services provided by Monadnock Aviation. Land available for development of hangars would also be included.

Mr. Hutwelker stated that he brought Art Robert on an airport tour about a month ago, when he was taking a tour of development sites in the area. He continued that it would be helpful if Mr. Hickling had the developable acreage pinned or flagged and cleaned up a bit more. Maybe the City could put up signs so it is easier to find. Mr. Robert was impressed with the overall area but had a hard time visualizing it. The same is true of an area in Swanzey. Mr. Hickling replied that he thinks they could pull that out of the Airport Master Plan pretty easily.

Mr. Hutwelker asked about the Airport Master Plan – if a company such as UPS wanted to put a hub here, does the Airport Master Plan show exactly where that could go? Mr. Hickling replied that the airport does not have that much space. Mr. Hutwelker asked who the airport is marketing to. Mr. Hickling gave ideas such as an aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility, paint shop, avionics shop, or other aviation businesses. Mr. Hutwelker asked if the City knows where such businesses would go. He asked also if the businesses would have a minimum size requirement, like 100 x 100. Mr. Hickling replied that they do not have restrictions like that, but they do have areas specified for development. That information needs to be extracted from the Airport Master Plan and made readily available.

Mr. Hickling asked if Ms. Bendel has other ideas for what to market to or attract. Ms. Bendel replied that NH has just made its roads enabled for flying cars. She continued that she believes NH is the only state in the nation to do this. This is a growing industry in the state and she thinks they should capitalize on it. There is an opportunity at this airport to coddle the growing flying car industry. Mr. Hickling replied that that is a great idea; they can do some research and see what they find. Ms. Bendel continued that Monadnock Aviation has hosted the company based in Woburn, MA. They brought their car here. They created a facility at the Nashua airport. There is a great opportunity here for the City, airport, and surrounding region, to bring a new

industry here and help it grow. That legislation making NH roads legal for flying cars was just passed this month. Mayor Hansel replied that if there is a flying car here, they should take a video of it, and that becomes the monthly video.

5) Airport Development

Mr. Hickling stated that Monadnock Choppers has been operating here since August 1. He continued that it is exciting to have a new business here, which does not usually happen as easily as it did this time. There are also two different parties interested in building hangars here. One will be about the size of the C&S hangar. They have some plans. They might be buying some aircraft of their own. They have talked with Ms. Bendel about having transit aircraft come through that are in need of hangars overnight, and if the airport has anything to offer to them. Also being able to go out and market to corporate jets to relocate to Keene. It costs more for them to operate out of somewhere like Boston, and they could relocate here and operate a lot cheaper.

Ms. Bendel stated that she is talking with Jack about a business partnership to bring jets in. She continued that they are definitely seeing how they can work out a business relationship. Mr. Hickling replied that to get additional based corporate jets here would be great. There is definitely a market out there such as aircraft management companies that manage fleets of corporate aircraft who operate them all over the country. They need places to base aircraft and do maintenance on them. If the Keene airport could provide an area for that, it would be great for the activity here.

6) Air Service Feasibility Study - Update

Mr. Hickling reported that he received the catchment area and market study Phase I from CMT. There is also a proposal from them to do an economic impact analysis and that he is working on getting more quotes for that. The members for the review panel have been finalized and there is a meeting scheduled for September 17. They will go over the Phase I report and talk about the next steps moving forward. With COVID-19 it may not be a great time to go after air service right now. If they keep moving forward they could be in a good position when the time is better. Ms. Bendel asked if a copy of that report was ever sent out; maybe she just missed it. Mr. Hickling replied that he believes that he sent it out. He will resend it just in case.

7) Alps Property Sale

Mr. Hickling stated that the larger, 10-acre property is being sold. They have a signed purchase and sales agreement and a deposit. He continued that the purchase and sales agreement needs to go through to the FAA process to get a land release from them. The FAA will review the request for release and post it in a federal register for 30 days and if there is no response the FAA will give the airport the notice to release the property to be sold. The five-acre lot got one bid and

then that person pulled the bid. There is a second bid out now that will be opened next week. Some people have called to express interest. They will see if any bids come in.

8) Capital Projects Update

Mr. Hickling stated that they are waiting for grants for the taxiway project. He continued that the FAA has not been good at getting grants out in a timely manner to get projects done that grant year. He expects the grants any day and has the approval to accept the grants on the next City Council cycle. Once they get the grants they will award contracts to the contactors and discuss the start date. There will probably not be much construction this year due to it being late in the construction season and contractors would not want to mobilize twice. As part of the CARES Act these projects are 100% funded by the FAA. Typically they are 90% federal, 5% state, and 5% local. There will be about \$1700 the City will have to cover, which is a small figure compared to the \$4.5 million in grants that we expect.

He continued that the fuel farm replacement project will happen this year. DuBois and King is starting on the design and we hope to bid it in the next month or so. There is a lead time on the build of the tanks, so he is working with Jeff Titus to see if the City can buy the tanks outright instead of putting that in the bid. Instead of going through the bidding process, the contractor winning the bid, then ordering the tanks and having to wait for the tanks to be built and delivered, it would be better if the City can just buy the tanks outright and they can start the build. They would then put the bid out for contractors for the installation only. It would shorten up the time to finish the project.

Mr. Jacobs asked if there is a need to go quicker. Mr. Hickling yes, the tanks are old, and there are insurance issues. They want to get it done before the end of the year. Ms. Bendel added that it would be challenging to do it in the heart of winter. She continued that if Monadnock Aviation can be of assistance in pre-purchasing the tanks, something like that could be arranged. Mr. Hickling replied that he working with Mr. Titus and does not think it will be a problem. He will talk with Ms. Bendel if needed. If it cannot be done by the end of November they will most likely wait until spring time.

Mr. Hickling asked if anyone else has anything to discuss.

Ms. Bendel stated that she wants to publicly thank Mr. Hickling for all he is doing, for the thought he is putting into the marketing and the community relations. She continued that it is a breath of fresh air and she appreciates it.

Mr. Hickling stated that Cory Watkins has resigned from the committee, so they have two vacancies they need to fill. He asked if anyone has ideas for names to give to Mayor Hansel. Ms. Bendel asked if he is looking for pilots or community members. Mr. Hickling stated that they have representation from pilots, and he is thinking maybe community members, people from Keene State College, businesses, or the Chamber. He asked for the Mayor's thoughts.

Mayor Hansel replied that he is open to ideas. He continued that there are some people whose names have come up. They have to do some vetting and see if they are still interested. They have aviation experience and background. Mr. Hickling stated that if anyone has ideas, they can send them to him or the Mayor.

Chair Hansen asked if Smith Medical is involved with the airport. Ms. Bendel replied that a few years ago they would fly in fairly often and they talked about them flying in and out more frequently, but that did not work out. Chair Hansen suggested someone from Smith Medical be invited to join, or someone from another industry in the area. Mayor Hansel replied that Smith Medical has a new Site Director and Mr. Hickling can reach out to him so he knows the airport is here. Mr. Hickling replied that that would be great and he will ask if someone wants to be on the committee. Ms. Bendel suggested someone from Bensonwood. She continued that they use the airport from time to time, mostly when their clients fly in. She thinks they could use the airport more. Mayor Hansel replied that he will help Mr. Hickling connect with a person there.

Chair Hansen asked if anyone had anything else. Ms. Bendel stated that last month she said the jet traffic was 50% down, and now it's 40% down, which is good news. They have had an uptick. Industry projections are that jet traffic is going to come back but they are not near normal levels yet. Mr. Hickling stated that some people say corporate travel might increase, because companies do not want to put their people on public transportation.

There being no further business, Chair Hansen adjourned the meeting at 9:49 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker