

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

9:00 AM

**Terminal Building,
Dillant Hopkins Airport**

Members Present:

Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair
Bill Hutwelker
Peter Temple
Nathan Jacobs, Alternate
Kristopher Radder, Alternate

Staff Present:

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

Members Not Present:

Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Luca Paris
Bob Lyle
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager

1) Call to Order

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

2) Adopt December 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Radder made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes of December 17, 2024. Mr. Temple seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Airport Runway 5K/Airport Open House 2025

Mr. Hickling stated that he, Mr. Lyle, and Ms. Bendel met a couple weeks ago to talk about what they need to do moving forward for the Airport Open House. He continued that it will be May 18, combined with the Airport Runway 5K that the Keene Senior Center is doing. They anticipate attendance at approximately 1,000 people. They are having some setbacks with the food trucks, but they hope that will work out. The 5K will be 8:00 to 9:30 AM and the open house will be 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The main attraction will be static displays. They are expecting mostly based aircraft. They will reach out to the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), and he will email all the tenants to solicit aircraft for display. In addition, they will look at some of the non-based aircraft, reaching out to DHART, the NH Air National Guard, and JBI

Helicopters. They will bring out the Airport's snow removal equipment. The flight schools will both have displays and can talk about what they do and hopefully attract some new students. They also hope the EAA and Civil Air Patrol (CAP) will set up displays and talk about what they do.

Mr. Hickling stated that they welcome other ideas ADMC members have for displays, but they are trying not to let this get too big for the first event. He continued that someone suggested bouncy houses, horse rides, and other things for kids, but they want to keep it to a smaller scope and not get overwhelmed, and keep it aviation-related.

Ms. Bendel stated that a couple of years ago, the Historical Society had some old airport pictures. She continued that if it is possible, it would be neat if the Historical Society set up a display about the airport's history, maybe in the lobby. Mr. Hickling replied that he was asked if the Airport would like to put up a display in the lobby of City Hall. He continued that that would be a great project for the ADMC, to come up with a display of historical materials about the airport, and statistics about the airport. The display would be in City Hall from March to May, and then it could be moved to the Airport and then be part of the open house. They could work with the Historical Society on this.

Ms. Landry stated that they could promote the open house as part of that display, too. Mr. Temple stated that the Historical Society has a lot of material on the early days of flying here, and photos of, for instance, World War II training. Ms. Bendel agreed that it would be great if the Historical Society had the resources to do a display board. Mr. Hickling stated that he said yes to doing a display for City Hall, and he would like the ADMC to take the ball and run with it, working with the Historical Society or whoever else they need to work with to make it happen.

Discussion ensued about the number and size of the display cabinets, and the logistics of creating the display. Mr. Hickling asked who could do this project. Ms. Bendel, Mr. Radder, and Mr. Jacobs stated that they will help. Mr. Temple stated that he will work on the historical aspects. Mr. Hickling asked if someone will take the lead. Ms. Bendel replied that she will. Brief discussion continued about possible things to include in the display.

Mr. Hickling stated that he, Mr. Lyle, and Ms. Bendel are the Planning Committee for the open house and will be meeting here biweekly from now until the event. He continued that they talked about the budget. They had talked earlier about getting sponsors and coming up with a budget for the event, which gets complicated because the Senior Center is already getting sponsors for the 5K, and he does not want the Airport to be competing with them. The 5K is an event to raise money for the Senior Center, and he does not want to take sponsorship money from them. He does not think the open house will have a huge budget, and the cost will be minimal and he will look to cover those costs working with the 5K committee and using airport marketing funds. In the future, if the event grows, they could look at doing sponsorships.

Mr. Hickling stated that for the static displays, he will reach out to tenants. He continued that they will need to RSVP so they can coordinate moving aircraft over, controlling when they can move them over and when they cannot for safety reasons. He recommends aircraft owners stay with their aircraft, or have someone from the CAP stay with the aircraft so the public cannot (damage them). There will be a waiver so the City is not liable for anything that happens to the aircraft. Ms. Bendel will reach out to the National Guard and JBI, and he will reach out to the EAA, DART, and the CAP. They are also seeking an aircraft display liaison, who would be there that day as a liaison between the open house and the aircraft owners to coordinate the movements of the aircraft. He will reach out to some people about that.

Mr. Hickling continued that the Planning Committee seeks volunteers. He wondered if Mr. Temple had ideas about parking fly-in aircraft, if they are advertising this as a fly-in. They might use half the main apron for fly-in parking, or park them at 32/14, but they will need people to park aircraft that are coming in, as they might be in areas without designated parking spots or tie-downs. He will try and get something like golf carts to shuttle people around. Discussion ensued about parking locations. Mr. Hickling stated that he will reach out to the EAA to see if they would be willing to help park aircraft that are flying in. If not, he will look for a plan B. Ms. Bendel stated that she thinks people could self-regulate if parked on the east ramp. They would still need a shuttle service. Mr. Hickling replied yes, and they need to make sure people do not walk across areas they should not be.

Mr. Hickling stated that he will contact CAP and see how many people they can expect for cadets and adults. He continued that he has already notified them of the event, and they are excited to participate. He will look at getting golf carts for shuttling. Someone suggested maybe local sports teams or people from the Elks Club or Rotary Club could park cars and take donations. Mr. Temple asked if the CAP cadets could help with that. Mr. Hickling replied that he would not have them parking cars; they need someone with a little more authority. Mr. Temple spoke positively about the squadron of cadets at Greenville. Mr. Hickling replied that he will talk with them, but his intent was to keep people from the CAP out with the aircraft, to keep the public off the aircraft and keep them from going where they are not supposed to go.

Mr. Hickling stated that regarding marketing and public relations for the event, they will do some of that in concurrence with the Senior Center for the 5K. He continued that they will do a press release and a radio talk show, and do a lot on websites and social media. The media liaison will be the City's public relations person, Rebecca Landry. They are working on a ground operations plan for the event layout and set-up and tear-down. Regarding procurement, the Planning Committee does not think they will need to get tents. For tables and chairs for the food trucks, they will probably use the existing picnic tables, moving them to where they are needed. They are coordinating with the Senior Center for the Porta Potties, helping pay for those. They probably will not need a sound system beyond the small one the Senior Center will be using. Ms. Landry replied that she recommends contacting the Rec Center to see about using what they have. Mr. Hickling replied that it would be good to have some way to communicate with people and make announcements.

Mr. Hickling continued that regarding food trucks, they had two – Wicked Groovy Grill and Mama McDonough's. Unfortunately, Mama McDonough's is selling their food truck, so now it is just Wicked Groovy Grill. A contact that Luca Paris gave him is working on finding more food trucks for the event, but they do not want to have too many and risk the possibility of the food trucks not having enough business and then not wanting to come back. They are thinking of two or three regular food trucks and then something with coffee and sweets in the morning, for the runners. Mr. Radder spoke about food trucks that he recommends. Mr. Hickling asked him to email him the contact information for those.

Mr. Hickling continued that he is doing the FAA coordination and is waiting for a response. They will move full steam ahead and plan for the event to happen, expecting that the FAA will approve it, because if they waited for that approval, they would not have time to plan. Mr. Temple stated that the only thing that could happen would be if the FAA does not approve closing the runway for the 5K, the 5K could still happen but it would have to be in a different location. Mr. Hickling replied yes, exactly, and there are two back-up plans for that. He continued that the event would still happen, but the runners would be disappointed not to be on the runway. It would not affect the open house at all.

Mr. Hickling continued that of course, NOTAMs would go out. They need to do the application for the Town of Swanzey to do an event here. He just printed it out yesterday. He asked if one or more ADMC members could take that on, going through the process with the Town of Swanzey to get their approval. He will do the coordination with the City of Keene. Mr. Hutwelker replied that he will go through the process with Swanzey. Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Hickling asked if anyone had other thoughts or questions about the open house. Ms. Bendel replied (that they had talked about) meals for volunteers. Mr. Hickling replied that they would have to talk with the food trucks, but his thought was that each volunteer could have a voucher for a meal from a food truck and then the food trucks would charge (the Airport). Ms. Bendel asked if the marketing budget would cover that. Mr. Hickling replied that he would have to see how many volunteers it would be. Ms. Bendel replied that they should especially cover a meal for the CAP cadets. Mr. Hickling replied that he could talk with Mama McDonough's to see what they could do.

4) Hangar Development Negotiations

Mr. Hickling stated that at the last ADMC meeting he talked about how they were going to push Avanru to come to the table and start negotiating. They sent Avanru some communications at the end of last month, and that worked. They are working through negotiating lease terms this month. They have a meeting on Thursday, and he hopes to finalize the lease language. It would then go to the City Council for approval, hopefully through the next Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee meeting on February 12. If that all works out with the negotiations with Avanru, they should have a lease in place in the next couple of weeks. If not, they would

release another RFQ probably next month. There are other people interested in that lot, so if they cannot come to terms with Avanru, they would see if they could come to an agreement with someone else. Like last time, they would put multiple parcels on the RFQ to see if there are other ones that people are interested in.

5) ADMC Functions Discussion Cont.

Mr. Hickling stated that last month, they talked about the ADMC's functions and guidelines, including the statement that the ADMC will follow the Airport Master Plan. He continued that he went through the master plan again, and he cannot find anything in there about marketing and development. There is a lot about infrastructure, as far as runways and buildings, but not really development of businesses. He thinks that statement was probably put in the functions and guidelines because most boards and commissions in the City do follow master plans and it was just following the pattern.

Mr. Hickling continued that they had talked about the ADMC taking on some of the things they had to follow up on, like marketing community events such as the Jumanji anniversary event coming up in June. They talked about the ADMC taking on the role of finding and marketing events like that, trying to get the information out to fly-in communities. He wanted to follow up and see if anyone had made any movement on that. He does not receive a list of events from the City. They had talked about how ADMC members would reach out and try to find events and come up with a list of events they wanted to promote. Ms. Landry spoke about how the City only lists events that happen on City property, so any events outside of city limits would not be listed there. Mr. Hickling stated that Mr. Jacobs had talked about an app he was going to look into. Mr. Jacobs replied that he reached out but has not heard back; he will try again. Mr. Temple stated that he sent Ms. Landry information about an organization that puts out a weekly list of events at New England airports.

Mr. Hickling stated that he would like to ask the ADMC members to go through the December meeting minutes where they discussed all these things they would like to see, and at the February meeting, be ready to talk about what they can do or how they could contribute to help this move forward. He continued that this year, he is really trying to make a shift and put a little bit more on the committee per the functions and guidelines

6) Other/Miscellaneous

Mr. Hickling stated that the item he had for other/miscellaneous was the City Hall display they already talked about earlier in the meeting. He thanks Ms. Bendel and the other ADMC members who volunteered to take that on. He will support it however he can, and connect them with the City Clerk, who is overseeing it.

Mr. Hickling asked if anyone else had anything to discuss. Mr. Hutwelker stated that he has a couple of items regarding Swanzey. He continued that the Town Administrator officially

announced that he is moving on to another community. Thus, the Town is on the search for a replacement, so if anyone knows of anyone, it would be helpful to be able to reach out to them proactively.

Mr. Hutwelker stated that the Conservation Commission in Swanzey attempted to put amendments into the wetlands ordinance. He continued that he does not know how impactful they would have been on the airport. He thinks they would have been impactful. The main one that the Town was able to successfully push back on was the requirement of a 75-foot undisturbed buffer from the wetlands. For example, the solar field over here would not have been able to be built. They were not successful in pushing back on the restriction that precludes anyone from accessing their property if they have to cross a wetland. For example, a seven-acre parcel on Safford Dr. has wetlands right in front. That owner can no longer market his property without a Variance, because this amendment would preclude access. He does not know how these amendments to the wetlands ordinance would impact the Airport Master Plan. State law permits accessing a wetland with a driveway or a road, done appropriately, but the Town's amendment would eliminate that. They do not know if the amendment will pass. If it does, they need to be ready.

Mr. Hutwelker continued that "the Town will have a committee established to review the buffer aspect. If any ADMC members want to participate in that, he will make sure they are aware. It would impact the airport. Mr. Hickling replied that he would definitely like to be a part of that. Discussion ensued about the proposed amendments and how they would affect the airport.

Mr. Temple stated that a friend of his bought an airport that is one of the 12 State-supported public use airports in NH, and he was told that it was good for the airport to voluntarily comply with the Town's zoning as much as possible but not required. He continued that that was based on a case decided by the NH Supreme Court a few years ago. The State's position, under the NHDOT's Aeronautics, is that with airports, the State can step in and have higher authority if it is an airport they are supporting financially. Discussion ensued. Mr. Hickling replied that he thinks Mr. Temple is right, and that the FAA, too, could override (some things). It just becomes a long process.

7) Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Hickling adjourned the meeting at 9:39 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director