

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 17, 2017

8:30 AM

**Dillant-Hopkins Airport Terminal
Building**

Members Present:

Clark Dexter, Chair
Robert Sutherland, Councilor
Rodney Thompson
Bill Hutwelker
Bob Bergevin
Joseph Bendzinski
Mitch Greenwald, Councilor

Staff Present:

Jack Wozmak, Airport Manager
Mike Moriarty, Airport Maintenance &
Operations Foreman
Ben Albert, Airport Maintenance

Members Not Present:

Peter Delaney
Richard Kasper
Joseph Briggs

1) Call to Order

Chair Dexter called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

2) Airport Manager's Report

Mr. Wozmak Reported:

1. On January 31, the NHDOT and the FAA issued a finding of no significant impact regarding the tree removal plan related to the Forest Management Plan. On February 2, the loggers began removing the overstory and completed their work approximately one week later. On February 14, the loggers began removing the felled trees and the track areas caused by the equipment will be "feathered" out to smooth the track areas as much as practicable. Approximately 157,000 board feet were cut in total. There is an area that is the subject of a lawsuit (see #2) because of a question as to if the amendment to the deed was legal; it is being managed by the City Attorney's and Mr. Wozmak is confident it will get worked out. The airport should receive approximately \$10,000 from sale of the timber, some of which may be used toward stump removal in potential development areas. Part of the money will also be used to pay for mitigating changes to abutter's views. DH

- Hardwick out of Antrim is performing the cutting and removal and the forester was active in the removal process. 90% or more of the trees on City owned property that are obstructions to aviation have been removed, 10% remains in the Edgewood forest which is the subject of the lawsuit, and now Mr. Wozmak needs to identify obstructions to aviation on abutting properties. Once those trees identified, Mr. Wozmak will speak with individual landowners to arrange an aviation easement or obtain permission to remove the trees at the airports expense. He is unsure of property owner's willingness to give permission or an easement so this will be an ongoing process that could last one to two more years.
2. The parcel within the Edgewood forest area is the subject of a lawsuit due to a decades old amendment to the deed that purports to allow for tree cutting for aviation purposes. No cutting will take place in that area until the legal question is resolved.
 3. The tenant interest in the former Alps building (aka Hillside Pizza) as a rental location for a Swanzey church youth center continues to progress. Mr. Wozmak has been drafting additional information for NHDOT to receive permission for this occupancy to be approved by state officials. Assuming this is received, their proposal will make its way to City Council for approval. There is one more interested party if this party's interest does not continue. Mr. Wozmak thinks this rental will reduce City expense and return a net yield. This property was acquired with FAA money and the City could sell it but 95% of the profit would have to return to the federal and state governments. The property has been vacant for five years and the largest expense to maintain it is approximately \$3,500 per year in taxes. Both of the potential tenants are non-profit and will be seeking exemption from the City.
 4. There are five vacant T-Hangars although Mr. Wozmak has interest for three planes to be housed in Keene, either in existing hangars or in a new hangar. An existing tenant wants to purchase a second plane so the T-Hangars could return to 100% occupancy soon. There is also curiosity from a party with three planes that is interested in building a hangar to hold all three. Mr. Wozmak is considering the idea of constructing a transient jet hangar.
 5. The final draft of the Airport Master Plan (AMP) is being printed for review here at the AAC as well as the AMP Committee. It will then continue to City Council. There is no exact timeline yet but it will be determined soon. The most recent draft has been reviewed by the FAA and Mr. Wozmak will meet with the City Manager next week to begin staff review. The Mayor needs to renew the Airport Master Plan Committee for 2017 for the process to continue.
 6. On February 14 Mr. Wozmak met with the regional manager for Eversource about use of the airport as a disaster staging area. He will continue to work with Eversource on those details. They discussed a number of scenarios where up to 400 trucks could be housed on a variety of parcels at the airport. They will give Mr. Wozmak more of those logistical details as well as potential benefits for the airport. They like the idea of the restaurant at the airport for efficiency. Mr. Wozmak will have to discuss this potential with the FAA because of vehicles in certain airport areas.

7. The airport continues to be understaffed by one employee (30% of airport staff) but has received many applications and will be working through the selection/interview process. There has been good luck borrowing staff from other City departments. Mr. Moriarty explained the need for an additional operations and maintenance employee. The airport needs sufficient employees to function in an efficient and safe manner. This need is in addition to needing four seasonal employees, and they just lost one. At the bare minimum, the seasonal employee needs to be replaced, but in reality, two employees are needed. Mr. Wozmak noted that mowing of airport property had to be contracted out last summer. Councilor Sutherland noted that the airport building and maintenance falls under the Parks and Recreation Department and that there are City budget line items for airport operations and maintenance. Mr. Wozmak replied that Parks and Recreation does some mowing on the grounds, and maintenance by Parks and Recreation at the airport will be discussed at an upcoming meeting; however, he said, the airport is not a park or recreation space. Parks and Recreation does not maintain the landscaped areas around the airport as they do for other facilities and Mr. Moriarty has brought that up. He also noted that subcontracting has been difficult in the past because most do not have large enough equipment for the airport property.
8. Plans to begin renovations to the former baggage area by installing a new floor structure and making other improvements to make the space productive are moving forward. Work in the area will depend upon staffing and weather. There is also the potential of moving the FBO to the space and using the current FBO space as a pilots lounge. Mr. Wozmak would like to maximize space producing revenue.
9. Mr. Wozmak made a capital request to the City for upgrading the outdated bathrooms to comply with ADA regulations and he is seeking to add a private bathroom for visiting pilots and crew. These budget requests will be presented to the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee for their consideration on February 23. Mr. Wozmak believes that is for action in the first year of the CIP. This is separate from the sewer plant plans, because that will be a longer term goal with a cost of \$500,000-800,000. Mr. Wozmak said ideally, because the airport provides wastewater treatment, the building should be connected to its own plant but there will be more discussions on how to get water and sewer to the airport as time goes on and development takes place.
10. Mr. Wozmak has had several speaking engagements this month: The Greater Keene Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Keene Kiwanis Club and the Keene (Tuesday Noon) Lions Club. He spoke on the development plans and potential for the airport. All presentations were well received.

a. Transportation Center

Mr. Wozmak has an upcoming meeting with Thomas Transportation and the Norwood Group to continue the design, footprint, and financial discussions. The matters to work out are between Thomas and Norwood, the airport is trying to facilitate finding a piece of land for a 40-year lease.

b. Marketing PR

Mr. Wozmak has a list of 25 companies he will be marketing the airport as a useful destination for. He said it takes a certain amount of analysis and he has spent hours researching companies that might have an affinity for what the airport offers and how to entice them with the airport. He will share that list with Committee members but he cannot make it public at this time. He will combine a new marketing brochure with an individual letter to send to each company. Councilor Greenwald noted the Economic Development Committee presented an action plan to City Council and the airport is on the cover. He thinks a lot of the supporting information in that plan could be useful to Mr. Wozmak and will send it to him. A lot of it includes information on outreach to companies that move into the area. Councilor Greenwald said there could be more marketing to bring in more jets and boost airport economics. Mr. Wozmak said the airport gets a number of jets for different purposes (corporate, recreation) and he has started outreach to resorts.

Mr. Wozmak noted he is interested in getting Swanzev involved with this Committee. Chair Dexter asked if there is any interest. Mr. Hutwelker replied he is an advocate but is in the minority at the moment. He said there was a significant discussion about it at the recent Swanzev Economic Development Committee meeting and he and another pushed for it but were overruled. It is not about money because Swanzev has similar partnerships with Winchester and Hinsdale. He said the long-term success of Swanzev is tied to Keene and collaboration with Keene so he will continue work on his end. He hopes he and Mr. Wozmak can continue to work together.

Ms. Bendel said that while marketing is great, she asks members to keep in mind that all services provided at this airport are provided by Monadnock Aviation. So if the Economic Development Committees are asking questions about who is coming to Keene, they should come to her first because she knows who, why, and how often. She is already recruiting jets and Mr. Wozmak is working hard but she is happy to hear other City committees are talking about the future of the airport as well.

Councilor Sutherland asked if the ice and drainage issues around the T-Hangars have been resolved. Mr. Wozmak replied he is due to go out and take new pictures. He learned the history and the problem is because the T-Hangars have pitched roofs that drain on both sides, causing pooling on the north side. The concrete pad the hangar sits on is at the asphalt grade or lower so in the winter water gets pushed in. Later built City-owned hangars do not have the same issue; the issue is in the privately owned hangars. For that reason, the airport has no responsibility to fix them but should be a partner in finding a solution. Mr. Wozmak has suggested a condo assessment to the President of the Hangar Condo Association but there is no resolution yet.

Councilor Sutherland noted there are a number of properties at the airport that are not core to operations, including the pizza restaurant and a number of properties on the other side of Route 32. He asked if they should look at the potential of selling them to avoid or

offset airport costs. Mr. Wozmak replied he does not think the actual properties consume a lot of money. Mr. Moriarty noted some of the buildings are critical because they are on the approach. He said even if they were sold, it could be with an aviation easement. Mr. Wozmak agreed it is worth looking into.

c. **Master Plan**

- 3) **Operations Manager's Report**
- 4) **Marketing Committee Report**
- 5) **FBO Announcements**

Ms. Bendel reported that business is strong. The flight school is also strong and many full time students are businessmen from Keene. The students often get their licenses, see the value of aviation, and they buy a plane for business. Those trends could boost economics at the airport.

She said maintenance just added another person to staff and have focused on hangars because business is good. With the Green Hangar leasing from the City, she is able to use the Blue Hangar to house corporate aircraft, including helicopter traffic. She said corporate jets have been coming to the airport several times daily which is an uptick. She said it is great news for Monadnock Aviation, the City, and the people of Keene. There are also many seminars taking place to bring people in from all over New England for things offered at Keene that other airports are not offering.

6) **Request for Aerobatics Practice in 2017**

Chair Dexter noted a request from the New England Aerobatics Club to have practices at the airport again this year. Last year they requested five practices, this year they have requested six. That does not necessarily mean six will occur (because of weather, etc.). Chair Dexter said the Committee needs to decide whether to approve that request.

Mr. Thompson asked of the five, how many practices they actually flew last year. Ms. Bendel replied three or four.

Mr. Bergevin made a motion to approve the request for New England Aerobatics Club to hold up to six practices at the airport in 2017, which was seconded by Mr. Bendzinski.

Councilor Sutherland noted he received many complaints before the events last year but never received any after. Mr. Hutwelker said he received complaints from people who live nearby and he responds by telling them they bought a home close to an airport. Chair Dexter said he received complaints as well. Mr. Moriarty noted having events like that at the airport is marketing; Ms. Bendel agreed it is positive for the economic development of Keene. Mr. Thompson asked about aviation gas income from the Club and Ms. Bendel replied it is beneficial – they buy fuel, rent hangars in bad weather, etc. Mr. Bergevin said no matter what the decision, there will always be complaints.

The motion carried unanimously.

- 7) **Next Meeting – March 17, 2017**
- 8) **Adjourn**

Hearing no further business, Chair Dexter adjourned the meeting at 9:33 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker