

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 27, 2024

9:00 AM

**Terminal Building,
Dillant Hopkins Airport**

Members Present:

Bill Hutwelker
Peter Temple (arrived at 9:04 AM)
Luca Paris
Bob Lyle
Kristopher Radder, Alternate

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Manager/Chair
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager

Members Not Present:

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Nathan Jacobs
Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair

1) Call to Order

Chair Hickling called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Roll call was conducted.

2) Adopt June Meeting Minutes

Mr. Radder made a motion to approve the June meeting minutes. Mr. Paris seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Update Private Hangar Development RFP

Chair Hickling stated that there was one response to the Private Hangar Development RFP, from Avanru Development. He continued that over the years, several people have expressed interest in building hangars here. One other person had expressed interest in submitting a proposal, but he looked at the current construction costs and decided not to. The proposal from Avanru Development is very good. Chair Hickling, Yves Gakunde, the City Purchasing Director and Deputy City Manager Rebecca Landry] had a productive Zoom meeting with the developer from Avanru Development and his consultant. They talked about the proposal and the next steps, including design criteria; permitted uses; a performance bond; and the process for approvals for site plan and building plan, and the fact that approvals need to go through the Airport, the City of

Keene, and the Town of Swanzey. There are also FAA approvals, as well. The Avanru developer understands all that and is familiar with the process.

Peter Temple arrived at 9:04 AM.

Chair Hickling stated that regarding the next steps with the RFP, the Airport sent Avanru a draft lease to review with their attorney, negotiate or comment on as needed, then return to the Airport. Once the lease is negotiated, it goes through the City Council process, and Avanru is given a notice to proceed. Avanru will give a proposed timeline from that point forward, of what they project for construction. They are looking to do a letter of intent, or some kind of agreement, prior to executing the lease. It will document that Avanru is the proposer and that the Airport is working with them.

Chair Hickling continued that another interested person came forward after the RFP went out. He continued that this person is considering constructing a new hangar, and seems quite interested, and has the resources for a smaller hangar in another location. It looks promising. He will check with Purchasing, but he does not think they need to do another RFP. If they do need another RFP, however, it should be a smooth process.

Mr. Paris asked about the location of this proposed hangar (with Avanru). Chair Hickling replied that it is just east of the Airport's parking lot, and it will be a 10,000 square foot hangar. Mr. Paris asked if it will be owned by Avanru. Chair Hickling replied yes, with a land lease. Mr. Paris asked if the idea is to bring in other jets or planes. Chair Hickling replied that Avanru plans to get a helicopter for his business, but the hangar will be large enough to sublease. He gave further information about Avanru's ideas/the possibilities.

4) Update Airport Development Feasibility Study

Chair Hickling stated that they were working with the Business Aviation Group on the Airport Development Feasibility Study. He continued that they have received a draft. He, Ms. Landry, Beth Bendel, Planning Director Jesse Rounds, and the Town of Swanzey have reviewed it. They have comments and questions about the draft, so they will meet with the Business Aviation Group via Zoom to talk about it and see how the product can be improved. Once they receive an updated draft they think is good, they move to the next phase, working with the consultant to start brokering Airport properties to aviation businesses. As a reminder, this is for aviation development. Per the Airport's grant assurances, per the FAA, they cannot develop land that has access to the airport unless it is an aviation business. That is why the Airport reached out to the Business Aviation Group, because they have those contacts with those aviation businesses.

Ms. Landry stated that the consultant did catch a few things that the Airport was probably aware of, but it is good to have confirmation of, such as how operations are relatively flat due to fixed hangar supply. It is good to have that in the study so that, for example, if they are looking at capital improvement, that is one of the reasons/justifications for it. The consultants' draft talked

about slow increase in IFR operations. They (the Airport) need to ask why. The consultants really keyed in on a shortage of workforce talent and how that might create an opportunity for the Airport. With COVID, people increasingly went away from commercial airline flights and looked more toward private jet service, but with that came a need for pilots and maintenance MRO staff, and there are shortages there. That might open doors for the Airport if they want to diversify. In addition, they talked about medical transport, which might provide a good opportunity for the Airport. The consultants did key in on some important opportunities and challenges; the Airport just needs a better polished report.

Mr. Temple asked for clarification about the “slow increase in IFR operations.” Ms. Landry replied that she assumes it is the instrument landings. She continued that other airports are seeing increases, faster than the Dillant Hopkins Airport, in the use of IFR operations. Chair Hickling replied that he thinks Ms. Landry is referring to the commercial activity. He continued that he will have to review that. As Ms. Landry said, the draft has some good points, such as opportunities for the Airport to look at. They were aware of the opportunities but it is good to have the consultants verify them. And yes, they need the draft polished a bit more.

5) Airport Runway 5K/Airport Open House 2025

Chair Hickling stated that he, Ms. Bendel, and Mr. Lyle met to discuss the 2025 Airport Runway 5K/Airport Open House. He continued that the attachment on the agenda is what they went over in their meeting. They are working with the Keene Senior Center on the 5K, and it is hard to find a date that works for them. He gave more information about dates/events they are trying to not conflict with, and the scheduling limitations for the Keene Senior Center staff. He continued that they came up with Sunday, April 27, 2025. He asked if the ADMC members have thoughts about it being on a Sunday.

Discussion ensued. Mr. Temple spoke of the need for the ADMC to determine what is driving this, such as whether it is a race with a little bit of aviation stuff, or an aviation open house with a race as one of the many components. He continued that if the race is the main driver, they should choose the date that works best for the race. If aviation is the major focus, he recommends further into the spring or the summer. Chair Hickling spoke about wanting the race and the open house to work together, because he thinks they will both feed each other. Mr. Lyle stated that his question is still what date is best for the open house, if the open house is the focus.

Chair Hickling asked what people think about holding the event on a Sunday later in the spring or summer. Discussion continued, and people spoke generally positively about Sundays, other than the lack of a back-up rain day. Chair Hickling stated that the 5K would be rain or shine. Mr. Temple spoke about considering the school district’s schedule. Ms. Landry replied that it would be wise to communicate with the school folks. Discussion continued about considering events to not conflict with, traffic considerations, and holidays. A couple of people stated that perhaps Sunday, April 27 is the best date. Chair Hickling replied that the Keene Senior Center folks put a lot of thought into that date, going back and forth about the pros and cons much like

the ADMC is doing right now. Mr. Paris spoke about the benefits of an event piggybacking on another event, and/or events combining and working together. He recommends keeping April 27.

Chair Hickling stated that they (he, Mr. Lyle, and Ms. Bendel) talked about what the scope of the event would be. He continued that they talked about having static displays of based and non-based aircraft, military aircraft, snow removal equipment, and hopefully displays from the flight schools. The Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) and the Civil Air Patrol would be part of it, too. They talked about expected attendance. Mr. Lyle stated that Chair Hickling was hoping for about 500 to 700 people. Chair Hickling replied that that would be good for this inaugural event. Discussion continued about attendance hopes and possibilities. Ms. Landry stated that it would be good if this could be a fly-in event as well.

Chair Hickling stated that the next step is to develop committee/volunteer roles. He, Mr. Lyle, and Ms. Bendel are looking for other people to fill various roles to help them put this together. They have a proposed date for the next committee meeting. They need to develop a budget and potential funding sources, such as sponsorships, which would require someone recruiting sponsors. They also would need a sponsor liaison to work with all the sponsors. He thinks Ms. Bendel volunteered to take on the static displays. They need a volunteer coordinator to recruit, manage, and assign tasks to volunteers. Ms. Landry will do the marketing/media. Airport Operations and Maintenance Manager Ben Albert will do the event ground operation plan. They need someone to handle traffic and parking; someone to procure/handle tents, tables, chairs, porta-potties, and other equipment; concessions, which he will probably work with Mama McDonough's on; and FAA coordination, which he himself will do.

Chair Hickling stated that they have an idea of what they need to do for the open house. He continued that regarding the idea of having the other event (the race) and just focusing on the open house, the airport staff would need to do the set-up and management for both. He thinks they might be able to reach out to other City departments to get some help for this, if the Airport pays employees' overtime, or get volunteers. He asked Ms. Landry if that would be possible. Ms. Landry replied that they can look into it.

Chair Hickling asked if ADMC members had thoughts about the event(s). He asked if they think the scope is too big or too small for their first event. Discussion ensued. Mr. Paris asked if Chair Hickling's vision is for something smaller than the big fly-in events that Ms. Bendel has done. Chair Hickling replied yes, and spoke about how it could be a fly-in event with the runway closed for 90 minutes or so for the 5K. Ms. Landry spoke about how the more they do involving aircraft, the better, for bringing people in, and about the draw of military aircraft displays. Discussion continued about military aircraft, and potential organizations and people to reach out to. Chair Hickling spoke positively about the EAA. Discussion continued.

Chair Hickling asked for other thoughts. Mr. Paris recommended having people from C&S on the committee. Mr. Temple stated that he can help with actions with people on the field.

Mr. Paris spoke about the need for “new, younger, excited blood to jump in on this.” He continued that he does not see how he could fit in with this. They need that next group of people who could take on some of this, and he does not know where to find them.

Ms. Landry stated that she does not think the vision is gelled enough yet for them to understand what the ask is. She continued that first they need a better plan for what they want to see happen here, and particulars about the displays and activities. Then they can better define what volunteers they need and what the volunteers will be doing. Questions include what displays they will have, whether activities will be happening in the lobby and/or on the tarmac, and whether and how the restaurant will be involved. She does not yet understand the detailed vision for the open house enough to say what they are marketing, what they are planning for, or what people are putting in some hours to prepare. Chair Hickling replied that they will work on that.

Mr. Radder suggested teaming up with the Parks & Recreation Department to bring in games and attract families. Mr. Temple stated that he can work with Chair Hickling and Lenny Weiser, head of the local EAA chapter regarding static displays, with aircraft owners who would be willing to show people around and talk with them. Chair Hickling spoke of how static displays of local aircraft would be great, and would make most people happy, regardless of whether there are bigger/more unusual/military aircraft. Discussion continued.

Ms. Landry stated that a planning committee is the first step. She asked if they have people in mind for that. Chair Hickling replied himself, Ms. Bendel, and Mr. Lyle.

Mr. Lyle stated that they need to refine what the draws are, such as food trucks and the static displays, because that will determine the expected attendance, which effects the planning. He continued that for example, if they can get a commitment from a certain group to have a static display for the event, that is something to base it on, something to advertise. They are working on a smaller scale here than an air show, with fewer people, so it makes sense to call it an open house. Yes, they should involve the “movers and shakers” from local businesses that use the airport. Now that a date has been chosen, he thinks the steps are to determine the draw, which will determine the number of people, which will determine the budget.

Mr. Paris stated that he just reached out to someone who might be able to organize a food truck event that day, or be involved in that. He continued that food is a draw.

6) **Other/Misc**

Chair Hickling stated that they talked a lot about community engagement, like the 5K and open house, which bring the public to the airport. He continued that next month is an event that increases community engagement – the Airport will host the second annual Clean Energy Fair. He asked guest Jack Lamont to talk about that.

Jack Lamont stated that he is the Program Manager for the Monadnock Sustainability Hub (MSH), a non-profit that is a catalyst for the clean energy transition in the region. He spoke about the MSH's work and last year's Clean Energy Fair, with about 300 attendees. He continued that he expects a larger attendance at this year's event on September 28, due to increased and earlier publicity. He spoke about the content of the event, such as the various clean energy vendors; the mini expo in the parking lot with electric cars and more; and the presentations that will take place in the terminal. There will also be food vendors and climate-related games. MSH is looking for volunteers to assist with various tasks, similar to what the Airport is looking for with the open house, such as directing traffic, counting attendance, and setup and breakdown. They also welcome help publicizing the event and appreciate people spreading the word. He continued that MSH might learn some lessons with implementing this event that would help inform planning for the open house; he would be happy to debrief on that after the Clean Energy Fair.

Mr. Lamont asked if there were any questions. Mr. Paris noted that there are four or five other events happening that weekend in the Monadnock Region. Discussion ensued about attendance possibilities, people attending multiple events, different events having different markets, and so on and so forth. Chair Hickling spoke positively about having the Clean Energy Fair at the Airport.

Chair Hickling stated that on a different topic, a few weeks ago he received a call from a person in Keene whose family member had passed away. He continued that the deceased family member was a retired Air Force pilot, and the family had scheduled a fly-over from the National Guard to occur during the graveside service. The National Guard canceled the day before, so the caller was reaching out to the Airport to ask if anyone could do a fly-over. He (Chair Hickling) sent an email to all the pilots, and they pulled through – a couple of them did a fly-over for this family. He appreciates that the airport community came through and did that. Ms. Landry asked if there was a way to possibly share that story, to express appreciation for how the airport community came together to show support and respect for this family.

7) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Hickling adjourned the meeting at 9:48 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director