

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

9:00 AM

**Terminal Building,
Dillant-Hopkins Airport**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Manager/Chair
Ben Albert, Airport Maintenance and
Operations Manager

Members Not Present:

Julie Schoelzel
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager
Councilor Mitch Greenwald

1) Call to Order

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

2) Adopt June Meeting Minutes

Mr. Radder made a motion to approve the June meeting minutes. Mr. Temple seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Revision Energy Solar Development

Chair Hickling stated that the solar development proposed for the Airport looks like it is moving forward now. He continued that this is a City project on Airport property. It has been driven by the City Manager and Public Works, and is part of a larger solar development initiative within the City. It is with Revision Energy, the same company that did the solar array for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. He explained the location/layout of the solar project at the Airport and showed it on the map, and stated that it is a 5mg solar array. It will be one of the biggest solar arrays on a municipal property in the state. The Safe Harbor investment tax credit goes away at the end of this year, so the City needs to get into an agreement with Revision and pay for 5% of the project before then, to be eligible for that tax credit of about \$3.4 million. The Revision calculations show a \$20 to \$24 million revenue in savings to the City over 25 years. It will cover all of the Airport's energy costs as well as the City's. He continued that due to the grant assurances, the Airport needs to get fair market value for any property leased, even if it is

to the City, so the City will reimburse the Airport that fair market value. They found an appraiser, who will do an appraisal.

Chair Hickling continued that in the last five years, they have been able to decrease the Airport's operating costs and increase revenue, so the cost to taxpayers for the Airport has decreased every year in the last five years. This will get the Airport close to operating in the black, which is very unusual for a municipal Airport. That would be something to be quite proud of.

Mr. Jacobs asked what Chair Hickling attributes the increased revenue/decreased operating costs in the last five years to. Chair Hickling replied that he has raised the T-hangar leases, for example, and has been adjusting other leases to fair market value, and they also have new leases.

Mr. Temple spoke about the importance of the City and the community understanding the economic value of the Airport, and a study done in the past few years that looked at Airports in NH and how much economic benefits the surrounding communities get from them. He continued that Keene gets millions of dollars in general economic activity because of the Airport, and people should know that. They should not be worried about whether the Airport is in the red or the black. Chair Hickling replied that the last study was actually done in 2010. He continued that he has been advocating to the NHDOT's Aeronautics Bureau and the Granite State Airport Management Association, about trying to get an updated NH aviation impact study. Discussion continued about the economic benefits of the Airport and the importance of educating the community about it.

Chair Hickling asked if anyone had comments about the solar project. Mr. Jacobs spoke about how he is opposed to the project because he thinks Airport land should not be used for non-aviation things, because it limits the possibility of future expansion. He spoke of his concerns that the solar panels will look like lakes to birds and that is problematic. He continued that he spoke at the Zoning meeting in opposition to the project, but it was approved. Discussion continued. Chair Hickling stated that the chances that they will need to extend the runway are slim, and he would not want to give up the opportunity for this solar project for that very slim chance they would need more runway. Ben Albert, Maintenance and Operations Manager, agreed and spoke about why and how the runway would be unlikely to be extended. Discussion continued. Chair Hickling gave more information about how Revision Energy is working directly with the Airport's engineering consultant to make sure they are following all the protocols and procedures to go through FAA approvals for land use, safety studies, and so on and so forth. Discussion continued about concerns for geese. Chair Hickling spoke about how the newer solar panels do not have as much glare, and he does not think the solar panels will attract geese any more than the bare fields already do.

4) Greater Monadnock Collaborative Collaboration

Chair Hickling stated that Julie Schoelzel is not here, but he was going to follow up on what they talked about in June about their collaboration with the Greater Monadnock Collaborative. He continued that he spoke with her about the survey she was going to work on for the members, and she recommended the survey be done in January after the membership renewal period. His response was that he would rather have a more effective survey than one done quicker, so he

agrees with that approach. Thus, they will table the survey for now and the ADMC can work on it after the New Year. It will be a good initiative, getting that information from the survey, finding those businesses that do a lot of business travel, and reaching out to them to let them know what the Airport has available for charter opportunities.

5) Hangar Development

Chair Hickling stated that the hangar development is in progress. He continued that the plan is to have the structure completed by winter.

6) Airport Signage

Chair Hickling stated that they have an agreement with the sign company to do these signs, which Deputy City Manager Rebecca Landry created draft designs for. These will be the new backlit signs that will go at Airport Rd. and Aviation Dr. They are working on these signs now. He hopes they will be up by next month. Discussion ensued about the sign designs and the Airport's logo, and ADMC members gave suggestions for how to adjust the sign's design to reduce confusion with the arrows. Discussion continued about putting the emphasis on "Keene" versus "Airport" versus "Dillant-Hopkins," and how various Airports are known.

7) Airport Fly-In Promotions

Chair Hickling stated that the ADMC had talked about Airport fly-in promotions for a while. He continued that he does not know if it is getting steam, and he wants to know if the ADMC wants to keep putting this on the agenda, or if they want to drop it. They talked about trying to promote local events to get people to fly in. This does not seem to have much traction.

Mr. Jacobs spoke in favor of keeping it on the agenda. Mr. Radder agreed. Discussion ensued about downtown events, the Airport restaurants, and the aviation community's connection with Keene. Chair Hickling stated that hopefully Ms. Schoelzel will be here next month, and maybe she could help the ADMC discuss what their next steps should be. Discussion continued about Swanzey events, ground transportation, local pedestrian and bike trails, and the possibility of e-bike and e-scooter rentals. Chair Hickling stated that he thinks Ms. Schoelzel cannot make it to the October meeting, actually. He continued that hopefully, there will be a new Airport Director coming in, and he will pass on the information.

Mr. Hutwelker suggested holding the October ADMC meeting on a different day when Ms. Schoelzel is available. Discussion ensued.

Chair Hickling stated that he thinks the restaurant here is the best fly-in restaurant in New England. He asked if anyone ever sees a contest or vote, in the publications for pilots, for the best fly-in restaurant, or if there is a way to do that. Discussion ensued about the idea, and about Airport restaurant advertising.

8) Other/Miscellaneous

Chair Hickling stated that he will check in with Ms. Schoelzel about her October availability and try to set a new meeting date.

9) Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director