

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 20, 2015

8:30 am

Airport Terminal Building

Members Present:

Clark Dexter, acting Chair
Robert Bergevin
Rod Thompson
Bill Hutwelker
Kevin Provost

Staff Present:

City Manager John MacLean
Ed Mattern, Airport Director
Mike Moriarty, Airport Maintenance and
Operations Manager

Members Not Present:

Peter Delaney
Doug Green, Chair
Richard Kasper
Kris Roberts, Councilor

Others Present:

Weston Liu, New England Aerobatics
Club
Ferrell Woods, New England Aerobatic
Club

City Manager John MacLean administered the Oath of Office to Bill Hutwelker and Kevin Provost as new members of the Airport Advisory Commission.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Dexter called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM, as acting Chair in the absence of Doug Green.

2. Approval of Minutes – December 19, 2014

Mr. Bergevin made a motion to approve the minutes of December 19, 2014. Mr. Provost seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Dexter stated that he is changing the order of the agenda to swap items 3 and 4.

3. Request to Use City Property – New England Aerobatic Club

Mr. Mattern welcomed Weston Liu and Ferrell Woods of the New England Aerobatic Club (NEAC). He continued that the NEAC has been using the airport for practice sessions for a number of years and is once again requesting permission from the City Council to do it again this year. He asked Mr. Liu and Mr. Woods to outline their request.

Weston Liu, from Nashua, distributed copies of the aerial photo that show area approved to fly aerobatics over and what the FAA considers the noise buffer. He explained that the NEAC does

aerobatics in Keene as practice for competition. During competitions they fly in front of a panel of judges. He distributed copies of the page from the rule book that shows what the Aerobatic Competition “box” is. The safety procedures are relatively easy to implement. He continued that NEAC members make sure they see folks that are not participating and make sure there are not conflicts. They try to fly four or five days a year in Keene, weather permitting. Last year it was two or three days. They coordinate with the Boston Center for Air Traffic Control and use the Notice To Airmen (NOTAM) system to make sure they maintain a high level of safety. Mr. Liu continued that the FAA did a noise analysis when processing the NEAC’s application and allowed the NEAC to fly as low as 500 feet during practice, but the NEAC asked it to be 1000 feet. Keene is a wonderful place to fly and the Bendels, of Monadnock Aviation, are great hosts. He thanks Keene for allowing the NEAC to practice here. NEAC members buy as much fuel as they can when they are here and he encourages members to stop here for fuel when they are on their way to other places.

Mr. Thompson asked what the ceiling is on the box. Mr. Liu replied 4,500 feet above the airport. He continued that in competition it is 3,500 above, to give a safety buffer. The City Manager asked why the NEAC does not fly out of Nashua. Mr. Liu replied that the Nashua airport is not wide enough for them to be able to fly over the box at the size they need. The City Manager asked if there are airports closer to Nashua that suit their needs. Mr. Liu replied that they fly at many airports in the region but they particularly like Keene and he encourages people to come here. Typically there are 12 to 15 pilots per day who come when the NEAC is practicing in Keene. The City Manager asked if all 12 to 15 aircrafts land to buy fuel in Keene. Mr. Liu replied yes. The City Manager asked if the NEAC pays any other fees to Keene. Mr. Liu replied no.

Chair Dexter asked if the NEAC is requesting five days. Mr. Liu replied yes, he proposes about five days total for May, June, July, and September or October. He continued that Ms. Bendel encouraged them to have a contest in Keene, one day in the fall. Ms. Bendel stated that the NEAC buys a significant amount of fuel, and sometimes NEAC members will rent a car from Keene or buy lunch. They are supporting local businesses. Also, Monadnock Aviation gets calls from people asking when the NEAC is coming so they can watch them practice.

Ed Appel of Green River Aviation stated that he has been here every day that the NEAC has been in Keene for the past three years. He continued that they only buy a little bit of fuel. There have been safety concerns from airport users, such as last year when a neighbor thought one of the planes was coming into her backyard. If NEAC pilots are having problems with their planes they take care of their planes themselves instead of coming to Green River Aviation for services. The biggest inconvenience is that the Green River Aviation instructor refuses to fly with students when NEAC is practicing here. He sees problems every time they come and does not want a rosy picture to be painted.

The City Manager stated that Mr. Mattern is aware of the safety issues and concerns from neighbors in Swanzey and Keene. He asked Mr. Mattern if he has alerted the NEAC that he will recommend the City not continue to have NEAC practice here. Mr. Mattern replied yes. He continued that the NEAC is great to work with and he has no issues with that, and he appreciates the activity and them buying fuel, but he has had a significant increase in complaints from airport

users and neighbors in particular. There have been complaints about the restrictions on touch and go's and weekend trainings curtailed by the NOTAM, and about the way pilots enter the aerobatic box by crossing the traffic pattern; people think that is unsafe. Most complaints are about noise. Neighbors feel their quality of life is reduced when the NEAC practice all day long on a nice day that the neighbors want to spend in their backyards, having picnics, etc. For the good of all of these people he cannot fully support the NEAC's request under its current format.

Mr. Bergevin stated that the NEAC has been coming for years and he suggests the Airport Director have a face to face meeting with them and go over the problems. He continued that they will never keep everyone happy. Some people complain about the noise, while others are not bothered by it, and others come down to the airport to watch the planes when they hear that they are here. The NEAC practicing here brings in revenue and people see the airport being used. They can make this work for five days a year.

Mr. Thompson stated that the AAC's function is to promote activity at the airport. He continued that aerobatics is an important part of flying airplanes. It is a dramatic event to those who are interested in aircraft, and this helps promote aviation. There are certain rules to follow and that needs to be discussed but he wants to see the NEAC's practices here continue. The AAC supporting NEAC's request to fly here is in line with the AAC's charge to promote aviation.

Ms. Bendel stated that NEAC pilots buy a significant amount of fuel, and sometimes come here for maintenance or to hangar their planes if they get stuck due to bad weather. She continued that she has observed that when there are problems it is typically due to people coming to Keene without having read the NOTAM and being unaware that the NEAC is practicing here. That is not the NEAC's fault.

Mr. Liu stated that today is the first time he has heard that a flight instructor would be intimidated by the NEAC's activity at the airport. He continued that regarding touch and go's, it is okay if someone wants to practice and land, stop, take a look around, and then go. In the NOTAM the FAA requires them to use standard words and abbreviations that may make it look more intimidating than intended. He hopes people do not think they have to stay home just because there is something different happening on the other side of the airport. He and NEAC members would be happy to talk with the flight instructor and have him educate the NEAC on the needs of the students he is working with.

Mr. Bergevin made a motion for the AAC to recommend to the City Council and City Manager that they grant the request by the New England Aerobatics Club to use the Dillant-Hopkins Airport. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion.

Mr. Appel asked the AAC to wait until there are nine AAC members because four are absent today. He continued to speak directly to members of the AAC without being recognized by the Chair. As a point of order was being called, Mr. Appel left the meeting.

Mr. Hutwelker made a motion to amend the motion to also recommend that the Airport Director meet with the New England Aerobatic Club to discuss ways to address the concerns that have been raised. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion to amend.

Mr. Mattern stated that typically when the request goes to the City Council it is for the issuance of a revocable license and indemnification agreement. He continued that typically, having all such issues addressed with staff is a condition of the permit. What Mr. Hutwelker is proposing in the amendment is already done as a point of order. He would be happy to do this.

(Amended motion: Move that the AAC recommends to the City Council and City Manager that they grant the request by the New England Aerobatics Club to use the Dillant-Hopkins Airport and that the Airport Director meet with the Club to discuss ways to address concerns that have been raised.)

The motion to amend passed by unanimous vote.

Chair Dexter stated that in a perfect world the NEAC would have their own airport and airplanes would not make noise and instructors would have their own airport, too, but this is a community airport and they have to work together. He continued that he hopes all parties can find a way to coexist.

The motion, as amended, passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Bergevin asked Chair Dexter if Doug Green's term on the commission has expired. Chair Dexter replied yes, as of December 2014, same as Mr. Bergevin's, but they stay on the commission until they are replaced by new members. The City Manager replied that that is correct. Mr. Bergevin asked if Mr. Dexter is now the chair indefinitely. Mr. Mattern replied that the ordinance requires that the chair be a resident of Keene, so yes, it is Mr. Dexter almost by default. He continued that they should have made that more formal.

Mr. Liu asked about meeting with Mr. Mattern. Mr. Mattern replied that the AAC's recommendation will be moved forward to the Planning, Licenses, and Development (PLD) Committee, and the PLD Committee will make a recommendation to the full City Council. He continued that it is the City Council's authority to grant the request or not. NEAC members are welcome to attend the PLD Committee meeting; he will email Mr. Liu the schedule.

The City Manager stated that Mr. Mattern has not recommended approval of the NEAC's request and may make a different recommendation than the AAC's. He continued that Mr. Mattern will meet with Mr. Liu to talk about options to alleviate concerns, but it may still turn out that his professional opinion ends up being different than the AAC's recommendation. The AAC needs to understand this and not think that Mr. Mattern is not acting in good faith if he differs in his opinion.

Mr. Woods stated that he and Mr. Liu would invite the flight instructor from Green River Aviation to come speak with them, see what the NEAC is doing and how, etc., to see if that addresses his concerns. He continued that students can come, too – maybe some would take in interest in aerobatics in the future.

The City Manager stated that if Mr. Liu, Mr. Woods, or other NEAC members are interested in the Keene airport, he invites them to bring their planes here and be full time members of this airport community. Mr. Woods and Mr. Liu thanked the City Manager for the invitation.

4. AAC Agenda Topics/Activities – Discussion

Mr. Mattern stated that last month he and some AAC members had an informal discussion of potential topics for this group, interests, projects that this group could help with, and so on and so forth. He continued that he put together a quick list of possibilities, and he is willing to hear ideas for additions. He would like the AAC to discuss how to prioritize this list. The City Manager stated that Mr. Mattern did a good job with the list. He continued that the two new members could give ideas, too.

Mr. Mattern showed the list on an easel. He stated that he will ask each AAC member to put a sticker on the five items they think are most important or that the AAC should focus on first. Mr. Bergevin asked if they can take the list home and think about it, and choose the five priorities next month. Mr. Mattern replied yes, there is no deadline; this is just to start the discussion. He continued that some items require explanation.

Chair Dexter asked Mr. Mattern to briefly explain the items on the list and then they will take Mr. Bergevin's suggestion and look it over at home, individually, choosing their top five. At the next meeting everyone can share their top five to see where the group is at.

Mr. Mattern went through the items on the list, such as marketing initiatives (brochure tune-up, marketing materials to try and recruit people to base their aircraft here, etc.), a directory at the entrance to the parking lot to be more welcoming, minimum standards review (an extensive process that has not been done in 10 or 12 years), presentations by various people, the role of the AAC (How has the AAC changed over the years, and is it serving the needs?), community liaisons or ambassadors (AAC members could be "cheerleaders" for the airport), and field trips. Also on the list are CIP budget preparation, agenda preparation, Master Plan Update project, creation of the Airport Operating Handbook, outreach programs/open house events, and hosting a traveling art exhibit on aviation.

The City Manager suggested involving and including Monadnock Aviation and Green River Aviation in this exercise. He continued that it seems important to have more of a partnership relationship with the FBOs and this is where they could encourage that partnership. They could perhaps even allow a representative from the FBOs to talk about what agenda they want to see. There is more than one way to look at it. He could look at it as, how can they retain their current businesses, and second, how can they get more business down here? This needs to be a vital and exciting place. He asked if anyone objects to having the FBOs participate. Chair Dexter and Mr. Thompson replied that they encourage their participation. Mr. Hutwelker replied that he agrees, as long as there is a sense of protocol, with respectful, open dialogue.

5. Airport Master Plan Update – Project Update – Airport Director

Mr. Mattern reported that last night the Mayor appointed an Ad Hoc Planning Advisory Committee. He continued that members include himself, Mike Welsh, Bill Hutwelker, Bob Bergevin, Dr. Ann Shedd, Rhett Lamb, Councilor Janice Manwaring, Jack Dugan, Phil Suter,

Bill Summers, Beth Bendel, and Joe Briggs. They are looking forward to scheduling the first meeting. The primary focus of this update is to focus in on that piece of getting the public's input. They want to encourage the public's participation to a greater extent than they ever have in the past. The meetings are public. He encourages anyone who is interested to attend.

6. Project Updates – Airport Director

Mr. Mattern stated that Mr. Hutwelker has been actively trying to find a tenant. Mr. Hutwelker replied that George Foskett, on behalf of Masiello, is working on this, too. He continued that they are compiling a marketing packet to mail out to other airport restaurants to get ideas from them. The biggest problem is all the vacancy already existing. There are five open slots from here to Troy. They keep hearing "There's not enough traffic" – the more activity people can see that the airport has, the more likely restaurants are to come forward. It is great working with Mr. Mattern. He continued that he has had a good experience working with the City of Keene. The process has been streamlined so there will not be any stumbling blocks to bringing a tenant here. They are in a good position; they just have to provide an opportunity that is lacking, due to traffic. The restaurant is startup, ready to go.

Chair Dexter asked if any consideration has been given, in the interim, to bringing in Keene's or Swanzey's Culinary Arts programs to do a meal on the weekends. Mr. Hutwelker replied that they are open to encouraging that if that is okay with the City, but no, that has not been a discussion. The City Manager replied that it is up to the City Council, but to him, it sounds like something the City would consider.

Mr. Thompson stated that he suggested earlier that they make this room available to organizations in town, like the Lion's Club and the Chamber of Commerce. They are always looking for meeting space. If someone could cater their breakfast, for example, it would be a great way to get business leaders from the community into the airport.

Mike Moriarty suggested approaching already-existing restaurants in the area and enticing them to move to the airport by giving them a better deal. Mr. Hutwelker replied yes, that is part of their approach – encouraging existing restaurants to move here or open a second restaurant here.

Mr. Mattern reported that regarding the Request for Proposals (RFP) for leasing the City-owned hangar and administrative building, the City Council voted last night to reject the current process and start over, due to the confusion over the deadline. He continued that the City will be preparing another RFP, making adjustments to the process, and issuing it in the near future.

Mr. Mattern stated that he is happy to give the new members a more in-depth briefing and take them on a tour of the airport at their convenience. The City Manager replied that he strongly encourages them to take the orientation tour – it is important for them to understand the airport.

7. Announcements

Ms. Bendel reported that two Monadnock Aviation students are about to finish up their pilots' licenses, as the first two people to complete the Out of the Blue scholarship program. She continued that Monadnock Aviation was one of two flight schools in NH that were awarded participation in that. The scholarship pays \$3,000 towards the training and license. This is a

great way to encourage people to fly. The City Manager suggested that Ms. Bendel submit something to the Chamber of Commerce bulletin about this, and advertise it on the airport's website as well.

Mr. Thompson stated that something that has been missing from people's awareness is that this is the Dillant-Hopkins airport. He continued that much of what the airport is due to the fact that those two men performed significant activity in the military for the benefit of the country. Their names should not just hang out there; their stories should be part of what the AAC is telling the public, regarding the importance of the airport. The City Manager replied that that sounds great, and maybe they could have Dillant Hopkins Day. Ms. Bendel replied that she thinks they perished at Pearl Harbor, so they could ask the Civil Air Control to do a flag ceremony on Pearl Harbor Day. Chair Dexter agreed that that would be an excellent thing to do. Mr. Bergevin suggested having military aircraft come here, like they did in the past, as part of an open house event. Brief discussion ensued about who this could be and how it could work. Mr. Moriarty spoke positively about the Collins Foundation coming here and how well they were received.

Chair Dexter stated that two months ago the commission voted unanimously to ask the Mayor to appoint an interim City Council to the commission. He asked for an update. Mr. Mattern replied that he forwarded that on and to his knowledge the Mayor is still considering it. Chair Dexter asked how Councilor Roberts is doing. The City Manager replied that he has had a setback but he does not know how serious. He continued that Councilor Roberts enjoys this committee and it would be nice to have him back.

8. Adjournment

Chair Dexter welcomed Mr. Hutwelker and Mr. Provost to the committee. He adjourned the meeting at 9:35 AM.

Mr. Hutwelker stated that before they adjourn he wants to talk about the protocol with the meeting between Mr. Mattern and the NEAC, and the City Council meeting with the NEAC's request for the five training dates. He continued that he does not want the commission and the Airport Director to be on opposing sides. He wanted the meeting between Mr. Mattern and the NEAC to happen before the request goes to the PLD Committee, to see if the concerns can be addressed. Mr. Mattern replied yes, he can meet with them before this moves on to the PLD Committee, since the first date the NEAC is looking for is not until May.

The City Manager stated that Mr. Mattern has been very involved with the surrounding neighborhoods, due to the obstruction clearing project. He continued that he has received a lot of feedback from the neighbors and they have been very specific about the NEAC. Mr. Mattern has to think about what is in the City's long-term best interest. The City Manager continued speaking about the neighbors' feedback and perspectives. He concluded that for the obstruction clearing project, which the neighbors are already concerned about, the City will need aviation easements with these neighbors, and thus needs good relationships with them. This might be more important than allowing the NEAC to come here for five days.

Airport Advisory Commission meeting minutes,
February 20, 2015

Ms. Bendel spoke about how she is trying to run a business here, and the NEAC are her customers, and they do buy a significant amount of fuel and spend money in Keene. Eliminating 20 pilots from coming 5 days a year is significant.

Mr. Thompson spoke of the need for activity at the airport, including fly-ins. He continued that there will always be complaints from neighbors but this is an airport, with aviation activity. The City Manager replied that if this one activity is causing a problem for surrounding neighborhoods they cannot ignore that. Discussion continued between Mr. Thompson and the City Manager.

Ms. Bendel suggested inviting a citizen from Edgewood to join the AAC. The City Manager replied that the neighbors are not voicing concerns about noise from every aviation activity – just this one group. He continued that he and Mr. Mattern do talk with the neighbors and listen to them. Mr. Mattern needs to be free to make his professional recommendation, and it might not be the one that the AAC is making.

Mr. Bergevin expressed appreciation for the City Manager's presence at this meeting. He stated that his mother lives in a house at the end of the runway and has no problem with the airport or its noise. He expressed his thoughts about the neighbors who are upset about the obstruction clearing project.

The City Manager spoke of how there are two sides to every story, and of the need to think of the whole City. He continued that he encourages Mr. Mattern to be upfront with the AAC about what he talks about with the neighbors and what is going on. The AAC did the right thing by recommending that he speak with the NEAC to see if they can alleviate the concerns. It may or may not work and Mr. Mattern will recommend what he needs to.

Discussion continued. Chair Dexter spoke of the need for compromise. The City Manager asked if he will be part of the meeting with Mr. Mattern and the gentlemen from the NEAC. Chair Dexter replied yes.

Mr. Thompson spoke of how busy this airport was in years past, compared to the lack of activity now. The City Manager suggested having an agenda item about what has happened to general aviation, and how the situation in Keene compares to the situations at other airports.

Chair Dexter adjourned the meeting at 9:53 AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker

Edited by
Ed Mattern, Airport Director