

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 24, 2025

9:00 AM

**Terminal Building,
Dillant Hopkins Airport**

Members Present:

Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager
Bill Hutwelker
Peter Temple
Nathan Jacobs, Alternate

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Manager/Chair

Members Not Present:

Luca Paris
Bob Lyle
Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Kristopher Radder, Alternate

1) Call to Order

Mr. Hickling called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

2) Adopt May Meeting Minutes

Ms. Bendel made a motion to approve the May meeting minutes. Mr. Jacobs seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Hickling stated that this is not on the agenda, but he has news to share – Luca Paris has resigned from the ADMC. He continued that Julie Schoelzel from the Greater Monadnock Collaborative has applied for the open position, which will go through the City Council process for approval. Then she will be a member of the ADMC.

3) Greater Monadnock Collaborative Collaboration

Mr. Hickling stated that as they discussed previously, this is a great opportunity for the ADMC to collaborate with the Greater Monadnock Collaborative. They had talked about finding businesses that might be flying commercially that could be using the Airport for charter. They might work with the Collaborative to host an event at the Airport or identify other events that they (he and ADMC members) could present at, regarding what the Airport has to offer. Many

times, businesses fly commercially because they do not recognize the benefits of flying charter and have the misconception that flying charter is too expensive, not considering all of the other costs of flying commercially, the delays, layovers, unexpected overnights, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Hickling welcomed Julie Schoelzel as she arrived at the meeting and brought her up to speed in the conversation. He continued speaking about the benefits of flying charter. He stated that that is the primary message they want to get out there. He thinks multiple people should speak to the group (of Collaborative members), and Ms. Bendel would be a great person to represent the benefits of charter. He would speak about the benefits of the Airport. Someone who has their own aircraft and uses it for business (would be a great person to speak as well). He thinks people do not recognize that some people with based airplanes use it for business, and it might inspire a small business owner who drives all over to look into getting their pilot license and an airplane instead.

Mr. Hickling continued that the big question is how to create the audience they need to reach. He continued that they would look to Ms. Schoelzel for ideas about who in the group they should market to. Ms. Schoelzel replied that they are working on a survey to their general membership and she can factor in some questions about air travel. One of the goals for the survey is (to address) the biggest complaint she hears at the Chamber, which is not wanting to go to a Chamber event and meet nine people selling finance stuff. Thus, she is trying to determine who members do want to get in front of, so they can have more segmented opportunities. The survey could help determine whom information about flying charter might be relevant to. Then they could look at hosting an event here. Discussion ensued about what an event could look like. Mr. Jacobs suggested involving charter operators who are flying people from NYC, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and so on and so forth. Discussion continued. Ms. Schoelzel spoke about how they would want to take some time to really think about this, to make sure they can have the right people at the event, and that the event feels special and distinct from other Chamber events – high end, invitation only. She spoke about how it is a different kind of marketing mentality.

Mr. Hickling asked if it would be worth it to have a separate survey from the Chamber specifically about business travel. He continued that they could use that information to know who to invite to the event. Ms. Bendel stated that she thought an air travel study was conducted a few years ago. Mr. Hickling replied that that market study was not specific to business travel. Discussion continued about business travel and the benefits of flying charter. Mr. Hickling spoke about how the event could be held at the Mama McDonough's restaurant (at the Airport), but he thinks the priority before event planning is identifying and trying to reach the right people. He spoke of how it is not always obvious who those people are – sometimes small businesses do a surprising amount of air travel. Discussion continued. Mr. Jacobs spoke about how some companies do business travel using scheduled charter services with scheduled flights to and from airports like Keene's. He explained how it works. Mr. Hickling stated that the study from a few years ago focused on the demand from Washington, D.C., and New York City for leisure market in Vermont, suggesting Keene maybe have scheduled service to capture that market, but he does

not think leisure travelers would do that. Mr. Temple spoke about a charter operator he knows, and the business he does, and how he might have some names.

Mr. Hickling asked if Ms. Schoelzel can work a little bit on how they are going to reach out, and whether they should do a separate survey. Ms. Schoelzel replied yes, and she will add something about business travel to the first survey that will be going out, and run it by the ADMC first. She continued that they can do something more in depth for the people who answered that survey question. Discussion ensued about how to get the survey out and reach the right people. Mr. Hickling stated that the first step is identifying how to reach out to people, and then they can work on what they want to present. He continued that it would be great to have someone from a local business that does fly charter come talk about why they do it and what the benefits of it are.

Mr. Hickling asked if there was anything else to talk about for this agenda item. Ms. Schoelzel stated that they should talk about the timing of when to have the event. Mr. Hickling stated that September or October would be best. Discussion ensued, and Mr. Hickling stated that the reason he says October is because he has submitted his letter of resignation and is retiring at the end of October. He continued that he gave a lot of time so that he could help with the selection process (for a new Airport Manager), and ideally it will be a smooth transition so that when he leaves, someone is here ready to pick up all the projects and keep everything moving rather seamlessly. He was going to give his news under the “Other/Miscellaneous” agenda item, but it is relevant here since they are talking about a timeline. He does not want to rush the event, however, if it would not work. Ms. Landry replied that it would be sad for the group not to have Mr. Hickling there, but if needed, they could hold the event after he leaves, if the new person in the position could pick it up. Discussion continued.

4) Hangar Development Proceedings

Mr. Hickling stated that to update everyone on the hangar development with Avanru, they have submitted a timeline for the project and a site plan, which is being reviewed by the City Engineer. He continued that that is moving along well. They are still waiting for a couple of items from Avanru in order to issue them a notice to proceed to start construction. Avanru intends to have the project completed by the fall. The Town of Swanzey issues their approval from the Planning Board based on FAA approval, which the City has not yet received.

Mr. Jacobs asked if Mr. Hickling had given more thought to maybe repositioning that property to make two opportunities for hangars there. Mr. Hickling replied yes, and he thinks they would not have to reposition much, but they would have to relocate the septic system, and it would push the next building out, which would block the view of the runway terminal, which would not be ideal. Discussion continued.

5) Airport Fly-in Promotions

Mr. Hickling stated that regarding Airport fly-in promotions, they keep talking about this, and he is not sure what to do about the transportation challenges for people flying in for events (and needing ground transportation to get downtown/to the event). Discussion ensued. Mr. Hickling stated that if this is something the ADMC wants to pursue, they need to come up with some action items and timelines, and delegate them out, to see what they can come up with. Discussion continued with ideas about potential fly-in events and groups. Mr. Hickling asked if anyone was willing to take the lead with some of these ideas. Mr. Jacobs stated that he can reach out to a group. Mr. Temple stated that he can contact someone, too.

6) Other/Miscellaneous

7) Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Hickling adjourned the meeting at 9:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director