

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 26, 2021

9:00 AM

Terminal Building
Dillant Hopkins Airport

Members Present:

Curt Hansen, Chair
Nathan Jacobs, Vice Chair
George S. Hansel, Mayor
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Brian Johnson – (Called in)
Richard Blood
Alona Florenz
Elizabeth Bendel
Bill Hutwelker

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Manager

Members Not Present:

Joe Bendzinski

1) Call to Order

Chair Hansen called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

New Business:

2) Adopt August Meeting Minutes

Mr. Blood made a motion to accept the minutes of August 24, 2021 as presented. Councilor Greenwald seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Hickling informed the committee that Peter Temple has been nominated for the open seat on the committee and would likely be joining the committee soon and that he looked forward to getting him approved, noting his presence would make them a full committee with only an open alternate spot to fill. He added that they are approaching the end of term for Chair and Vice Chair and encouraged individuals to come forward if interested.

3) Swanzy TIF Expansion/Airport Rd. Utilities

Mr. Hickling welcomed Michael Branley from the town of Swanzy who was present to discuss creating a TIF to be able to put utilities down Airport road. He mentioned the reason for this is because they have two parcels that are prime areas for development and would be more valuable and marketable if utilities were present.

Mr. Branley stated that the City of Keene has been a great partner for the Town of Swanzy, mentioning that they have discussed a TIF on several different occasions in the past 5 to 6 years, and would welcome reviewing again. He explained that for the Town of Swanzy the TIF district would have to be created by their annual town meeting, and would include a process of going before the Board of Selectmen and then it would be added to their warrant to be voted on. Mr. Branley went on to state that the TIF can be set up with bonding authority for improvements, or it could be set up to capture growth which could then fund improvements. He added that TIFs generally work better when there is a concrete development plan, to avoid one party bonding for the improvements and paying whether or not the development occurred. He recommended specific developers to determine what value of increase is needed to help cover the improvement costs, as well as having the timing coincide with Swanzy's annual town meeting. Lastly, Mr. Branley noted that a lot of the land they speak of is exempt, making matters a bit more complicated.

Mr. Hickling asked, if they develop on land that is currently exempt would it become taxable. Mr. Branley stated that it would.

Mr. Hickling reviewed that the Town of Swanzy is very supportive of development occurring and is willing to help; however, it is complex because the airport belongs to the City of Keene but is located in Swanzy. This means that if they develop, the City of Keene will obtain revenues through leases and such, but they wouldn't get revenue from the taxes, and vice versa for Swanzy.

Ms. Dragon asked about a timeline for the Town of Swanzy. Mr. Branley answered that they have to have the warrant finalized in early January and a deliberative session in February. Ms. Dragon suggested they could get the TIF established and begin to accumulate revenue and capture value right away, and could then go back in later on and amend the TIF district plan to finance the potential improvements. She added that this would avoid the Town of Swanzy taking a big risk with authorized bonding if the new revenue doesn't materialize. Mr. Branley felt that suggestion would be an easier sell than the bonding authority for development.

Mayor Hansel asked the cost of extending utilities down Airport Road. Mr. Hickling stated the last estimate was just under one million dollars for power, water and sewer.

Mr. Jacobs asked for clarification on the area/hangars they were referring to for development. Mr. Hickling stated he'd like to have the TIF run to the other side of the C&S hangar, noting that

a parcel beyond that is prime developable land for aeronautical use. There is additional land beyond that as well, however, there are some wetlands that would need to be avoided.

Ms. Dragon suggested they update the GIS map to better identify developable properties for aeronautical and non-aeronautical, and layer wetlands on the map as well. They could then set up a meeting with the Town of Swanzev to decide what the TIF will look like. Mr. Hickling added that he obtained some good examples of maps from other airports and plans to emulate those and add them to a landing page on their website. Ms. Bendel asked if there was an estimated timeline for adding this information to the website, noting that it's critical to development of the airport and knowing what they have to offer. Mr. Hickling stated he is hoping to get it done within the next couple of months and that the individual working on the map is currently very busy but has them on his radar.

Mr. Jacobs asked when the pilot agreement with Swanzev ends. Ms. Dragon stated it is an annual agreement but they also have some pieces of property where they calculate the taxes owed to Swanzev based on what was on the property at the time the airport obtained it.

4) New Hangar Development Opportunities

Mr. Hickling reported that the City has initiated discussions with Avenru Development for the construction of a new hangar. The first meeting went well and they are working on drafting a lease agreement. The development would likely begin next spring. Additionally, he stated that Monadnock Choppers is interested in building a new hangar off of Aviation Way. There are also two people interested in another parcel in between two other hangars, Monadnock Aviation being one of the parties interested. Mr. Hickling stated they will need to come up with a bid process as well as determine what size building can go on the land to follow code. Mr. Hickling summarized that there's a potential for 3 new hangars to go up. He added that it would be great to keep with the momentum and get the other parcels ready for development.

Old Business:

5) Capital Project Updates

Mr. Hickling reported that during their CIP meeting they moved the perimeter fence to top priority. He stated there are still some funding challenges with that project and they do have to make it a multi-year the project, with 2023 reserved for design and environmental permitting, and construction taking place the following year.

Additionally, he stated they moved the obstruction project and made that multi-year as well. He explained that this project will entail removing trees to allow for lower approaches. Mr. Hickling added that due to funding the process will be lengthy and take about 4 or 5 years. It would begin with an obstruction study followed by purchasing easements and then the actual obstruction removal would take place.

Ms. Dragon added that the City is in the process of going through their Capital Plan and realigning the airport projects for the FAA timeline. Additionally, they are going through tax map updates where they will do a fly over, and she has asked that there be coordination with the airport so they could potentially obtain obstruction information during that fly over.

Mr. Hickling next stated that the taxiway extension had been completed. He mentioned that the Weaver Brother Construction did a great job persisting through extreme challenges due to significant rainfall. He added that the reconstruction phase of the remaining taxiway will be done next spring because they ran out of time in the construction season by the time they got funding.

Lastly, he reported that the fuel farm project has been challenging due to several issues. Funds were awarded in June/July but supply chain issues have pushed the project back to next April. He added that there shouldn't be any increase to cost, they will just need to be patient with the timeline.

Mr. Jacobs asked if there would be an impact to selling fuel. Mr. Hickling stated there shouldn't be any impact and reported that they will get a fuel truck and expect tanks to be down for only a few days.

Mr. Hutwelker brought discussion back to establishing a TIF and then a bond afterwards. He stated it sounded like timing would have the project completed in 2022, and asked how they would then develop a TIF.

Ms. Dragon stated they would like to potentially establish the boundary of the TIF district by January, so when hangars are built in the spring the incremental value from the hangars would be deposited into the TIF district. They would then go back and revise the TIF district plan to authorize the bonding and use the accumulated funds for improvements.

Mr. Hutwelker asked how they would fund the installation of utilities prior to bonding. Ms. Dragon stated the hangars will be built regardless of the utility project, so they would be accumulating funds to build utilities later on, not prior to bonding.

Mr. Hutwelker asked for clarification on the hangars being referred to for fund accumulation. Mrs. Dragon stated it would be the 3 hangars Mr. Hickling mentioned earlier in the meeting. She explained that a TIF district works by establishing boundaries for the TIF and setting a base value at that time. She further explained that, as you see values increase, the increment is what gets preserved in the TIF district, which would be available for future projects.

Ms. Bendel stated that she believed Monadnock Chopper and Monadnock Aviation hangars are already in a TIF, noting that would mean only one hangar would be in the new TIF. Mr. Hickling stated he was unclear on that but that they would need to determine those details. Ms. Dragon agreed and stated they need to look at the maps to determine what's already in the other TIF district.

Mr. Hutwelker asked about timing in terms of defining and redefining boundaries. Ms. Dragon stated they will meet soon to get this all going, recognizing that it will need to happen quickly. Mr. Hickling stated he will work on setting a meeting up in the upcoming week.

Mr. Hickling introduced Lenny Weiser from the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) to speak about partnering with the airport to put on programs for youth. Mr. Weiser stated the EAA was established in the 1950s and has since then expanded its focus beyond home builds to all aspects of aviation. He stated his focus is on the recreation aspects of aviation and noted that they have a number of programs like young eagles, building programs like sport air workshops, and a newer program called flying start. He stated that, within a 40 mile radius of the airport, there are 435 EAA members, demonstrating that there is an interested aviation community out there. Mr. Weiser added that flying start provides social media marketing, resources and the facility, while also bringing people from the community in with the intention to develop business at the airport. Lastly, he stated that they have another proposal to partner with the airport which would be to build a transient camping area to help give the airport more exposure. Mr. Hickling stated he will put Mr. Weiser on the agenda for next month to talk in more detail about this potential partnership.

Chair Hansen opened the floor for discussion.

Ms. Bendel informed the committee that they are hosting the president of the Chamber of Commerce who is bringing marketers from out of state. She stated that the Chamber is looking into a branding campaign for the region and are considering how the airport fits into that.

Mr. Jacobs asked if there was any airport marketing going on with regards to open hangar space. Mr. Hickling stated they are working on an advertising plan. Ms. Dragon added that the city is working on hiring a branding and marketing consultant, to align with the Chamber but take it to next level and show how Keene is different, which would include the airport.

6) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Hansen adjourned the meeting at 9:39 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director