

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Friday, October 20, 2017

8:30 AM

Dillant-Hopkins Airport Terminal

Members Present:

Clark Dexter, Chair
Fred Haap
Bob Bergevin
Joe Bendzinski
Councilor Robert Sutherland
Peter Delaney
Bill Hutwelker

Staff Present:

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Jack Wozmak, Airport Manager
Mike Moriarty, Airport Operations Manager
Ben Albert, Airport Operations

Monadnock Aviation:

Beth Bendel, FBO

Members Not Present:

Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Rodney Thompson

1) Call to Order

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

2) Approval of Minutes – September 15, 2017

Mr. Haap made a motion to approve the minutes of September 15, 2017, which was seconded by Mr. Bendzinski and carried unanimously.

3) Airport Manager's Report

a. Updates on:

- i. Marketing PR**
- ii. Website Development**
- iii. Renovation of Baggage Area**
- iv. New Hangar Projects**

Mr. Wozmak provided the following report:

1. The discussion regarding some type of scheduled air service continues (post Cape Air) with Tradewinds Aviation. He will have a conference call with the owners of Tradewinds within the next few weeks and our new engineer of record, Dubois & King, will participate. The discussion ended with Cape Air because Keene is not a severely underserved airport at this time; their operations rely on subsidies from underserved airports. Tradewinds has the potential to provide similar

responsive service and travel needs in this region; he thinks there is still an option for regular service responsive to normal business travel.

Councilor Sutherland said Cape Air is mostly seasonal out of New England; he also thinks the Rutland Airport is federally subsidized. Mr. Wozmak said Tradewinds is a charter company; he hopes to develop data to illustrate the volume of movement in and out of Keene that they could acquire. There is an economical argument for them coming to Keene more frequently. Mr. Wozmak has had sporadic discussions over time with the Chamber of Commerce on regional travel, with little progress. He has also reached out to individual companies, which is more labor intensive. He is trying to find a better way to leverage larger conversations and he will continue trying to work with the Chamber. He thinks variable air service is needed here for people who are taking limos or busses. Mr. Delaney asked the mechanism for getting federal subsidies and noted there used to be subsidies for the Keene airport. Mr. Wozmak does not think the airport applies for subsidies but rather is a part of the supportive conversation that shows an acute transportation problem in Keene. Mr. Delaney said Thomas Transportation is doing well and not federally subsidized. Mr. Wozmak replied the data has to be compiled to demonstrate an acute transportation problem; every airline in Keene has left when subsidies were eliminated. Councilor Sutherland said the one thing Keene cannot change is the fog; we can articulate a need here but if flights must continually be cancelled, it is hard to maintain business. Mr. Wozmak thinks the weather is a minor issue as many airports have fog; the differences here that ISL minimums are a function of back-taxiing on the runway and trees. If Taxiway A could be extended to the end of runway 02, back-taxiing would not be necessary and the minimums could be lowered. Fog may occasionally delay landing but it does not delay take off. Councilor Sutherland said his understanding was that weather related take-off delays prohibit travelers from making their connecting flights at other airports. Mr. Wozmak replied that using a charter or fractional jet can allow travelers to avoid commercial airlines and increases the number of airports you can land at. He needs to make an economic argument to fly charter instead of commercial. If he can convince five companies that ownership of a fractional jet will allow them do more business, make more money, and avoid travel delays. Mr. Wozmak said this is of continuing interest to him but it is hard to identify the economic development interests of the Chamber. The City Manager said she recently had a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and specifically talked about finding ways to promote the airport. She and Mr. Wozmak will continue conversations about how best to do that. Mr. Wozmak said her support will help to build this conversation; he thinks it is great the City has an economic development plan but it is unclear what will be done with it. Councilor Sutherland and the City Manager agreed things are happening with that plan, just slowly.

2. Norton Air LLC is renovating the hangar previously owned by the Thomas' and he replaced/repared the roof and poured a new concrete floor. A new hangar door is ordered. The owners found an underground storage tank they will pump out with the help of NH DES.
3. The study to evaluate the best location for the automated weather observation system (AWOS) is ready to go but is delayed pending the outcome of FAA

budget discussions. This study is critical to the master plan project of extending Taxiway A. The delay is expected to be temporary. This discussion is important now because the taxiway cannot be extended until the new AWOS location is determined. NH DOT and the FAA will meet on October 27 to hopefully find a solution; if there is a funding delay for that study, extending the taxiway will be pushed another year.

Councilor Sutherland asked if the taxiway extension is needed. Mr. Wozmak replied yes, it is a safety issue that needs to be done regardless but will also hopefully help to lower minimums.

4. We have renewed discussions with the Department of Safety regarding CDL examinations on airport property. We may be moving toward markings that will satisfy both DOT and FAA. Mr. Wozmak would like to extend the airports capacity for these exams because it would save local communities time and money driving to Concord for the exam. He thinks there is a preliminary agreement to place pins in the pavement to hold driving exams while not interfering with FAA markings.

Ms. Bendel asked where this will take place on airport property. Mr. Wozmak replied by the T-Hangars, not on primary airport property. Mr. Bergevin noted the testing area in Concord is small and asked why this cannot occur in the airport parking lot. Mr. Moriarty replied the Concord CDL training area is approximately the size of the entire Keene airport parking lot; however, he listed benefits of having CDL testing in Keene such as fuel sales. Mr. Wozmak noted there was also suggestion that DOT might fund additional pavement if they see the value.

5. We have engaged SWCA Environmental Associates to design a plan for airport mitigation and screening, incorporating conifers of various types with red maple, staggered to create a screen, which will grow over time but not exceed 50 feet in height. We are contemplating purchasing trees that are 8 to 10 feet tall. The landscape plan calls for approximately 128 trees, strategically placed. Once preliminarily approved by DOT/FAA, this plan will be submitted to the City Council for a public review process. Mr. Wozmak said the FAA obviously funds obstruction removal, but not landscaping. He is trying to turn aesthetic planting into something that looks more like mitigation; so far it is not going well. He hopes to have information soon to move this to Council and into the CIP for budget consideration. This has a broader timeline with planting likely not until next fall.
6. The Town of Swanzey contacted Mr. Wozmak asking him to write a letter to the Department of Environmental Services objecting to a recommendation by the state that the town reduce the Wilson Pond water level by two feet due to existing dam height and flooding concerns. He will evaluate the aviation safety issues regarding the use of the pond by planes to determine if lowering the level of the lake would create an aviation safety issue.

Mr. Hutwelker added that the pond level is already down 13in below normal and at least one stump is protruding; if they succeed in sandbagging the diversion dam at Branch River then water levels in the pond would reduce to a trickle permanently. Mr. Moriarty suggested that float planes scheduled to fly in should call him to check the water conditions. Mr. Wozmak said, according to the Sea Plane Association, a minimum of four feet of water is required to land and right now the average depth of the pond is five feet. Mr. Moriarty added that decreasing the water in Wilson Pond could also send more birds to water on airport land as well as beaver; Mr. Wozmak agreed a wildlife biologist may be needed to look into that.

7. The Wings of Freedom Tour was a popular event, with solid crowds on all three days. For \$3,200/hour, guests could go up in a P51; the plane flew more this time than previous events.
8. We remain at full occupancy in the T-Hangars.
9. Whip City Aviation is moving forward with their plans to construct a new hangar on vacant land just north of the former fire equipment building on the east side of the airport. The project is before the Swanzey Planning Board and the City Council has authorized the City Manager to execute a land lease for this new hangar. Mr. Wozmak is working with the engineers of record to determine placement details and he would not be surprised if they break ground this fall. The hangar will be roughly 60X60feet with a 10,000sf footprint. There has been discussion about letting the Swanzey Fire Department use the old fire equipment building while they are doing renovations and displaced for a few months. Mr. Moriarty noted critical snow removal equipment is kept in that building and a temporary location would have to be found for those things if the space is loaned.
10. We are working with Dubois & King to add Beacon Replacement to our capital improvement plan for next year, and subsequent years. Some beacons are old enough to receive federal/state funding. Mr. Wozmak would like to formalize maintenance of those beacons to be included in future CIPs. The airport has a regulatory obligation to make sure all beacons work properly; once four beacons are out at the airport, operations must be shut down. Beacon structures were replaced in the last few years, but not the beacons themselves. This discussion will continue.
11. We are working with Primex on a \$12,000 insurance claim for the vandalism of one beacon where the connector box was used as bullet practice and the copper wiring was stripped from the conduit.
12. In November we will publish an RFP for renovation of the bathrooms and handicap access ramps. There is currently money in the budget for this and Mr. Wozmak is planning for winter work to get the best contractor pricing. During construction there will be a bathroom trailer so there is a suitable place for all airport visitors to use.

Chair Dexter asked the status of the former baggage area. Mr. Wozmak replied he amended the lease to Monadnock Aviation and Ms. Bendel has executed a lease for the learning facility. There is heat in the classroom and Mr. Wozmak has spoken with the Director of Parks, Recreation & Facilities to extend air conditioning duct work and make

that room part of the central heat system. The new roof HVAC unit will be installed in November, adding capacity. There is some trim work left to do and the new lease is on its way to the City Manager for execution, but Ms. Bendel is welcome to begin using it at any time.

Chair Dexter recalled that last meeting there was a request for the airport to get involved with a KSC aviation program. He met with Dr. Gordon Lerversee who thinks it is a good idea but noted the college does not have money to begin such a program. Ms. Bendel also looked into opportunities to collaborate with the community colleges; she thinks it is a great opportunity and would benefit both students and her business. She has made some progress but was not yet ready to report. The conversation will continue.

4) FBO Announcements/Activities

Ms. Bendel reported she is also considering working with local high schools for a program on aviation. The Career Center already purchased seats at the ground school so people can begin to learn. There is a critical need for pilots nationwide and her business has career training to sell to those schools.

Ms. Bendel has many courses coming up. The private pilot ground school is 1/3 complete; there has been unprecedented attendance at ground schools over the last two years. There is another 12-week ground course beginning in January. There is also now an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) at the airport; this will be used to train local first responders for their unmanned aircraft licenses. She is expecting 20 people in the class from Keene and Swanzey and fire departments throughout the region.

October 21 was the last bar-be-que of the year followed by a safety seminar with a nationally recognized flight instructor.

She echoed Mr. Wozmak that the Wings of Freedom Tour was a great success; she thanked Mr. Moriarty and Mr. Albert for their work in preparing that event.

5) Airport Operations Report

Mr. Moriarty reported this time of year is the calm before the storm of winter. The grass has slowed down and they are working to check all equipment before winter. Checking and replacing beacons has been laborious and requires hiking over rough terrain; however, Mr. Albert doing this work himself has already saved the airport \$12,000. Wildlife control continues. Mr. Wozmak noted it is in the budget to finish fencing the airport property over a three-year period. He has also added money to the budget for a new brush mower for the airport; the more the brush is out of control the more difficulties there are with wildlife. C&S Grocers have identified wildlife as the single greatest safety concern at the airport; Mr. Delaney suggested C&S help fund the 5% of fencing not paid for by the state. Councilor Sutherland noted a problem with fencing is that once something gets in, it cannot get back out. Mr. Wozmak replied yes, wildlife sweeps occur multiple times per day; as the fencing is installed, simple escape routes will be included.

There is no other effective way to keep the wildlife out in addition to the more than 20 wildlife permits given out for hunting at the airport.

6) The Future of the AAC – member appointment by the Mayor, etc.

Due to lack of time, this matter will be discussed at the November meeting.

7) Next Meeting – November 17, 2017

8) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Dexter adjourned the meeting at 9:32 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker