

**City of Keene
New Hampshire**

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

9:00 AM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Curt Hansen, Chair
Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair
Rick Blood
Bill Hutwelker
Brian Johnson
Joe Bendzinski

Staff Present:

David Hickling

Members Not Present:

Mitch Greenwald, City Councilor
Nathan Jacobs
George Hansel, Mayor

1) Call to Order

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.

Chair Hansen called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. He introduced Alona Florenz, who he stated is in the process of being nominated to join the committee.

Elizabeth Bendel joined at 9:08 AM and quorum was met.

2) Adopt Meeting Minutes

Elizabeth Bendel made a motion to approve the Minutes of February 23, 2021 as presented. Mayor George Hansel seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Airport Events

David Hickling spoke about promoting the airport and making it a more visible part of the community beyond just the flying aspect. With regards to airport events, he stated that they may be able to hold some events at the airport in 2021 if things continue to improve with COVID-19. One of his suggestions was to hold an air show. Mr. Hickling stated it may be possible to make this happen in late 2021, but if not he would definitely like to

plan this event for 2022. He listed challenges to this event as traffic flow, parking, budget and timing.

Another of Mr. Hickling's ideas was a 5k on the runway, which he mentioned had been a huge success at airports he'd worked at in the past. He made note that they would need to partner with someone who knows how to set up races, such as a local running group.

Mayor George Hansel stated he has contacts for running clubs that could help out with the 5k event. He requested a one-page outline to send to them to see if this event can take place in 2021.

Mr. Hickling also mentioned a fly-in movie, food festival, and car show for other airport event ideas. He noted that most of the aforementioned events would be dependent on outside resources and volunteers; not only for the day of events, but also in the months leading up to events for planning purposes.

Elizabeth Bendel stated that the budget for prior air shows has been around \$80,000 and it took about 75 volunteers a day. She made note that a timeline for this year would be tough and thought next spring would be more realistic.

Mayor George Hansel stated he has staff working on an events template for downtown Keene, which will give groups an estimate of all costs and timelines associated with hosting events at that location. He suggested they add the airport into that template. This would display the airport as an option to those groups and show the cost comparison of holding an event at the airport versus downtown, which may be cheaper in some instances.

Elizabeth Bendel stated there's also Aviation specific events like flour bombing contests and racing on the runway, noting those would bring awareness to the airport but not necessarily bring in revenue. She and Mr. Hickling mentioned fly-in safety seminars, which Elizabeth Bendel stated she typically holds once per month and will resume when COVID-19 is over.

4) Community Relations

Mr. Hickling brought up engaging with the community outside the airport and noted that one of the ways they could do this is by promoting the land on airport road for walking and viewing wildlife and endangered species. He suggested they put up signs describing that the airport maintains the area.

Mayor George Hansel thought that was a great idea and mentioned a community member who photographs pictures of birds at the airport weekly. He suggested using those images to post a weekly picture on social media, mixed in with posting planes and airport facts.

Mr. Hickling stated another idea is a dog park, which there is room for at the airport. He mentioned that he wasn't sure of the costs associated with this, but wondered if the

airport could support a project like that. It would be a joint venture between the City of Keene and the town of Swanzey, who have both wanted a dog park for quite some time.

Mayor George Hansel stated there's \$10,000 set aside for this project and a group that is interested in spearheading it. He was in support of the idea and wondered if they'd need to alter the airport master plan. Mr. Hickling stated it could be possible, they would need to get approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) on which area could be used and rules surrounding public gatherings.

Mayor George Hansel suggested being aggressive with these events and community relations projects, noting he would like to see the committee moving forward and establishing deadlines.

Mayor George Hansel left the meeting at 9:30 AM. Quorum was lost.

5) Old Business

a. Property Sales

Mr. Hickling stated the property sale process has been extremely delayed and they've had several conference calls with the FAA about getting approval of sale releases back. With regards to use of funds for property sales, Mr. Hickling stated the property revenues can't go towards the local share of future Airport Improvement Plan (AIP) projects. This is because the grant specifically states that 5% of the projects have to be paid by the sponsor or community, and the parcels they are selling were originally bought by the FAA. Mr. Hickling went on to say that the decision was made to move forward with the sale for first parcel once they receive the release from the FAA, and they will look to lease the other parcel for a restaurant and amusements. He mentioned they will need an updated appraisal and then enter into lease negotiations for the second parcel, and made note that the lease will be a long-term revenue for the airport.

b. Restaurant Lease

Mr. Hickling stated the Flight Deck did not renew their lease. They put out an RFQ for a new vendor and will be moving forward with that process. The goal is to have a restaurant with extended hours and days, and at least 2 meals per day. He stated they are hopeful that whomever they get to fill the restaurant will be able to help facilitate events at the airport such as a food festival, which could attract locals as well as fly-ins.

Joe Bendzinski joined at 9:35am. Quorum was met again.

Bill Hutwelker stated he would be happy to send his events policy to Mr. Hickling for review. He also noted that they will be altering their events plan for the fairgrounds and stated it might be appropriate to carve out room for the airport as well. Mr. Hutwelker stated he would appreciate participation from Mr. Hickling and/or Chair Hansen to help them navigate the adjustment of their events policy to include the airport. Mr. Hutwelker

also mentioned that the dog park hadn't yet come to the board of selectmen but he has heard strong support for it and assured they will work with them to try and make that project happen.

Guest David Dinneen stated he was a prior airport manager and had run a lot of the events mentioned in the meeting. He stated the 5k or movie night could easily take place this year and mentioned he would reach out to Mr. Hickling to offer help from his past experiences.

There were no further questions or comments.

Chair Hansen adjourned the meeting at 9:38 AM

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
David Hickling, Airport Director