

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Friday, March 20, 2015

8:30 am

Airport Terminal Building

Members Present:

Doug Green, Chair
Clark Dexter
Robert Bergevin
Rod Thompson
Kevin Provost

Staff Present:

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

Members Not Present:

Peter Delaney
Bill Hutwelker
Richard Kasper
Kris Roberts, Councilor

Others Present:

1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of Minutes – February 20, 2015

Mr. Bergevin made a motion to approve the minutes of February 20, 2015. Mr. Dexter seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3. Request To Use City Property – Cheshire County Sheriff's Office

Mr. Mattern stated that the City operates a number of beacons to mark hazards around the airport. He continued that these are located at various positions in Marlboro, Keene, Roxbury, and Swanzey. The Cheshire County Sheriff's Office wants to add an antenna to the Mount Caesar beacon. Arlene Crowell is here to speak to that.

Arlene Crowell showed a photo of the beacon light on Mount Caesar, and stated that it is an ideal location, one of the highest places in Swanzey. She continued that putting an antenna there would be a great improvement regarding the dead spots. It would also pave the way for Fire to get up there. They propose putting a generator there to run the beacon as emergency backup. They need to keep public safety backed up all the time. They did complete and file the FAA Form 7460, "Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration". They are communicating back and forth with the FAA coordinator to make sure there is no hazard. They are in the third

communication clarification option. If they found a hazard they could not continue but it looks good to the FAA.

Mr. Mattern stated that the 7460 is required whenever you are proposing construction in the airport area. He explained that the FAA evaluates the proposal to determine if there is any impact (e.g. with radio frequencies), and they either approve the proposal or give instructions on what to do in order to get approval. The County would apply for grant funds for this. The emergency generator would power the beacon when the electricity is unavailable. The City does not have that now and it would be good to have.

Mr. Mattern asked for a cost estimate. Ms. Crowell replied that the County received \$50,000 for this project from Vermont Yankee. Chair Green asked if the antenna would just be for radio communication. Ms. Crowell replied yes. Chair Green asked other questions, which Ms. Crowell answered. Mr. Moriarty spoke to the benefits of the antenna. Chair Green asked if the antenna would be above the beacon. Ms. Crowell replied below.

Mr. Bergevin made a motion for the Airport Advisory Commission to recommend granting the Cheshire County Sheriff's Office request to use the Mount Caesar beacon/tower for the placement of a communications antenna. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion.

The City Manager asked if the City would own the generator. Ms. Crowell replied no; the City would not need to take on that burden. Chair Green asked if would be on a concrete slab, something that you unlock to start up. Ms. Crowell replied that it would be on a transfer switch – it has to be automatic. The City Manager asked if the County would be checking the generator on a regular basis. Ms. Crowell replied yes. The City Manager asked if this requires an agreement with the City. Mr. Mattern replied yes. The City Manager asked if it requires an agreement with Swanzey. Ms. Crowell replied that the Swanzey Selectmen already authorized putting the generator on their property. Mr. Mattern stated that the City has easements for the beacon, which is on Swanzey property.

The motion passed by a unanimous vote.

3. Request to Use City Property – Eversource Energy

Mr. Mattern reported that they have been having discussions with Eversource regarding emergency response. He continued that Eversource seeks places to stage equipment during emergencies like ice storms or hurricanes. They have used the airport in the past and want to formalize that agreement so they can do more appropriate long term planning on how to respond to an incident. They have been giving the City preliminary drawings. None would have an impact on airport operations. They want to use surplus property in the field and parking lot. If they were ever called to use the site they hope there would be a restaurant to give food service – otherwise, they would put up a food tent for the emergency responders. A benefit to the airport would be that Eversource would restore airport power as quickly as possible. Mr. Mattern continued that he hopes someone from Eversource can come to the next AAC meeting to give more information.

The City Manager asked if the area would be used exclusively for Eversource's purposes, and if this would require a license. Mr. Mattern replied that they would recommend the Planning, Licensing, and Development (PLD) Committee give Eversource a license, containing parameters they feel are appropriate, and information about insurance, coordination, and how they would make use of the license. The City Manager stated that Eversource would be tying the property up preventing future uses. He asked if that warrants a discussion about income. Mr. Mattern replied that the areas they want to use are not developable relative to their location to the approach and could not be leased out to others. He continued that if the area were to be used for another purpose Eversource would not use it. They want surplus space. The City Manager replied that this is an opportunity to explore – the airport could use more revenue, although this would not be large revenue. He continued that Eversource's use of the space would have to be subordinate to the US government's right to use it (as the US government always has the first right), and after that, subordinate to the uses the City might make of the property. The space has diminished value but still value. He asked if Mr. Mattern has talked with Eversource about contributing to the airport. Mr. Mattern replied no.

Chair Green asked if Eversource would be using the space for emergencies only and would not have anything permanent. Mr. Mattern replied it would be temporary space for crews coming from afar to help with emergencies. He continued that local crews have their own base of operation. Chair Green asked clarifying questions about the location and parking. He asked if the FAA and DOT would approve parking temporarily or permanently. Mr. Mattern replied that it is on a case by case basis, and they would make a determination. Mr. Thompson asked what it would look like. Mr. Mattern reiterated that there would be no buildings or equipment storage; everything would be temporary and go away as soon as the emergency was over.

Chair Green asked if this is just informational for today, and if they can expect someone from Eversource Energy to come to the next meeting. Mr. Mattern replied yes.

4. Continued Discussion – AAC Agenda Topics/Activities

Mr. Mattern showed the list of topics, which he would like the AAC to choose priorities from. He continued that they can add new topics as well. He briefly explained each item on the list.

The City Manager stated that City staff should be talking with the AAC about the operating budget and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He continued that there are millions of dollars' worth of grants and expenditures coming up regarding the airport. They should have more conversation so the AAC is at least aware. They also need to talk about the decreased business at the airport, and get creative and figure out how to resurrect it. Also, recently the AAC members were split in their opinions regarding a recent difficult RFP process – they need to work it out and have one voice. There are many issues for the AAC to focus on.

Mr. Bergevin stated that nothing used to start at this airport unless it started with the AAC, and the AAC's authority has slowly dwindled away. He continued that he asked why and never got a good answer. He thinks the priority topic is the role of the AAC. In years past, members were always busy with something to do. They need to know what their role is and then do something.

Mr. Thompson stated that it is unclear to him why he is here and what the function of the AAC is. He continued that he was not given a handbook or anything written about the AAC's role. There is nothing they have been charged with, nothing they have the responsibility to complete. They vote on things but their votes do not carry weight. He wants to know what is expected of him as a member.

The City Manager asked if he means he has never had an orientation. Mr. Thompson replied yes, all he did was take the oath. Chair Green asked if Mr. Thompson and Mr. Bergevin want the AAC to have more authority, or if they want to be informed and advised so they can be more knowledgeable with making recommendations. Mr. Thompson replied that he wants to know what exists now as the AAC's responsibilities. He continued that if they are only here to pass things through and speak to the value of whatever the subject is, they have no strength and no say in what is happening. If they had the ability to initiate or affect things in some way that would be a big help. Just advising the City Manager and Airport Director does not seem to be doing anything. The City Manager replied that he is here now, committing to attending these meetings. Chair Green replied that the City Manager's presence is a very positive thing. He continued that it is important for the members of the AAC to see that he is taking this seriously and is interested.

Mr. Bergevin stated that he has been on and off the AAC for twenty years and has seen a lot of changes made. He continued that any recommendations they made in the past went directly to the City Council, and the AAC used to have a lot of clout. Members were very familiar with the airport and they were listened to. The City Manager replied that he is committed to attending these meeting for the coming year. When former Mike Blastos was the Mayor he (City Manager) stepped back because Mayor Blastos wanted to be an active participant with regard to the AAC. Mayor Lane is great but has not been able to focus on the airport because of his commitments to other City boards – the Planning Board in particular. The City Manager continued that he is happy to be here now. He feels a special relationship with this commission. It is the only one that says “advises the City Manager” as part of their charge. He wants to participate but not overly influence the commission. He will lend his expertise anytime the AAC wants it. His take is not that the AAC is not important; they just have not had the level of agenda and activity to jump start this group. That is why they are here. They want to jump start the AAC, rejuvenate it. If the AAC is giving advice on politics the City Council may or may not take that advice. The City Council has to have the last say. He does not think it has happened often where the City Council has gone a different direction than the AAC. The AAC can weigh in on the CIP or the operating budget, which Mr. Mattern puts together but the AAC has not seen lately. They should talk about it – what personnel works on, and where the dollars are going. The AAC needs to understand what Mr. Mattern is trying to accomplish and see if the AAC and Mr. Mattern are aligned.

Mr. Moriarty asked if this is the only AAC presence, or if there is AAC presence at other meetings. He continued that one person representing the AAC might not be enough. Chair Green replied that much of what they have here goes to City Council committees. He continued that AAC members do not often appear at those meetings. It might help for them to do so, so the City Council knows if the AAC feels strongly about an issue. The City Manager replied that Mr. Bergevin and Mr. Kasper have come to meetings. Mr. Bergevin replied that last time he was

clear that he was speaking for himself, not the AAC. He continued that it was the meeting about the RFP process and at first he agreed with the discussions and then it went a direction he did not agree with.

Chair Green stated that it is important to have a City Councilor on the AAC. He continued that he hopes Councilor Roberts can return to these meetings, as he is a real asset to this commission, but if he cannot, it is important to have another Councilor here. The City Manager replied that Councilor Roberts desires to stay on. He continued that he understands Mr. Bergevin's frustration and thinks he never got a good explanation about what happened with the RFP. If the AAC sends a recommendation and it is not perceived to be incorporated into doing business the AAC deserves an explanation as to why and what happened, so the AAC is not perceived to be impotent. He would be happy to talk with Mr. Bergevin about what happened with the RFP process, at another time, to explain.

Mr. Bergevin stated that they need to know the role of the AAC, and they need to focus on marketing. He continued that he has seen activity dwindle but he thinks it can be better. The airport is an asset to the City of Keene. There is some negative publicity but it is only caused by a small handful of people. Most people in the area know this is a sleeping jewel. Chair Green replied that it is important for the AAC to know its role; that is the foundation for all that they do. He continued that he agrees that marketing is #2, because a lot of the other topics and activities flow from that. The pilot population is aging out and it is getting too expensive for younger people to join, many times. They have talked for years about trying to attract corporate business aircraft. Someone spent money doing the study on the feasibility of making this a hub for corporate aircraft. Some exciting things, historically, are not around anymore. They had the Essential Air Service (EAS), and the fuel farm controversy, and the regional carriers that came and went. Some of the things the AAC had meaningful input into in the past have just gone away. Marketing will drive a lot of these other topics. They have \$5,000 for marketing, which they have never utilized. The only person on the commission in his tenure who had marketing capabilities has left. They should try to get someone on the commission with marketing expertise or use some of the money to get a consultant to provide them with guidance.

The City Manager stated that Bill Hutwelker has marketing knowledge and others might have marketing experience and knowledge that he is unaware of. He continued that they have a natural partner in Monadnock Aviation. He has watched Beth Bendel try hard to market this airport over the years. They could create more of a partnership with her. There are many issues under the heading of "Marketing" – does the terminal building need to be completely re-thought? Maybe the restaurant is secondary to other uses. Maybe they could have offices and other businesses, instead of struggling to get a restaurant. He agrees that the priorities are the role of the AAC and marketing. They should bring Ms. Bendel in and extend an invitation to Ed Appel.

Chair Green agreed. He continued that the Bendel's have done a lot and have been the sole marketers of the airport. Mr. Bergevin stated that they are lucky to have Monadnock Aviation, and if they could get Ms. Bendel to help the AAC with marketing, that would be great. She writes a great newsletter each month – it has so much going on. The City Manager stated that they could have community events here and also focus on getting more business here. The

neighbors might be vocal about that, but this airport needs more use; they have not reached critical mass.

Mr. Moriarty replied that he agrees with the priorities. He continued that they need to look at the basics first. He is here every day, and he thinks about it all the time. He thinks a lot about marketing, in reference to the terminal. What are they trying to market? It is chicken versus egg. The building needs to be marketable before they try to market it.

Mr. Thompson stated that when he first came to the airport (in 1985) it was jumping. He continued that it was a pleasure to be here. All of that was done long before the renovations took place in this terminal. He remembers when commercial airlines were here and the baggage areas were busy, and he knows they are not coming back. Back then you had to wait in line to take off. When they have something to offer the public they should overhaul what is here so that people are comfortable here, with their needs satisfied. For now, this is an attractive place but not ideal. Why spend money on a terminal building like this? It is not a priority to him. Once the terminal is renovated, how does that benefit the airport? Who will be coming in here just because they have renovated it? Mr. Moriarty replied that the space would be more universal. They could have conferences here. The City Manager replied yes, they will get into those details later.

Chair Green stated that this is a good discussion that needs to continue. He continued that he agrees with what the City Manager said. They should do everything they can to work with Ms. Bendel, Mr. Appel, and anyone else with an economic stake here; they put out a lot of their own money to be here at the airport. He spoke of the excitement of air shows. Mr. Bergevin spoke of previous activities here, such as cookouts, Christmas parties, speakers, and a balloon fest. He continued that sometimes you would have to wait in line with five or six aircraft ahead of you.

Chair Green asked members to come back to the next meeting with one idea for marketing the airport. The City Manager asked that it be broken into two categories – public relations, and marketing to the general aviation community. Embedded within those two components is what Mr. Moriarty was saying – it matters how things look. They will come back to that.

5. Update – New England Aerobatic Club (NEAC) Request to Use City Property

Mr. Mattern reported that he, Chair Green, and Mr. Clark met with representatives from the NEAC, regarding their request to use the airport. He continued that they talked about the issues that the City was facing relative to the obstruction clearing project. The NEAC was appreciative of the City's needs and came up with alterations to their plan to address concerns. They offered to not fly on Sundays, and not before 10:00 AM on the Saturday that they do fly, and to invite the general public to the safety briefing on the days that they fly so the neighbors have a better understanding. They recommended raising the floor of the aerobatic box and flying in the southern portion of it to be a little further away from the neighborhood. He was appreciative of their willingness to do those things. The issue will go before the PLD Committee next Wednesday. He forwarded a summary to the neighbors and the minutes of the last meeting, and he thinks some neighbors will come to the PLD Committee meeting. AAC members are encouraged to come as well.

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Chair Green stated that they talked a little about the box, about moving it further but there were obstructions. Mr. Mattern replied that the NEAC pilots are judged on their practice sessions and the judges have to be able to see them. He continued that maybe they could get the judges closer to the runway so that is not an issue. Chair Green stated that it was a good, constructive meeting; the NEAC is trying to accommodate the City's concerns. They expressed that the AAC is in favor of this. Next week is important.

Mr. Dexter asked if, given the concessions that the NEAC made, that changes Mr. Mattern's opinion on the NEAC's request. Mr. Mattern replied that it was important to maintain a good relationship with the Edgewood neighbors. Addressing their concerns through these operational changes makes sense. He continued that if the City Council granted the permission with these conditions he would feel better because the neighbors are getting consideration.

Mr. Thompson stated that everything they do here is promoting aviation. Everything that improves the airport will make more noise. He asked if everything they do is going to be subject to what a few homeowners feel is annoying. Mr. Mattern replied that the neighbors do not necessarily have veto power over any project. That resides with the City Council. He continued that the obstruction clearing project is very important with regard to the safe operation of the airport. Having clear approaches is necessary under any circumstances. One component of the project is the Environmental Assessment, which involves asking people how the project impacts people's lives, such as noise and air quality. They are in the middle of doing that. They need to make sure they give the neighbors ample time to be heard and that their opinions are considered. They do have standing to express their opinion. They are residents of the City of Keene and they support the City budget. The question is whether theirs is the majority opinion. The City Council ultimately decides. Neighbors and AAC members can talk with the City Council equally. Mr. Mattern continued that he supports aviation and the airport, of course, and part of making sure that they can justify their own existence here and make the most of this asset is all of these ancillary pieces that are happening as well. They cannot focus just on marketing the airport without making sure they have clear and safe approaches.

Chair Green stated that the AAC has been clear that they support the NEAC's activity at the airport, and the will of the AAC was for Mr. Mattern to meet with representatives from the NEAC to see if there can be some accommodation to address neighbors' concerns. He continued that it seems like the things that were discussed address the concerns and allow them to go forward and use the airport as an airport with the aviation activities that go along with that. The airport is for the good of the whole city and region. There will always be naysayers. The obstruction clearing is a legal issue and a safety issue. If there is an issue that comes up it will be vetted out in the proper forum. In terms of the NEAC's proposed activity, reasonable compromises have been agreed to and he strongly urges the PLD Committee and the City Council to approve the request with those modifications.

Mr. Bergevin made a motion for the AAC to recommend that the City Council approve the NEAC's request and go along with this new agreement.

The City Manager stated that they are on the right track. He continued that they listened to the neighbors' concerns, made modifications, and now Mr. Bergevin is recommending approval with

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those modifications. This shows that the AAC cares about the neighbors while recognizing that they have a job to do here.

Chair Green seconded the motion.

Mr. Bergevin asked how to get Mr. Mattern on board. Mr. Mattern replied that he is on board with the changes. He continued that his memo will say that originally, based on the neighbors' complaints about the NEAC's activity, he would not be recommending the NEAC's request be approved, but then he met with the NEAC (per the recommendation of the AAC) and they have agreed to a number of alterations to the way they would fly. He supports the changes, which do a lot to address the neighbors' concerns. Chair Green asked if Mr. Mattern, with the changes that were agreed to, supports this recommendation to the PLD Committee. Mr. Mattern replied yes. The City Manager clarified that when Mr. Mattern kept saying he would "recommend against" the NEAC's request, what he actually meant was that he could not recommend it, which is different. He continued that however, Mr. Mattern can now recommend it.

Chair Green encouraged the AAC to attend the PLD Committee meeting. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Chair noted that the meeting has run over time. He asked Mr. Mattern if there was anything on the agenda that could not wait until next month. Mr. Mattern skipped to item 9 on the agenda.

6. Airport Master Plan Update – Airport Director

Tabled.

7. Community Relations – Airport Director

Tabled.

8. Project Updates – Airport Director

Tabled.

9. Announcements

General Aviation Appreciation Month Proclamation

Mr. Mattern announced that this is General Aviation Appreciation Month and the Governor and Mayor have issued proclamations. He continued that he or someone else can accept it at the City Council meeting – the City Council would appreciate the AAC's presence at the meeting. The City Manager stated that he will let the AAC know when this is on the City Council's agenda, and encouraged everyone to come, and suggested Chair Green say a few words at the meeting.

Chair Green announced that the next meeting is April 17, 2015, but he will not be present.

AWOS Repair Outage

Tabled.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:46 AM.

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Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker

Edited by
Ed Mattern, Airport Director