

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

9:00 AM

Terminal Building
Dillant Hopkins Airport

Members Present:

Curt Hansen, Chair
Nathan Jacobs, Vice Chair
George S. Hansel, Mayor
Councilor Mitch Greenwald
Brian Johnson
Richard Blood
Alona Florenz
Bill Hutwelker
Peter Temple

Staff Present:

David Hickling, Airport Manager
Rebecca Landry, ACM/IT Director

Members Not Present:

Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Elizabeth Bendel
Joe Bendzinski

1) Call to Order

Chair Hansen called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

2) Adopt October Meeting Minutes

Mr. Hutwelker made a motion to accept the minutes of October 26, 2021 as presented. Mr. Blood seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Jacobs voiced that he doesn't have the time to be Vice Chair and Chair Hansen stated he will only be in the position through the end of the year, when a new Vice Chair will be elected.

Chair Hansen welcomed Peter Temple, the newest member of the committee.

3) Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 1314 Flying Start Event/Guest Speakers
Lenny Weiser & Jeff Martin

Mr. Hickling introduced Mr. Weiser and Mr. Martin from the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA).

Mr. Weiser started off by introducing the Flying Start event and stating that he hopes it can be a joint venture between the airport and flight schools, as well as any other applicable organizations. He requested the support and involvement of the committee to help with marketing, staffing and space. He noted several other proposals, such as a transient pilot camping area and art on the ramp that they are also looking toward exploring in the future.

Mr. Weiser explained that the EAA started in the 1950's to help people build and get involved in aviation. They have since evolved and learned that they can do all kinds of promotion; however, when it comes to aviation, they have found that the only factor that truly helps aviation grow is active pilots. They have been facing several demographic issues such as the population of younger folks decreasing for a time and other cultural things interesting the younger group, proving it difficult to attract them to aviation. He went on to state that their chapter started to have virtual meetings during COVID, where they brought in speakers from all around and expanded programming, thus helping them eliminate the outdated image of the EAA as a bunch of old guys sitting around talking about building airplanes. They found that using social media and virtual mechanisms expanded interest and broadened the ways in which the chapter can help aviation. Mr. Weiser continued to state that, in an attempt to increase the pilot population, the EAA has the Flying Start program to attract adults, specifically people 17 years and older who can obtain a pilot's license. They come to a session, and following the session they have the opportunity to take flights with an instructor. He pointed out that they have over 430 EAA members within a 40 mile radius of the Keene airport; however, there are a lot of people who are shy or don't know how to get started. Mr. Weiser stated that these people need a safe and easy way to become involved and ask questions, which is where the Flying Start program comes into play.

Mr. Weiser went on to state that they have an organizational framework for the Flying Start program and noted that there's a tremendous amount of work and promotion just to organize the event, so they would need help from the committee. Their goal is to organize a specific Flying Start event committee and get participation from flying schools, the ADMC, and any other organizations interested. They are aiming for a late April/spring time event and would mostly need assistance with aspects such as promotion, safety, pilots to give flights, and post-flight engagement. He reiterated that the EAA would provide the framework and materials but they need help to organize the promotion side of the event.

Mr. Martin added that the EAA has, for years, been involved in flights geared towards kids and getting them interested in aviation, which he noted is great; however, they typically become uninterested quickly. This event in particular would be geared towards adults who have the means and interest, so they would get, and remain, involved. He added that the EAA sponsors the event so they will underwrite insurance aspects, except flight instructor insurance.

Mayor Hansel expressed that he felt the event is a great idea and exactly the type of work he hoped the committee would get involved with.

Mr. Jacobs inquired about next steps. Mr. Hickling answered that the next step would be to put the committee together and set up a meeting schedule to begin to work through the process. He

added that to hold an event at the airport they will need to go through the FAA. Mr. Hickling agreed that this type of thing is exactly what they are looking to do, have an organization come in and lead and they partner and provide support.

Ms. Florenz asked how big of a committee they would need. Mr. Weiser stated they need one that is representative of all organizations that would be involved. For example, if they want food they'd need a representative from that entity.

Mr. Martin stated the events they have put on in the past were well attended with people flying in from Philadelphia, NJ and Canada. He added that they've done events on their own for years so they know they can be successful; however, it would be nice to have involvement from the ADMC going forward.

Mr. Weiser added that the Keene airport has more tribalism than many other airports and an event like this will benefit the community.

Mr. Hickling stated the committee seems to support the idea and one member from the ADMC could be sufficient to represent. Mr. Weiser added that they are still in the beginning stages of formation, noting there is no deadline or event date yet, and stating that the ADMC is the first group they've had a discussion with.

Mr. Jacobs asked if there are other airports that support the chapter and how so. Mr. Weiser stated a lot of other airports have a pilot's association and they affiliate with the EAA and use their insurance. Their chapter is small and they are trying to bring these programs in and garner participation and partnerships with the pilot community. Mr. Martin agreed that a pilot's association is needed at the Keene airport and thinks they could have a very active and vital chapter there if they got the pilots involved and debunked the old image of the EAA.

Mr. Hickling thanked them for their presentation and informed them that he would be in touch.

4) Airport Development Maps & Website

Mr. Hickling reported back on the creation of maps for the airport website. He showed the committee an example of what the website would look like. Various maps were presented, including where the airport is located in new England, general region location, a zoomed in map on the area of proposed development, a map showing the area along Old Homestead highway where Mr. Hickling pointed out the spots that people are interested in, and a map showing areas of limited development opportunities due to elevation; however, would be a good option for solar development. He reported that he has an upcoming meeting to further dive into the maps but what he showed was the general idea.

Mayor Hansel commented that it looks great and asked how they'd get people to the website once it's set up. Mr. Hickling welcomed advice on that but noted that the target market would be an aircraft management company or people doing new and innovative research and that we should market to them, possibly through blind mailings and trade publication ads.

Ms. Landry stated trade publications are a great idea and will likely be the most effective, also targeted marketing and advertising can be done online to help.

Mayor Hansel agreed with the suggestion to focus on trade publications.

Mr. Jacobs expressed concern about the solar development mentioned because he doesn't want to give away land that the airport has for something other than aviation. Mr. Hickling stated that the area was identified in the Airport Master Plan as for non-aviation development, due to the lack of access to the airfield. Mr. Jacobs suggested that if someone were to build they could excavate some of that material out. Mr. Hickling answered that they will re-evaluate and take a look to see if it's feasible to do excavation and make possible aviation development.

Mr. Temple asked if there is any trouble with putting solar around airports in terms of glare and safety. He stated that he is aware that solar panels can be put over parking lots, so you're not taking up land and you're also making shaded parking and helping with the challenge of snow removal. Mr. Hickling stated that solar around an airport has to go through the FAA and added that T-hangars could also potentially have solar added.

5) Swanzy TIF District Discussion

Mr. Hickling reported that there had been a meeting with regards to the possibility of a TIF district, and found that there are a lot of challenges; however, discussion was fruitful because they identified other incentives that the town of Swanzy has. For example, they have a property tax exemption program that can be approved by selectmen to offer up to a 50% tax break. In summary, the TIF district is likely not feasible but they came out with other positive ideas and incentives.

6) Adjournment

Chair Hansen stated the next meeting is set for the 4th Tuesday of December and proposed to cancel that meeting and hold the next meeting in January. He added that at the end of the next meeting they will nominate a new Chair and Vice Chair. He opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Jacobs stated it would be nice to have a list of EAA chapters and other groups so they could reach out to them with communications.

Mayor Hansel stated he would like the committee to come up with a list of things they are trying to accomplish so the members can start working on action items outside of the meetings, that way the committee doesn't just become a report out session. Mr. Hickling and Chair Hansen stated they would work on that.

Dave, a member of the public, stated he loves the idea of marketing and getting the users involved in the committee. He added that there are a lot of people who have knowledge and they just need to find them and bring them in and establish a game plan to see the committee grow.

Steve Burke, another member of the public, stated it was his first time attending a meeting and he is excited to see the work the committee is doing.

There being no further business, Chair Hansen adjourned the meeting at 9:51 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
David Hickling, Airport Director