

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Friday, January 20, 2017

8:00 AM

Dillant-Hopkins Airport Terminal

Members Present:

Clark Dexter, Chair
Rodney Thompson
Joseph Bendzinski
Bill Hutwelker
Robert Bergevin
Peter Delaney
Richard Kasper

Staff Present:

Jack Wozmak, Airport Manager
Beth Bendel, FBO

Members Not Present:

Robert Sutherland, Councilor
Mitch Greenwald, Councilor

1) Call to Order

Chair Dexter called the meeting to order at 8:31 AM.

2) Approve Meeting Minutes- December 16, 2016

Mr. Bendzinski made a motion to approve the minutes of December 16, 2016, with corrections. He stated that under the Airport Manager's Report on page two, third paragraph it stated, "All of the damaged planes have left the airport and we now have two t-hangars" should be changed to "five t-hangars".

He continued on page 5, third paragraph, "The size of the scope the people are looking for is not contingible" should be changed to "The size and scope of the solar project is not determined".

Mr. Bendzinski stated that on page 12, second paragraph, third sentence, "Mr. Budzenski" should be corrected to "Mr. Bendzinski".

Mr. Wozmak stated on page 7, fourth paragraph, "Mr. Bergevin said a couple of times he mentioned to the Manchester there is a restaurant opened at the Keene Airport" should

be changed to “Mr. Bergevin said a couple of times he mentioned to the Manchester Quiet Birdmen there is a restaurant opened at the Keene Airport”.

Mr. Bergevin seconded the motion to approve the December minutes with corrections. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

3) Airport Manager’s Report

Mr. Wozmak provided the following report to the Committee before the meeting:

1. We have completed the Environmental Assessment, Phase II and this report is under consideration by the NHDOT and the FAA. On January 17th we held the promised Public Information Session regarding the EA Phase II, which cleared the way for tree removal. Mr. Wozmak said he received a statement from the City Manager that was read at the City Council meeting to accept the report from the MSFI Committee as informational. Mr. Wozmak read the statement from the City Manager as follows:

“The issue of trees at the airport and in the Edgewood neighborhood has been and I suspect will always be a controversy.

It is a fact that there is a safety issue with trees in the flight path.

It is a fact that the City did develop a Forestry Management Plan that has been developed for the entire 300 acres of the airport. Part of that plan includes removal of trees adjacent to the Edgewood neighborhood. Part of that plan is management of the forest generally. Areas not adjacent to the Edgewood neighborhood (that is the airport generally) will be treated in accordance with the Forestry plan. The whole intent of the plan was for scientific management of the entire forest and the retention in appropriate areas of vegetation and trees that will create in time a new forest.

It is a fact that there are no plans to close the airport.

It is true that we do need to work as best we can with our neighbors recognizing that they have concerns and share the safety concerns.

The issue is trying to balance these concerns, remembering that for the area adjacent to the Edgewood neighborhood and in the neighborhood the issue really is public safety and that is paramount.

It has been my intent to see what actions the FAA would take in regards to the EA II. Most importantly regards the removal of trees in the Edgewood neighborhood.

It is my intent to work with the Airport Director and Forester to leave a temporary buffer untouched between Airport and the neighborhood that allows us to determine what buffers need to be erected or installed. The remainder of the trees would be removed as proposed in the Forestry management plan. We cannot leave this temporary buffer in place long; it will be unstable and as long as these trees remain there is a safety concern”.

Mr. Delaney asked if the statement from the City Manager was open to discussion at the meeting or was the statement for informational purposes. Mr. Wozmak replied he was not at the City Council meeting and that he understood the statement was for informational purposes. He continued that it came back to the inherent authority and obligation of the City Manager to manage the airport and all of its activities in accordance with the laws and regulations. Mr. Wozmak said because of the laws and regulations that prohibit obstructions to aviation the City Manager was acting in accordance with his statutory obligations as a City Manager. Mr. Delaney asked Mr. Wozmak how he would envision the buffer. Mr. Wozmak replied he did not know at the time and would need further discussion with the City Manager. He continued they would need to identify the trees that were penetrating the air space. He noted these trees were greater than 80 feet in height. Mr. Wozmak said these trees would have to be removed with the buffer or no buffer. He said he contacted the forester to get advice and guidance on how to identify how the height of those trees would specifically be identified. Mr. Wozmak explained any tree below the “box” would stay for the time being. He noted this was against the advice from the foresters. Mr. Wozmak explained the forester said that was an unwise thing to do because when removing some of the trees, leaving the unstable trees was not consistent with the Forestry Management Plan. He continued at the moment it was an accommodation for a buffer to mitigate the impact the Edgewood neighborhood was sensitive towards.

2. Mr. Wozmak stated that they will be implementing the Forest Management Plan and engaging in tree (obstruction) removal around the end of January/early February. All of the area has been pre-marked and we have taken great pains to mitigate tree removal. Nonetheless, this will be a dramatic cut given the number of white pine trees within the flight path.
3. The tenant interest in the former Alps building (aka Hillside Pizza) as a rental location for a Swanze church youth center continues to make its way down the process. Mr. Wozmak submitted a memo to the NHDOT/FAA to get permission to charge an amount likely less than fair market value or at least less than the historical rent (\$250 vs \$600). They have requested some additional information but are tentatively in agreement with this use.

Mr. Kasper asked if the rental space was just for the building. Mr. Wozmak replied the rental was just for the building and parking area.

Mr. Bendzinski asked if there was a church interested in renting the property for parking spaces for \$1000 a year. Mr. Wozmak replied there was but had not heard back from the church.

4. We have 5 vacant T-Hangars.
5. The marketing brochure was finalized and the ACC members received a copy of the brochure. The next step was to develop a fresh website and social media connections. Mr. Wozmak said he begun to identify markets to approach with specific partners that might have an interest in developing the airport.

Mr. Bendzinski asked if the sign on the brochure existed somewhere at the airport. Mr. Wozmak replied no. He continued there were funds available in the capital budget for signage. Mr. Wozmak said he had not moved forward with replacing the signage at the end of the road because he wanted to have a better idea of the things happening at the airport prior to designing a new sign.

Mr. Delaney asked if the money for the brochure came out of the marketing budget. Mr. Wozmak replied yes. Mr. Delaney asked the cost of brochure. Mr. Wozmak replied it was \$1000 to develop and \$218 for printing. He noted to develop the website would be another \$1500.

6. The next phase of the marketing information will be the website development, using the same information as in the brochure.
7. The final draft of the Airport Master Plan has been delayed due to the intense work on the tree removal and the environmental assessment, but revision work continues and NHDOT has already provided much feedback to STANTEC about the draft thus far. This will get reviewed here at the AAC as well as the AMP Planning Committee, then on to City Council for approval.
8. As a result of discussion at the December meeting of the AAC, Mr. Wozmak reached out to and met with the regional manager for Eversource about the use of the airport as a disaster staging area. They remain interested in this and we will continue to work with Eversource on those details.

Mr. Thompson recalled a meeting was held with a representative from Eversource and the use of the airport was voted in. Mr. Wozmak said that it looked like it went all the way through City Council and the details were not followed through with the airport. Mr. Wozmak said those discussions would be resuscitated.

9. We had one employee terminate employment to work for NH DOT Highway

Division so we will be understaffed until that position is filled. Mr. Wozmak noted the Airport had lost 30% of their workforce. Ben Albert and Mike Moriarty were the remaining maintenance staff. Since we only have 3 staff here, that may create some backlog of work. As for snowplowing, we continue to borrow 3-4 employees from the wastewater plant and the transfer station. We always hope that the “borrowed” employees have some experience plowing at the airport; we frequently have to train them which further reduces our staffing ability because a trained operator must ride with the trainee.

Ms. Bendel said Mr. Albert was a powerhouse. She thanked Mr. Albert and Mr. Moriarty for their hard work on keeping the runway clear and open for business. Ms. Bendel said the airport was able to take other planes from runways that were not open due to the work of Mr. Albert. Mr. Wozmak agreed with Ms. Bendel and said that it took a lot of time and effort to keep the runway clear during snow storms.

Mr. Wozmak explained when the airport borrowed employees from the wastewater plant and transfer station they were usually different employees each time and needed additional time to be trained. He continued the equipment used to plow the runways was much different than the equipment used to plow a highway. Mr. Wozmak said they do try to get the same people but was difficult.

Mr. Bendzinski asked if the vacant position was posted. Mr. Wozmak replied the position was posted immediately.

Chair Dexter asked for an update on Thomas Transportation. Mr. Wozmak replied he was still in contact with the Norwood Group and they were still working on conceptual designs and pricing to see what sort of package would come together that met Ed Thomas’s needs. He explained that a meeting would be held at the airport to discuss these details. Mr. Wozmak noted this was a private deal between Thomas Transportation and the funding sources for the deal. He said that the Norwood Group was fundamentally a broker and when that began to take shape the airport would be able to get a sense of what they want built as well as the size and location of the project. At the moment, Mr. Wozmak said it was still conceptual between the parties and nothing had come forward.

4) Discussion of Classification from Regional to National

Chair Dexter read the mission statement for the ACC as follows: “An advisory committee created to take a pro-active role in the development of the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport”. He continued he wanted to discuss what he thought had happened two years ago. Chair Dexter said the state had spoken to the ACC about

whether the airport should remain a regional airport or a national airport. He provided the ACC with brochures of the airport that were provided two years ago. Mr. Thompson asked if this was relative to the meeting held at the Keene Library with the FAA a couple years ago. He recalled that the meeting was where the FAA presented their plans and discussed the change in status of the Keene Airport. He said they too had a brochure they were developing. Chair Dexter said it was appropriate to discuss the brochure and make a recommendation to the City Council on whether or not this change in classification was a good idea.

Mr. Wozmak said the question of what direction the airport was moving in terms of regional or national had come up several times. He read a list of categories that an airport must meet in order to be declared a national status versus a regional status. Mr. Wozmak noted that there were at least thirteen categories that needed to be met in order to be considered a national airport. The Keene Airport complied with the following national categories:

- Runway length
- Pavement Strength
- High Intensity Runway Lights
- Approach Lighting System with Flashers
- Terminal Building Greater than 5,000 Square Feet
- Intermodal Ground Transportation Options

Mr. Wozmak read the following categories the Keene Airport did not comply with to be considered a national:

- No Instrument Approach to All Runways
- At Least 2 Vertically Guided Approaches
- 34:1 Clear Approach Slope
- Secure Aircraft Parking Apron Capable of 40 Plus or Minus Jet Turbo Aircraft
- No Full-Time On-Site Security
- No ARFF (Airport Rescue Fire Fighting) On-Site 24/7
- No Air Traffic Control Tower
- No Access to Customs

Mr. Wozmak said that it was his understanding from the NHDOT there was no change in funding opportunities merely because of a status change to regional or national. He continued what would drive the opportunity of funding was if the airport could hold 40 jets and had all of the other things mentioned. Mr. Wozmak said based on that scenario it was likely operations would increase and would put an airport into a different funding zone.

He continued there was a lot of discussion about a status change and there was also sensitivity to the change. Mr. Wozmak noted the FAA would like to move in a national direction because it fits within the state aviation plan. He noted the airport clearly had a

ways to go before making the change. Mr. Wozmak said he did not see any likelihood to get customs, a control tower or an ARFF 24/7. He noted these were very expensive.

Mr. Bergevin said that he was also at the meeting held at the Keene Library a couple years ago and he understood that the FAA had upgraded the Keene Airport from a local to a regional airport.

Mr. Wozmak said the DOT and FAA were not pushing to move in one direction or another. He said these were decisions made with the City of Keene and that there was no conversation that he knew of regarding a status change to national.

Mr. Thompson recalled prior meetings held with an active marketing committee that was heavily involved in discussions on the marketing of the airport. He said they were working on an FAA approved plan that was needed to be completed in order to generate the marketing concept. Mr. Thompson said at the same time, the meeting that was held at the Keene Library by the FAA recalled two of the strong points at the meeting 1) FAA said the Keene Airport was a regional airport 2) FAA offered proven documentation of the economic benefit the airport was to the City of Keene. He explained that the marketing committee also dissolved around that time and to his knowledge there has not been another marketing committee. Mr. Thompson noted nothing was taken advantage of from the meeting.

Chair Dexter said that the brochure that he presented at today's meeting was the brochure presented by the FAA at that meeting held at the Keene Library. He said from his understanding the powers to be did not like the brochure because it contained pictures of other airports and not the Keene Airport. Mr. Thomson said it was a draft that was not completed and showed clearly how much the Airport contributed to the City of Keene. He noted that was the time when the marketing committee was trying to say the airport was important.

Chair Dexter asked the ACC how they wanted to proceed. He said their charge based on the mission statement was supposed to come up with ideas on the development of the airport. He said this was an issue and asked the ACC if they should take a stand.

Mr. Thompson said he was under the impression that the airport being designated as a regional airport, was eligible for additional funding. He said they needed to discuss the advantage of trying to become a national airport and what benefit was derived in terms of a financial return from the FAA. Mr. Thompson said from what he could see so far was that it did not make any sense. Mr. Wozmak said that the trigger that drives the funding from the FAA was the number of operations. Fundamentally, Mr. Wozmak said the more planes at the airport the more likelihood of getting more money.

Mr. Kasper said considering the impediments that it was a waste of time to pursue a national status. He noted the addition of a control tower alone was a large enough project. Mr. Wozmak said he thought it was reasonable to say the airport could move in the direction of instrument approaches to all runways. He said he did not know what it

would take to get a vertically guided approach. Mr. Wozmak said once the obstructions were removed it would get closer to the approached slope as well as increase safety. He continued the Airport Master Plan did include expanding the size of the apron in the next 10 years. Mr. Wozmak said he did not see security, customs or ARFF in the future. He said that he asked about customs because C&S does international flights and would be convenient for them with a mobile custom. Mr. Wozmak said that unit was out of the Portsmouth International Airport at Pease. He noted federal funding was going to be reduced with respect to the mobile customs. Mr. Wozmak said he did not think that would be a viable opportunity.

Mr. Bendzinski asked what happened when C&S landed at the Keene Airport on an international flight. Mr. Wozmak replied C&S international flights did not land at the Keene Airport and that they needed to stop in Bangor or Portland, Maine. He noted they would need to stop anywhere customs existed.

Jim Nortz said in the Portland aviation district in terms of a mobile unit useful to negotiate with the customs bureau because they have facilities at Bradley Field which are an hour and 15 minutes verses over two hours to Portland. He noted this was something to take into consideration cost wise.

Mr. Delaney said that it seemed one of the driving forces awhile back was a regional carrier that was funded by FAA money. He continued there was a discussion about contacting Cape Air. Mr. Delaney asked if anything had happened when Cape Air was contacted. Mr. Wozmak said he spoke with their Vice President of Planning and their principal impediment was to demonstrate to them that the airport had enough market. He continued once the airport could get Thomas Transportation it would show that sort of travel they make to other regional airports. Mr. Wozmak explained the primary obstacle they raised was the pilot shortage and to add this leg means they would have to add pilots. Mr. Wozmak noted it was not a secret there was a shortage of pilots and there was a big bubble of pilots heading toward retirement. He continued the amount of new commercial pilots was not as robust and the commercial career ladder had to fill the gap. Mr. Wozmak noted this was still a struggle.

Chair Dexter said the purpose of bringing up the discussion was that a member of the Airport Master Plan Committee questioned what the airport should be doing about status. He said the member asked for an answer. Chair Dexter asked the ACC to give the Airport Master Plan Committee an answer and wanted to have a resolution from the ACC today.

Mr. Thompson said that was complex and far reaching. He continued he did not think there was a need to become a national airport and that it would also be too expensive. Mr. Thompson explained there was no advantage in terms of money to the airport. Mr. Wozmak said a motion could be made to table the discussion to another date for more time. Mr. Kasper asked if a timeframe would need to be identified in the motion. Mr. Wozmak replied the motion did not need to identify a time frame.

Mr. Bergevin made a motion that the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport stays as a regional airport until someone can assess to the ACC that shows the Airport should advance. Mr. Kasper seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Chair Dexter asked Mr. Hutwelker if there was any further development with the Green Technology Report. Mr. Hutwelker replied that there was no further development.

Mr. Kasper asked if there was ever an interest in anyone renting the miniature golf course. Mr. Wozmak replied no. Mr. Wozmak said that was the difficult part of the property because no one wanted both pieces of the property. He continued the go-carts were auctioned off in part because the property was abandoned and the former tenant owed the airport money. Mr. Kasper asked if there were separate bathroom facilities for the go-cart area. Mr. Wozmak replied there was a separate building with a bathroom. Mr. Kasper asked if it could be operated as a separate entity. Mr. Wozmak replied yes.

Mr. Thompson asked if the buffer being suggested was open for discussion and stated he was not in favor of the buffer. Chair Dexter said the City Manager made the decision and that it was not open for discussion. Mr. Wozmak said anyone was free to voice their opinion. A brief discussion ensued amongst the ACC in regards to the buffer.

Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Chair Dexter adjourned the meeting at 9:23 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jennifer Clark, Minute Taker
January 25, 2017