

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

9:00 AM

**Terminal Building,
Dillant-Hopkins Airport**

Members Present:

Bob Lyle
Peter Temple
Bill Hutwelker
Elizabeth Bendel, Vice Chair
Councilor Jacob Favolise
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager

Staff Present:

Ryan Cooley, Airport Director, Chair

Members Not Present:

Kristopher Radder, Alternate
Nathan Jacobs, Alternate
Julie Schoelzel
Councilor Mitch Greenwald

1) Call to Order

Chair Cooley called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM and conducted roll call. He led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2) Approval of December 2, 2025 and January 27, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Hutwelker made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of December 2, 2025, and January 27, 2026. Mr. Temple seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Nominations and Election of ADMC Vice Chair

Mr. Hutwelker made a motion to nominate Ms. Bendel as Vice Chair. Mr. Lyle seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Consideration and Vote on ADMC Letter of Support to the Swanzev Planning Board for the Airport Solar Project

Ms. Landry stated that when staff asked for the ADMC's support for this letter a couple of months ago, it was drafted by the previous Airport Director, David Hickling, before he left. She continued that Revision Energy had to make some changes for various reasons to accommodate requirements, basic changes like where a curb cut will be, which changes the scope of the solar

array just a little bit. The first letter had too much detail, so they had to make corrections to it. It is still in the same spirit as the first letter, supporting the solar array on airport property.

Mr. Lyle asked if they have checked to see how the Town of Swanzey feels about this. Ms. Landry replied that the Town has received a number of documents about it, but the City will not really know what the Town feels until they go through the Town's Planning Board process this week. She asked if Mr. Hutwelker had any insight. Mr. Hutwelker replied that they did get through Zoning. He continued that having someone from the City's Conservation Commission in support would be helpful.

Mr. Lyle spoke about how the City of Keene might want to somehow "sweeten this a little" for the Town, since the solar array is good for the City, so that the Town feels better about it. Discussion ensued. Mr. Temple asked how all this works, and how it impacts the Town. Mr. Hutwelker spoke about how an arrangement was worked out with the first array that was done about 15 to 20 years ago, but he does not know what it was based on. Ms. Landry stated that the solar array will have a big footprint and generate more than enough to account for the energy needs of the City, so there will be other off-takers. Mr. Lyle replied that that was his question, whether the Town could potentially do a solar array alongside this, or purchase some of the excess power to offset their expenses. Ms. Landry replied that it works a little differently than that. She explained that the energy generated goes to the grid, and the off-takers benefit if they sign on to be off-takers. It comes down to how many off-takers there will be. There are restrictions on what types of organizations can be off-takers. These are all good questions and they just need to follow up, such as regarding the tax questions. Rather than the Town adding on their own solar array, they hope the Town would take advantage of this one. Mr. Lyle agreed. Ms. Landry continued that regarding the project going to the Town's planning board, the question for the Planning Board is whether the project meets the Town's regulations.

Councilor Favolise stated that he likes the letter, which is clear and concise. He continued that there is not much else that can be done with this land. The question for the Town's planning board is not about whether the Planning Board likes the project; it is, as Ms. Landry said, about whether the project conforms with the regulations. From the City Council perspective, he is wary about putting language in that sounds like a promise or commitment to another municipality, that they might not be able to follow through on, regarding the unresolved questions of taxes and how the energy will be distributed. He thinks the letter is appropriate as written.

Chair Cooley stated that what he is saying is 100% correct, about this being about the planning board's rules and regulations and their planning process. He continued that however, regarding the City's partnership with the Town, which could be a question for Elizabeth Ferland, City Manager and Eversource – whether extra energy generated could be a benefit to the Town of Swanzey. Mr. Lyle replied that it does not need to be a promise. He continued that he is just thinking of history, because the Town and the City have sometimes had a not a great relationship. He is just looking for ways to make it more a partnership. Ms. Landry replied that she remembers the days when it was difficult, but now, the City has a great working relationship with the Town and they work hard to continue to foster that. They are mutually supportive of one another. She hears and appreciates what Mr. Lyle is saying, and they will keep doors open to these conversations. Chair Cooley added that when he came, he promised to be a bridge builder,

a proponent of the partnership between the municipalities, and a good steward of the land. Mr. Lyle replied that in that case, he thinks the letter is fine.

Mr. Lyle made a motion for the Airport Development and Marketing Committee to approve the letter as written and to allow Elizabeth Bendel to sign it and send it on the Committee's behalf. Ms. Bendel seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 5 to 0. Mr. Hutwelker abstained.

Ms. Landry stated that the original reason the Vice Chair was the one signing the letter was because the ADMC did not have a Chair at the time it was written. She continued that it might be good if the Chair and Vice Chair can both sign the letter. Others agreed.

5) Terminal Upgrade Project Update and Discussion

Chair Cooley stated that the grant application is still out there and pending. He continued that the FAA has not made the decision yet. The application is for facility upgrades, including a new roof, modern HVAC, redesigned airlock vestibules, and a complete redo of the entrances on the land side and air side to make them ADA compliant.

Chair Cooley continued that in addition to that, staff are also in the middle of working with architects with the City and the Facilities Director, Andy Bohannon, doing a terminal feasibility study. They are looking at the terminal footprint and coming up with a design themselves to apply in August for the "Timbers for Transit" State grant for another upgrade and remodel to the terminal, to turn it into more of a welcome center. They would expand the facilities, have a pilot lounge, move the FBO into a dedicated space, and create a 30–50-person conference room. Keene does not yet have a conference room of that size. They want this to be a shining beacon that welcomes people to Keene and the region. For people who come to the region by air, this is their first entry point; this is what they see. They want the restaurant to be the shining anchor for the airport, too. He will provide updates from the architects when he has them.

Chair Cooley asked if anyone had feedback. Ms. Bendel stated that she loves the look of the welcome center in Vermont, and it would be great to have something similar to that. Discussion continued about the design as Chair Cooley spoke about what the architect said about Keene's history with the mills, and the look of brick masonry mixed with wood. The architect is excited to work with this space. Discussion continued with examples of how other small airports look. Ms. Bendel asked if the idea is to create a new building or renovate this one. Chair Cooley replied that the idea is to renovate this one, with a possible second story, and/or possibly expanding the building into the parking lot area. There is a lot of potential.

6) Other Business

Chair Cooley asked if anyone had other business to discuss.

Ms. Bendel stated that Monadnock Aviation has a career pilot seminar happening this Saturday, targeted to high school and college students, but open to anyone considering careers. She gave more information about it. Ms. Landry asked if the media knows about it. Ms. Bendel replied that they have put it on social media and shared the information with local schools. Ms. Landry

replied that staff will share the information on the City's social media, too. Ms. Bendel stated that she has a great PDF to send to anyone who can share the information. It is free and there will be pizza and snacks.

Ms. Bendel stated that Monadnock Aviation has a private pilot ground school starting in April, in person with an online option. She continued that the third piece of news is that Monadnock Aviation will have its own solar array, which should be live in July, to provide all of their power needs. Discussion ensued about the ability for hangar owners to put solar arrays on their roofs.

Mr. Temple stated that he was looking at a report from the CAE Council on Aviation Employment, regarding a study about the employment needs in the next 10 years in the aviation industry. He continued that it says there will be a need for about 416,000 new aviation mechanics. There is a tremendous shortage, and it is hurting everyone. He has often thought, over the years, about how great it would be if the airport land had a facility that trained people to be aircraft mechanics. He spoke more about this idea. Discussion ensued about the idea, and about other aircraft mechanic training programs that exist or used to exist in the area. Ms. Landry stated that she is very interested in the idea, which she, Ms. Bendel, and others have talked about over the past two years, along with joining it with a jet maintenance program. She continued that it would be a great way to bring aviation professionals here, to showcase the airport, and to get funding for the airport. Discussion continued and Ms. Bendel spoke about how being an aircraft mechanic is a great career. Chair Cooley stated that he is all ears, and they can put this on next month's agenda.

7) Airport Solar Development Update

Chair Cooley stated that as previously discussed, the project will be going before the Swanzey Planning Board this week. He continued that the City is still finding the off-takers necessary for the power generated by the solar panels. That is in negotiations.

8) Airport Open House and Airport 5K Planning

Chair Cooley stated that the Monadnock Humane Society will not be holding their animal walk at the airport this year. He continued that they have decided to have it at a different venue. The Senior Center will be holding their Airport 5K run as planned. The good news is that the .DOT NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and the FAA both gave approval, and said that as long as the airport continues to host events out here on the public-facing land side, they are okay with it. Airport staff will still reach out to those agencies every year regarding any events that are planned, even though the agencies said it is okay, just to make sure they continue that transparency with the regulating bodies.

Mr. Temple asked about an aviation open house for this year. Chair Cooley replied that he and airport staff decided they will not have that this year, but it is his goal to revamp and restructure an airport open house for another year. He continued that he is also still trying to research having an airshow. Those events are great for bringing people to the region.

9) Potential Air Service Interest

Chair Cooley stated that the next step is for him to have discussions with City administration, regarding the funds necessary to start the process. He continued that they will move forward if that is approved. If not, they will try again another time.

10) Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Ryan Cooley, Airport Director