

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

9:00 AM

Terminal Building
Dillant Hopkins Airport

Members Present:

Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Curt Hansen
Nathan Jacobs
Richard Blood
Alona Florenz
Elizabeth Bendel
Bill Hutwelker
Peter Temple
Kristopher Radder

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Manager/Chair
Rebecca Landry, Assistant City Manager/IT
Director

Members Not Present:

George S. Hansel, Mayor
Luca Paris
Brian Johnson

1) Call to Order

Chair Hickling called the meeting to order at 8:00am.

2) Adopt April Meeting Minutes

Councilor Greenwald made a motion to accept the minutes of April 19, 2022 as presented. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Old Business

A) Air Service Update

Mr. Hickling explained that the scheduled air service industry has faced numerous challenges over the past couple of decades including 9/11, the fuel crisis of 2008, the pilot shortage that started 10 years ago, COVID19 nearly shutting down the industry, new staffing challenges, and the current new fuel crisis. He went on to state that airlines did have some positive years from 2015 to 2020 with low fuel prices and signs of growth. Mr. Hickling reported that recent talk in the industry has not been positive, not only for cities like Keene with viable plans to attract

service, but also for smaller cities that currently have service and will likely lose that service in the coming years. He continued to state that, in the traditional markets for scheduled air service they have a viable plan for soliciting an airline for service; however, colleagues and other sources that he trusts have begun questioning his reasoning to continue with the plan, due to the current industry trends that don't seem to have any short-term changes in sight. Mr. Hickling stated, with this in mind, and the recent interests they've had regarding airport development and land leases, he's been considering where they should focus their resources right now with regards to scheduled commercial service versus scheduled charter service. Mr. Hickling explained, with scheduled charter, they would pay a charter company a flat fee to fly a route they know they can subsidize. He added that they can keep working on their relationships with commuter airlines that so if things do change they are in a position to make a move. Additionally, they can reevaluate in November to see if they want to move forward with a grant application and he will keep contact with the air service development consultant they connected with.

Mr. Jacobs stated he was recently in Nantucket and talking with some folks at their airport and almost every weekend they have a different type of festival. He added that a few years ago they only had Cape Air flying in there and now they have Jet Blue and United. He went on to state that the town of Nantucket is promoting the efforts to get people to come and enjoy the festivals. He wondered what festivals they have in Keene that they could begin to advertise to get people to come up for a weekend.

Mr. Temple added that most airports the size of Keene usually have air taxi service, called Part 135, both scheduled and non-scheduled. Mr. Hickling stated they get calls frequently for unscheduled charter and he believes Ms. Bendel has looked into whether or not there's a viable market. Ms. Bendel stated they have charters coming in on a daily basis but they are not based in Keene. Mr. Hickling added that he would like to look more into the scheduled as well, if they have the demand from businesses.

Mr. Radder asked if they have a list of events going on in Keene that they could focus marketing on and get people to fly in for. He mentioned Pumpkin Festival, the Winter Ice Festival, and the Street Food Festival. Mr. Hickling stated they are working, in the next budget cycle, to have a City Public Information Officer, which they are hoping will be Ms. Landry. Ms. Landry stated the City Manager has put forward a Resolution that's going before Council which would include a new full time Marketing and Communications position for the City. She added that she would really like to be that person if Council approves it. She further explained that she loves the airport and has been involved with it for about 5 years now so this would provide an opportunity for support and involvement of the airport with events and beyond. Mr. Hickling stated this position would be able to coordinate all of the City's social media so everyone is working with each other and helping promote one another. Ms. Landry added that using analytics is how they would go about this to know the audience and base marketing off of that.

Mr. Radder asked if there was a Lyft or Uber program in Keene. Ms. Landry stated they are starting to pick up again after pausing during COVID and Mr. Radder stated it would be great to advertise that people can fly in and grab one of those services from the airport.

Councilor Greenwald stated the Chamber is doing a marketing and branding project as well as the airport and the City so it's a great opportunity. He mentioned having a master calendar in the future.

B) Airport Land Use Study

Mr. Hickling reminded everyone that at the last meeting Steve Bourque showed them some initial thoughts and ideas in regards to potential hangar development sights and best use of available parcels. Following that meeting he had further discussion with Mr. Bourque about providing a scope to give everyone an up-to-date land use study for the airport. Since then he obtained this and they are now addressing some questions and comments. Mr. Hickling went on to state that he believes by moving forward with them on this they can ensure they don't inappropriately use available resources, and also use this project to boost their business development marketing efforts. He stated it is their plan to redirect funds budgeted for the air service consultant towards this development plan. Mr. Hickling mentioned the scope could get bigger and they could even look at a cost-benefit analysis if the City wants to put in hangars. He also stated another deliverable he's looking for is the GIS website which they could use to push out marketing to entities such as aviation businesses or aircraft management companies.

Ms. Landry asked if they'd be contracting out the building of the interface for the GIS. Mr. Hickling stated he envisioned the consulting company working with Mr. Schoefmann, City of Keene GIS Technician.

C) Airport Open House Event

Mr. Hickling stated the event is tentatively scheduled for September 3rd, 2022 and will be a food truck festival and open house. He added that they will need to spread the word to get fly-ins for the event and attract an audience to the open house that they might not normally attract.

D) Miscellaneous

Mr. Hickling stated the EAA had their fly-in a couple of weekends ago and it went very well. It lasted about 2.5 hours and 6 people signed up, 3 of which will be taking flights.

Mr. Radder asked if there were any events coming up for kids to get them interested in aviation. Mr. Hickling stated the EAA has the Young Eagles program and there's also the Civil Air Patrol they could connect with.

Mr. Hickling stated he will share the aerobatic club dates with everyone and there was note that the FAA has restrictions on advertising but they do put it out on social media and the radio.

Ms. Landry stated she'd love to do an interview with a friend of hers who is a young adult and an aviation enthusiast, and highlight that it's a real and possible opportunity to get your pilot license.

There was short discussion about complaints of low flying airplanes and Mr. Hickling stated he created a website page which gives directions on what to do if you think a plane is flying unsafely, as well as information on military aircraft. Mr. Radder suggested they post photos on their social media of C130 planes to attract viewers.

Ms. Landry stated the website is getting a refresh for each department and so they will have more flexibility on their landing page for imagery and programs.

4) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Hickling adjourned the meeting at 9:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director