

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Friday, September 15, 2017

8:30 AM

Dillant-Hopkins Airport Terminal

Members Present:

Clark Dexter, Chair
Councilor Robert Sutherland
Robert Bergevin
Joseph Bendzinski
Bill Hutwelker
Rodney Thompson (Arrived Late)

Staff Present:

Jack Wozmak, Airport Manager
Mike Moriarty, Airport Operations Manager
(Arrived Late)
Ben Albert, Airport Operations

Monadnock Aviation:

Beth Bendel, FBO

Members Not Present:

Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Peter Delaney
Fred Happ

1) Call to Order

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

2) Approval of Minutes – July 21, 2017

Mr. Bendzinski made a motion to approve the minutes of July 21, 2017, which was seconded by Councilor Sutherland and carried unanimously.

3) Airport Manager's Report

Mr. Wozmak reported the following:

- He has been working with the Town of Swanzey on the old Thomas Transportation hangar and he had another visit from someone who wants to build a hangar for a new small jet. All hangars remain full.
- He has been working on the Airport Layout Plan with the FAA to have it included in the City Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He is considering replacing some lights around the airport for energy conservation as the City has done elsewhere. This will primarily save money and there are public service rebates for more efficient lighting. He will include quotes in the Capital Budget and look into Eversource rebates. He does not believe any of the street lights at the airport are a part of the City replacement program.

Councilor Sutherland said there is a City-wide engagement with Honeywell for improvements and he is surprised there has not been attention to the airport. He suggested speaking with the Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities. Mr. Wozmak was not aware of this. Mr. Albert noted the exterior lighting on SRE was done with the Honeywell program and they were at the airport recently.

Mr. Benzinski asked about the previous heating problem in the restaurant. Mr. Wozmak replied the entire unit was replaced and is ready for winter.

- Progress has been made on brush clearing so he is holding off on pressure washing the terminal building. The vacant staff position was filled and mowing has taken place since.
- The FAA has given approval to study where the weather station should be. As the Airport Master Plan developed, it became clear the AOS data was not accurate, including reporting freezing rain during the summer. It is not easy to find a better location for it, according to the FAA and Engineers of Record. Every airport has a weather station, often for the entire City, to tell planes the landing conditions.
- He has been looking into goats for airport management of vegetation. Goats have been implemented at the landfill and while they may not be less expensive, they are more sustainable. Goats also do an excellent job managing invasive plants. The FAA supports this. Someone would be paid to care for the goats twice per day in addition to a guard dog; approximately \$30/day. The airport currently spends \$2,000-3,000/month for brush clearing.
- The process of seeking private property owners who will voluntarily allow the City to remove tree obstructions from their property is moving slowly. He sent out 24 letters to properties identified as possibly having obstructions.
- He had another conversation with Cape Air and they need to see Keene as having an “Acute Transportation Problem” (like an island that can take advantage of subsidies) in order to fit neatly within their corporate profile. There is more work to do on that front and he is trying to get some sort of regularly scheduled service out of Keene. He is also working with Tradewind Aviation and will have a conference call with them within the next month. He is trying to demonstrate to them that they can make money without the subsidies.

Councilor Sutherland said it is probably too much to do a market study but Keene might be a great place to fly in from New York to ski areas. Mr. Wozmak replied that happens now to some extent.

- The Wings of Freedom Tour will be at the airport September 25-27. \$2,000 for 30 minutes in a Mustang and it is worth it.
- He said there have been many impediments to finding a tenant for the Alps building and now it was discovered there is a serious septic problem; he is unsure it was ever good. He went before the Swanzy site planners and one requirement is a toilet and working septic system. It cost approximately \$500 to have someone confirm the system had failed. He reviewed 20 years’ worth of documents and found that 15 years ago, the FAA said to sell the building and acreage because

they are unneeded. The only reason the City bought it was because it was attached to land the airport needed at the time and the owner would not sell one without the other. Additionally, at the time the Alps building was purchased, the state was not a Block Grant state, meaning 95% of the sale of this property would have to go back to the FAA. NH is now a Block Grant State so the airport can have the land appraised, sold, and petition to the FAA to keep the money for airport purposes. There is a good likelihood the FAA will agree. He has asked the Consultants of Record to begin the process, which will take approximately one year. Unless anyone on the Committee objected, he did not see the point of putting money into the septic system while still paying taxes on it.

Mr. Bendzinski asked if the City owns the building; Mr. Wozmak replied yes.

Councilor Sutherland made a motion for the Airport Manager to continue pursuing the possibility of selling the land of the old Alps restaurant, which was seconded by Mr. Thompson and carried unanimously.

Mr. Wozmak said the FAA is clearly willing to entertain this possibility so he will move forward and identify discrete steps to get there. It will ultimately go to City Council and FAA to approve any disposal of property, sale, etc. It will take time.

Mr. Thompson asked if the property has been tested to hold a septic system; he thinks it would make a significant difference on the value of the property. Mr. Wozmak was unsure if it could hold septic or not. Mr. Moriarty replied the City is conducting that test and soil testing using equipment from Public Works.

Mr. Bendzinski asked if sale would include the land. Mr. Wozmak replied yes, the 11 acre lot the FAA identified is not needed for aviation; however, there is an aviation easement, which will place some limitations on new owners.

Chair Dexter reported the City Council met and approved everything at the airport – new classroom and new hangars.

Mr. Wozmak shared he found books on places to go in New England with old cars or motorcycles. He reached out to the company to encourage a book about places to fly in New England so pilots know where they can travel in the state. He will continue the conversation.

Mr. Wozmak met with an environmental landscaper and executed a contract to begin a development plan for planting conifers along the City property line to create a visual barrier and replace the noise barrier sacrificed when all the trees were taken down. It will be 630 feet/1,000-2,000 trees. He will be asking City Council for a motion requiring that for any further trees to be removed, mitigation planting must be in place. This will be funded 95% by federal and state dollars. He would like this to happen as soon as possible. He is working with the Cooperative Extension to decide on the right assemblage of conifers to use for height and sustainability. He is keeping the FAA informed to ensure it

meets their standards. He hopes the plan will be before Council by October. Councilor Sutherland suggested sharing some of that information with the Edgewood neighbors who might want to learn or donate. Mr. Wozmak agreed and noted the project will not be executed this year because so much bidding is required.

Chair Dexter noted the aerobatics club had practice the previous Saturday; it was a beautiful day but there were several noise complaints (two calls and one email). Ms. Bendel said there were more than three people at the airport enjoying the day. Chair Dexter thought a recommendation has passed Council placing boundaries on practice times. Apparently they continued past the 4:00 PM deadline. Mr. Wozmak replied yes, he looked back at the minutes of that Council meeting and only a start time was listed in the motion. He informed Councilor's Hooper and Manwaring that they can review this more in depth next year and can still revoke this October's practice if deemed too disruptive. He has not seen any activity in that direction, but thinks end times are appropriate. He thinks 4:00 PM is a reasonable end time; only one or two continued past that time this past weekend. Ms. Bendel believes they went over time because every other practice this season was weathered out and they had a lot to practice. The Committee agreed to not do anything at this time because they only have one more practice left this season on October 7.

Mr. Wozmak reported he has not looked at the governance reports yet. He also had no update on the sign; he is waiting because it feels premature if new hangars will be built and businesses might move here. He also needs to further research where the sign could be relocated; the Fire Department would prefer it moved so they have easier turn radius.

Chair Dexter reported that at the last City Council meeting, Mayor Lane tasked the AAC with reviewing whether or not this airport should work with KSC to start an aeronautics course. He welcomed Louis Kolivas, 119 Gun Road. Mr. Kolivas noted he had a conference with Mayor Lane, the City Manager, the Councilor's of Ward Three, and professor Zahos, who is a Keene native, teaches aviation in Illinois, and knows the airport well. Mr. Zahos had the idea to develop a curriculum at KSC or the community college system to teach some component of aviation – pilots, fixed wing mechanics, repair, etc. – the college could offer as their curriculum changes. Mayor Lane and the City Manager agreed this opportunity is well timed and Mayor Lane suggested a possible flight school in conjunction with a small time college. This is a good “what if?” opportunity because many schools in the state are looking to adjust their curriculums and opening this curriculum at KSC could create opportunities for the airport. He and Mr. Zahos hope this Committee will consider the possibility.

Mr. Bendzinski said that while early in the process it sounds like the college would have to take initiative on this. Mr. Wozmak replied if they are willing to start a new course of study they have to be determined, see demand, and develop a curriculum. The college can do that and the airport has the land to support it. Someone with more expertise needs to identify the demand and return more clearly. He said the college is in a financial crisis at the moment and if there is demand right now it could increase revenue and interest.

Mr. Kolivas suggested this Committee embrace someone from the college. Chair Dexter noted he had a meeting with Gordon Leversee to discuss this on September 18 at 10:15 AM at the college; Chair Dexter, Ms. Bendel, Mr. Delaney, Mr. Bergevin, and Mr. Bendzinski volunteered to attend.

Mr. Bergevin noted a few years ago the City was involved with Tom Eaton and Mayor Blastos and spent more than a year getting a hangar for 707 maintenance approved; he said at the last minute someone shut it down and it closed after more than a year of legal work preparing. He said he is not in favor of KSC having a flight school unless it is included with Monadnock Aviation because they pay taxes. Ms. Bendel said she has taught at the college for credit. Mr. Wozmak and Mr. Thompson agreed any investigation about feasibility should include Ms. Bendel because she has been doing it so long at the airport. Mr. Bergevin said he thinks the whole Committee should be involved and informed as this moves forward. Mr. Moriarty said in any process like this someone should be involved who graduated from one of these programs to share their experience. Mr. Thompson asked where the nearest aeronautic/mechanical training facility is; Ms. Bendel replied Nashua. Mr. Thompson said something like this could benefit the City, college, and airport.

4) FBO Announcements

Ms. Bendel reported Monadnock Aviation is wrapping up a fantastic summer; they hired another flight instructor and purchased another aircraft. This is the 9th anniversary of Monadnock Aviation; she was pleased with this considering 20 FBO's have gone out of business in the past five years. She was proud of and thankful for the new classroom and is looking forward to running the ground school in a fresh environment. Mr. Thompson complimented Ms. Bendel on her hard work over the last nine years.

5) New Business

Councilor Sutherland asked if anyone had been in touch with Amazon; the company is thinking about building new locations on the east coast. Mr. Wozmak replied he has sent two letters and will send a third; he is looking into their criteria for expansion. They would essentially have their own airport if they established within 10 miles of Keene.

Mr. Bergevin asked the status of Green River. Mr. Wozmak replied he does not know and tries to stay out of it. Ed Apple works for EAI who bought the Thomas Transportation hangar. Mr. Wozmak does not know what he has been doing but he is in that hangar. Councilor Sutherland suggested contacting the City Attorney.

Mr. Hutwelker thanked Mr. Wozmak and City staff for hosting the Swanzey Board of Selectmen's meeting at the airport two weeks ago. He said 75-80 people attended, which is unusual. He asked the Committee's permission to approach Mr. Wozmak with regard to an issue with the dams on upper and lower Wilson Pond that might impact the airport because one proposal is to lower Wilson Pond by one foot in order to meet NH DES regulations. The citizens were concerned about water level dropping so he met with the

Consultants on Record and discovered there may be an exception that would allow water level to decrease only two inches. The suggestion was made to be mindful that Wilson Pond provides landing space for a plane and a one foot water drop could impact that. He asked permission to meet with Mr. Wozmak and write a letter on behalf of the airport with regard to the importance of Wilson Pond remaining close to its current water level; it would facilitate the ability to get an exception from DES. Mr. Wozmak stated he is happy to write the letter; he will need to speak with someone with a float plane to get information on lake depth and impediments. Chair Dexter asked Mr. Wozmak to take that as informational and report back at the next meeting.

Chair Dexter reported that the terms of the following Committee members expire at the end of the year: Mr. Happ, Councilor Greenwald, Mr. Bendzinski, Mr. Hutwelker, and Mr. Bergevin. This is more than half of the Committee so everyone needs to be thinking of replacements. He is adding an agenda item to next month's meeting to review the Committee's charge and determine if it needs to change to be more pertinent to what the Committee wants to do, or if the Committee needs to continue. There have been some complaints the Committee does not do anything anymore and he wants to address that. Mr. Bergevin agreed he made those complaints.

- 6) **Next Meeting – October 20, 2017**
- 7) **Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Dexter adjourned the meeting at 9:29 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker