

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 25, 2024

9:00 AM

**Terminal Building,
Dillant Hopkins Airport**

Members Present:

Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair
Bill Hutwelker
Peter Temple
Bob Lyle

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Manager/Chair

Members Not Present:

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Nathan Jacobs
Kristopher Radder
Luca Paris

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair David Hickling called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

2) Approval of Minutes

Chair Hickling welcomed any questions and comments on the minutes. With no comments or questions, Mr. Bob Lyle motioned to approve the minutes from May 28, 2024, with a second from Mr. Bob Hutwelker. With all in favor, the minutes from May 28, 2024, were accepted.

3) Old Business

A) Update on the Private Hanger Development RFP

Chair Hickling announced that the Request for Proposal (RFP) for hangar development was released last week. With input from the purchasing department and the City Attorney, they also worked extensively with the Business Aviation Group to create the RFP. They have a non-mandatory pre-proposal meeting at the airport on July 2, 2024, at 10 am. He welcomed anyone with questions to attend to have their questions addressed, but added questions can also be e-mailed. The last day to offer questions is July 11, 2024, with the due date for the RFP being July 22, 2024. Should they need to do interviews and shortlists, they have scheduled that for July 26, 2024. Lastly, a recommendation will be made to the city manager.

Chair Hickling explained that they could negotiate the lease terms with the proposer that they feel would best serve the airport. Once completed and an agreement has been made, it will go to the City Council for approval. The RFP does specify some dates for signing the contract, starting construction, and finishing construction, which are all outlined in the RFP. If someone responds to the RFP and does not believe they can make the timelines, there is potential for negotiation.

Mr. Lyle asked for the location for this proposal. Chair Hickling responded that they have three parcels. One parcel is located directly out front, another near the gate by the green hanger, and the third is where the Hex hanger is now. Mr. Lyle asked whether Chair Hickling had people interested enough to respond to the RFP. Chair Hickling said there are interested individuals, and one person is quite eager to build a hanger. Demand for hangers has increased, but he believed the high construction cost has deterred many interested individuals. Multiple people have inquired over the years, and along with advertising it, Chair Hickling has also shared the RFP with those previously interested individuals. The RFP is available online, but he can e-mail a copy if anyone wants to see it.

B) Airport Development Feasibility Study

Chair Hickling explained that the feasibility study is another item they are working on with the Business Aviation Group. Chair Hickling shared that the forward momentum of the study stalled when he requested that they turn their attention and efforts to the RFP and a requested review of the ground leases. As Business Aviation Group has extensive background and knowledge of the grant assurances and all the FAA requirements that need to go into a lease, he requested their assistance with a review of the ground leases and welcomed their suggestions and input. These requests and his desire to have a sample lease agreement were some of the reasons for the delay in the RFP. Despite some sidetracking, the focus is now on the feasibility study, which is nearing completion. He expects to receive it in the next week or two. Upon receipt of that, the next phase that the Business Aviation Group will assist with will be attracting aviation businesses to develop in the airport setting.

Chair Hickling believes there is potential for corporate operations, charter operations, aircraft management companies, or even fractional ownership opportunities. He pointed out the significant difference between housing two corporate jets in Boston versus building a facility to house them in Keene. If those companies do not have a presence in the Northeast but wish to, Chair Hickling believes this would be a perfect opportunity. While Keene is not immune to the housing and workforce challenges across the county, he believes the city has much to offer on the other side.

C) Airport Runway 5K/Airport Open House 2025

In last month's discussion, they discussed the need to demonstrate civil aviation benefits beyond the 5K for the FAA to approve closing the runway for the 5K. The previous discussion included the idea of holding an airport open house. The last 5K was highly successful in getting people to the airport but was also a big success for the Keene Senior Center. They are interested in participating again and working to grow the event. In order to receive FAA approval, the event would need to be bigger and more aviation-oriented. Chair Hickling believed an open house would be a great way to do that. As he mentioned last month, this will require the participation of the members of the ADMC in organizing and executing the

event. He asked the committee members if they could provide that level of support and welcomed comments.

Ms. Elizabeth Bendel responded yes. Mr. Lyle said he believed the 5K was a great success. He wondered whether they were "building an ocean liner to support a dinghy" and questioned whether the open house was solely to meet the FAA requirements or whether it served benefits worthy of the additional work and challenges. Mr Lyle questioned whether they could justify the open house given the exposure it gives to the airport.

Chair Hickling explained that they had discussed doing an open house long before the 5K came along; it has yet to come to fruition. He believed the open house would be more valuable to the airport than just the 5 K. Ms. Bender suggested a reversal in the ocean liner expression, saying it was "the dinghy supporting the ocean liner."

Ms. Rebecca Landry, who joined through Zoom, shared that the city recently held their community night. They had far more public participation than they had imagined they would. People are interested and want to come out and have the opportunity to do something different. Her team can assist with advertising, marketing, the event, promotional videos, and targeting specific audiences, including the aviation community. She believed that the event would not only be good for bringing awareness to what they do at the airport but would also benefit the restaurant and Monadnock Aviation.

Chair Hickling thanked Ms. Landry and believed the benefit would be worthwhile. He thought it would be manageable, especially if the group were willing to divide and conquer. By being intentional and setting the scope of the event, he believed they would be able to keep it manageable. As part of the planning, they would need to look at how spread out the event would be, how big they want the event to be, what size crowd would be feasible, etc. He pointed out that the group did need to consider that they might do all this planning only to have the FAA deny and refuse to allow them to close the runway for the 5K. In that case, they would do the open house without the 5K. He suggested they do their best to make this an aviation-related event and just the two-hour closure for the 5K, but with the understanding that it is not guaranteed.

Ms. Landry asked if they could make it a fly-in, including 5K, as she knew they had someone do that last time. Chair Hickling said that was a good idea and they could advertise it that way. He asked Mr. Peter Temple how he thought that would work. Mr. Temple liked the idea. He shared that he has been flying out of here since the 1980s. There used to be yearly air shows, and previously, they had the Collings Foundation come in every September with a B24, B17, P51, and T6. He has always supported having an event like this, and while he has never been a part of the team responsible for making it happen, he would undoubtedly be willing to help. He did not know if it made sense to do a Young Eagle's event and said it would depend on the size of the event and crowd potential. He agreed with the need to define the scope. In the past, static displays have served as a draw and might be something to consider. He believed public interest would be in going through a historic plane. Last week, he attended the annual Piper Fly-In at Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. They had a C54 four-engine transport cargo plane that came out during World War Two. This plane was used extensively during the Berlin Airlift, and the

inside has been set up like a museum for people to tour. Rather than an airport runway 5K/open house, the FAA might be more supportive of an airport open house with a list of features, one of which would be a 5K. The question will be more about what goes on in the airport open house. He proposed having some of the monthly aerobatic group members volunteer to do a demonstration.

Chair Hickling asked Mr. Temple if he had an idea of how to advertise a fly-in 5K to pilots from other airports. Mr. Temple suggested Facebook groups, especially the New Hampshire Pilots Association and the larger New England Pilots Association. Given Ms. Landry's previous statement about how the public wants events to attend, he suggested doing more than a pilot fly-in.

Chair Hickling said while a demonstration would be great, it crosses into airshow territory and gets complicated, so that a static display may be better. Mr. Temple agreed that a static display would be more appropriate given the complications that arise with an airshow and believed that a historic or military plane would significantly draw families and community members.

Chair Hickling asked the committee if they wanted to proceed with creating a separate committee for the Open House to meet independently of this committee's meeting or whether they just wanted to wrap it into the agenda for the larger ADMC meetings. They will likely need to add some meetings as the planning progresses and as they get closer to the event. He reminded everyone that the event planning will be for next April. He would rather wait until warmer weather; however, April was the chosen date to avoid conflicts with other 5K runs and community events. He believed there would be some degree of flexibility in terms of date. Mr. Lyle felt it would be a waste to go through all the planning and cancel because of a snowstorm.

Mr. Hickling invited individuals interested in participating in the steering committee to volunteer. Mr. Lyle offered to participate. Mr. Temple said he was happy to focus on parts for which he might have more contacts. The steering committee comprises Mr. Lyle, Chair Hickling, and Ms. Bendel. Within the next month, they will meet to determine the scope and identify coordinator roles.

Ms. Landry asked if Chair Hickling thought the Civil Air Patrol might volunteer some of their members for parking. Chair Hickling believed they would but thought they would be more appropriate for security and overseeing the area rather than the parking.

4) Etc.

Chair Hickling shared that the Keene Community Night was last week, and airport operations and maintenance staff Ben Albert and Jeremy Roy got the big snow blower and plow to the event for display. He explained that they had to disassemble the plow because driving a twenty-two-foot plow down the city streets is impossible. They trailered it over there and then reassembled it. They had a table and contest to name the snow blower. They selected one suggestion, but Ms. Landry said they had not announced it. Chair Hickling announced that "Sasquatch" was the chosen name. There were a few good ones, but there were quite a few entries by very young kids, so some of the entries just said "truck." He thought it was a fun way to engage the community and said they look forward to doing it again.

Ms. Landry asked if Chair Hickling planned to put some plaque or label on the newly named snowblower. He thought it would be a great promotional opportunity and said if the person who submitted the name was agreeable, they could have them place the plaque or sign and take a picture to post on social media. Ms. Landry offered to e-mail the person and see if they were interested.

Ms. Bendel asked if community nights ever happen at the airport. Unaware of how frequently the city intends to do them, she wondered if holding the event at the airport might be an option. Ms. Landry explained that this was the first community night since Covid. There was only one other community night, which was held at City Hall. A few trucks were parked out front, but the main event was held inside. The advantage of Marlboro Street is the vicinity of the public works garage where the trucks are housed and the area to be able to put them on display. Chair Hickling believed an event that size would result in going airside, involving the FAA for non-aeronautical events, which would present challenges.

The last thing Chair Hickling wanted to mention was a recent site visit by an Airport Hazardous Wildlife Services consultant. The visit involved the fence, but it got him thinking about some of their work and how they fall into the community engagement realm or trying to put the airport in a good light. He explained that the roadway between the airport and the water treatment plant is very popular for bird watching. Initially, the master plan proposed a fence along that road, which would essentially shut it down to public access. He is now pushing to have that fence pushed out towards the runway to be able to leave that area open, which will also help them with managing wildlife. He has had conversations with the Conservation Commission and numerous community members who are concerned about closing that area off. He believes moving the fencing will be beneficial for the airport. The Conservation Commission suggested letting some of the surrounding grass (not in the approach path) grow to create grasslands or potentially plant pollinator plants to attract pollinators. He believes such efforts are realistic and feasible and will bode well for the airport. Chair Hickling recognized that Cody Morrison of the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation was at the meeting and thanked him for attending.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Hickling adjourned the meeting at 9:46 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Amanda Trask, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director