

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

9:00 AM

**Terminal Building,
Dillant Hopkins Airport**

Members Present:

Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair
Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Nathan Jacobs
Bill Hutwelker
Luca Paris
Bob Lyle
Kristopher Radder, Alternate

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Manager/Chair
Ben Albert, Airport Operations and
Maintenance Manager
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager

Members Not Present:

Peter Temple
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager

Mayor Jay Kahn

1) Call to Order

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

2) Adopt August Meeting Minutes

Councilor Greenwald made a motion to approve the August 27, 2024 meeting minutes. Mr. Lyle seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Private Hangar Development Interests

Mr. Hickling stated that they put out the RFP for a land lease for private hangar development and received one response from Avanru Development, and that they had met with them on August 27. He continued that at that time, they discussed a letter of intent and Avanru providing a timeline. Not hearing back from Avanru, he reached out to them and has since had a couple of conversations with them. Avanru is now working with a reputable aviation consultant, Stratus Business Development out of Nashua who has been great to work with. On September 18 the Airport received a request from them requesting a first right of refusal for six months to act on the proposal, which the Airport denied as That was not their intent with the RFP. Avanru

understood that they needed to move forward with the letter of intent, along with a timeline for moving through the lease process and starting the project. Since they have not done yet that, he will draft a letter of intent, run it through the City Attorney's Office, and give it to Avanru and see if that will work. He will include timelines and expectations for getting this project going.

Mr. Hickling stated that since that RFP went out, two people have approached him with interest in developing private hangars as well. He continued that one was interested before and did not respond to the RFP but has a renewed interest now. He believes that since they went through the RFP process recently, they do not need to go through it again to work with these two people. He will verify with Purchasing. The ADMC should keep in mind that these two people are still looking into the possibility of construction hangars and have not yet begun the process of negotiating a lease. They have shown interest and looked at sites. One is interested in parcel 5, between the fuel tanks and the green hangar with an interest of constructing a 3,200 sq/ft hangar. The other is interested in parcel 3, which is the same one Avanru is interested in, but he has also talked with this person about parcel 8, where the Hex hangar is, Parcel 8 could be more attractive because there is an existing apron in and there are already utilities there.

Mr. Jacobs asked what happens to the people in the Hex hangar. Mr. Hickling replied that their lease expired four or five months ago. He continued that they renegotiated a new lease, and he had included a 90-day clause stating that if the Airport negotiated a lease for new development there, they had 90 days to terminate that lease. They would put them (the displaced people) first on the list for T-hangars and try to find them another place here as quickly as possible. It is an old building that is not in good shape. If there is someone who wants to come in and build a new hangar with more square footage and more revenue, the Airport needs to look at doing that.

Mr. Jacobs asked how that decision was made compared to the other hangars the City sold. Why get rid of that hangar instead of selling it to the people who are in it? Mr. Hickling replied that the difference is that it is the City's hangar. He continued that no other hangars were the City's; they were sold by one owner to another, with just the leases transferred. Mr. Jacobs asked if the hangar sold a couple of years ago was the City's. Ms. Landry replied yes, but that was a different situation. She continued that she does not know enough about the Hex hangar and defers to Mr. Hickling on it, but in both cases, they were buildings that needed a significant amount of repair. Mr. Hickling stated that this was before he was here, but the way he sees it happening is that they had a lease for the hangar itself, and the hangar needed a lot of repair that the City did not have the resources to do. The City could not sell it generally, because it was in a lease – they could only sell it to the lessee. Ms. Landry stated that she does not know the last time they had three people lining up to develop hangars. That is something that is different.

4) Update Airport Development Feasibility Study

Mr. Hickling stated that this has been moving, but slowly. He continued that he met with the consultants on September 11 to discuss some of the concerns that he brought up. The Airport was not happy with the product. The report made too many comments that were not applicable

to the Keene airport, and did not really show the airport and the City in a good light, regarding trying to market the airport and get people to come to Keene for business development. Some of the content was simply inaccurate; the comments were “carryovers” from a previous document, referencing things from a different airport. He cleared that up with the consultants at the meeting. He enlightened the consultant on the attractiveness of Keene for bringing people in for business development. The consultants did not know there were opportunities for tax incentives from the Town of Swanzey for corporate business development. Regarding the quality of life, the consultants seemed to have an impression that the city just was for older, retired people and there was nothing to do. He corrected them on that. The consultants seemed to understand.

Mr. Hickling continued that what really opened their eyes was when he used C&S as an example – a Fortune 500 company that relocated to Keene. The airport was a big draw for them, but there was more about the Keene area that attracted them. He wants to get a one-page from someone at C&S, describing the reasons why the company decided to relocate to Keene. If anyone on the ADMC can help with that, it would be very helpful. The consultants could use that as a reference when they try to attract other businesses to Keene.

Mr. Jacobs replied that it can be quite individual, but as a group, there is so much Keene has to offer. Mr. Hickling replied that he provided the consultants with what they need to show that Keene is a progressive, active city where there is a lot to do. He continued that all he is missing now is something from C&S, describing why they chose to relocate here. That would be hugely helpful. Everyone here knows that this region is a great place to live. Once he gets that document to the consultants, they can redo the market study, and then they can move on to the brokerage part of that project.

Mayor Kahn stated that one of the problems is the turnover that has occurred. He continued that it could be hard to pinpoint who at C&S was involved from 25 years ago. Timken and Corning are also substantial companies that could maybe (give input). Mr. Hickling asked if Mayor Kahn has any contacts or knows who he could reach out to. He continued that although C&S would be great, it does not have to be C&S. It would be great to have multiple (companies).

5) Airport Runway 5k/Airport Open House 2025

Mr. Hickling stated that they can now call this the Airport Runway 5k/Airport Open House 2025/Food Truck Festival, because Mr. Paris gave him a contact whom he reached out to, and he is interested in participating with his food truck and helping to recruit additional food trucks. He continued that Mama McDonough’s has a food truck and is also interested. They would like one or two more food trucks, but having those two would be enough. He stated that a food truck festival would be great as a fly-in event. Marketing this as a fly-in event will help get FAA approval to close the runway for the 5k. It is turning into a bigger event that the 5k will just be a part of. Last year, someone even flew in to run the 5k, which is a great idea. The only glitch is that the Senior Center, which organizes and runs the 5k, changed the date to May 18. It is still a Sunday, though, and should be good. May 18 gives them a better chance of having good weather

than the April date would have. There might be conflicting events going into late May, which they will have to watch for.

Ms. Landry replied that downtown construction should start May 1. She continued that it might be too early to talk about this, but if there were a way for downtown businesses to take advantage of an event that was out of downtown, that might be good. For example, downtown has a shoe store with running shoes, and restaurants with food trucks. If there is a way to support downtown businesses here at the Airport, that might be a nice addition.

Mr. Hickling asked what the best way is for them to make sure that anyone planning events knows the Airport is having this event. He continued that there is a City calendar. Mr. Paris replied that they can add the event to the Greater Monadnock Collaborative's calendar. Ms. Landry replied that some events do not make it to any calendar, like high school events and weddings. But they can keep that in mind as they are getting applications.

6) Other/Misc

Mr. Hickling stated that the Airport hosted the Clean Energy Fair on September 28, put on by the Monadnock Sustainability Hub. He continued that there was not a huge turnout; he thinks they were competing with many other events that day. However, it went very smoothly, thanks to Ben Albert and his crew and their hard work. It was a beautiful day and went well, and the Airport was happy to host that event.

Mr. Hickling asked if there was anything else. Mayor Kahn asked about ADMC membership, and whether anyone's term was set to expire. Mr. Hickling replied that usually the City Clerk's Office will send out a notice.

7) Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Hickling adjourned the meeting at 9:18 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director