

**VERMONT AVIATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
BARRE CITY PLACE
219 NORTH MAIN STREET
BARRE, VT 05641
April 13, 2021**

***Meeting held by teleconference**

ATTENDEES: Joe Flynn, Secretary of Transportation
Michele Boomhower, PPAID
Dan Delabruere, VTrans
Jason Owen, VTrans
Guy Tapper, VTrans
Paul Libby, VTrans
Rollin Tebbetts, VTrans
Kyle Wells, VTrans
Costa Pappis, VTrans
Bob Atchinson, VTrans
Bruce King, VTrans
Chris Beitzel, VTrans
Matt Fitzgerald, VTrans
Chris Carrigan, Vermont Chamber
Paul Carroccio, Rutland Airport
Steve Dolgin, Caledonia Airport
Steve Ireland, McFarland Johnson
Heath Marsden, Jacobs Eng.
John Hehir, Jacobs Eng.
Bill Hanf, Green Mountain Avionics
Bob Flint, Springfield
Patrick Sharrow, Hoyle Tanner & Associates
Cliff Coy, Boarder Air Ltd.
George Coy, KFSO
Kevin Dwyer, Caledonia
Vince Matais, VT Pilots Association
Robin Guillian, Vermont Technical College
Joe Gianola, Rutland Airport
Tom Horrocks, pilot
Chas Schumacher, Springfield Airport
Walter Kyle, pilot
Rick Lucas, McFarland Johnson
Lisa Lesperance, FAA
Brian Pinsonault
Adam French
David Dinneen
Laura Canham
Adam Goudreau

Tyler Richardson
James Stewart
Stacy Leveille
Otis Munroe
Jean Mongillo
David Howe
Armand Dufresne
Cody Miller
Dan Pennington

1. CALL TO ORDER and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dan Delabruere called the teleconference meeting to order at 1 PM and announced some Aviation Council memberships have expired. The Governor's Office is evaluating re-appointments. Presently, there are only five active members. Past members should send a letter (email) of interest about continuing to serve to Dan Delabruere.

2. PUBLIC INPUT

- Steve Dolgin, Caledonia Airport, spoke about the lack of fuel at the airport. Dan Delabruere explained the fuel system at Caledonia needs to be cleaned. There is a small amount of funding available for this very expensive work which has been approved to be done. Fuel refills were not being done during COVID because fuel sales were down and with the airport was not selling enough fuel, the fuel went stale. The credit card system is also going to be evaluated at a cost of about \$20,000.
- Paul Carroccio, Rutland Airport, asked if the state has plans to lease the hanger café at Rutland Airport. Dan Delabruere said the state wants a restaurant at the airport, but presently no vendors have expressed interest in the space. The state will advertise the space. Paul Carroccio asked about the status of lease rates. Dan Delabruere said nothing has been done in the last month or so. Paul Carroccio asked if the maintenance staff position at Rutland Airport has been filled. Dan Delabruere said the full time position has been filled and the state is in the process of filling the temporary position. Paul Carroccio announced Kyle Bedard has been doing flight instruction at Rutland Airport during COVID.
- Chris Carrigan, Vermont Chamber, announced the Chamber is working with Vermont Technical College and Burlington Tech on a two year aviation maintenance technology degree program. The Aviation Council is asked to send letters of support for the program. Also, Boutique Air out of Burlington Airport will be offering direct service from Burlington to Boston beginning April 29, 2021 and is working on direct service from Burlington to Montreal.
- Robin Guillian, Vermont Technical College, spoke about the Associates Degree in Aviation Maintenance to be offered by VTC.
- Joe Gianola, Rutland Airport, stated five of the seven beacon lights on top of the mountains surrounding Rutland Airport are not working. The lights are needed. Dan Pennington will speak about the lights on behalf of the working committee at Rutland.

- Vince Matais, Vermont Pilots Association, announced the conversion of the schoolhouse at Caledonia County Airport into the Vermont Aviation Museum & Flying School, and asked for artifacts and supplies from other state airports.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 2, 2020

Postponed due to lack of a quorum present.

4. FAA DISCUSSION ON BEACONS

Lisa Lesperance, FAA, explained the Part 77 regulation that identifies manmade structures which present a hazard to aviation. As safety guidelines were refined the FAA looked at marking terrain. Air Traffic determined marking a tree is more hazardous than having the tree there. Terrain is charted, identified, but a hazard light is not and is often above the tree line creating a hazard. Also, beacons are not maintained and often not working.

Dan Delabruere noted the beacon light issue is not exclusive to Vermont.

Dan Pennington spoke on behalf of the committee at Rutland Airport working on the beacon issue and respectfully disagreed with the FAA position. The beacon lights at Rutland Airport are a benefit to pilots and should be maintained and remain in place. Mr. Pennington asked if the FAA will take down the obstruction lights at their expense. Lisa Lesperance said the airport would be asked to file an obstruction evaluation process, and if the beacon is a hazard the FAA would ask that it be removed. With limited federal funds where the most safety is gained is the consideration. Other airports have collaborated with cell towers in the area to have beacon colors painted on the towers or to have a cell tower company help maintain the beacons.

Tom Horrocks, pilot, spoke about left hand and right hand patterns to Runway 19 at Rutland Airport. It is a safety issue with the beacons. Flying in/out of Rutland Airport at night with the ridgeline is an issue.

Paul Carroccio, Green Mountain Flight Training and pilot for over 40 years, said Rutland Airport is one of the best places to learn to fly because the mountains create three different winds every day. It is imperative to have the beacons for safety to be able to discern the ridgeline. VTrans needs to look at safety for every pilot who flies. Senator Leahy should be lobbied for money from the new infrastructure bill to take care of obstruction lights at all state airports. The money should be used to enhance safety at airports and on roads.

Chas Schumacher, Springfield Airport, said the ridge at Rutland Airport is challenging without the beacons. FAA funding to decommission the beacons with the notion that the beacons are more dangerous if they are not working is hard to understand. How the beacons were funded in the first place is a question. Dan Delabruere said a combination of local, state, and FAA funds were used at the time for the beacons. Chas Schumacher suggested doing a survey to identify the minimum number of beacons required at state

airports to get a sense of critical ones and then figure out the cost. VFR flight at night at these airports is challenging. The beacons should be a priority. Dan Delabruere said FAA guidance is saying all the terrain cannot be illuminated. Thousands of lights (beacons) would be needed because there is so much terrain. VTrans will follow FAA guidance. Uniform guidance in the state and across the country is what is wanted.

There was discussion of available funding or shifting funds from rail or highway to improve safety at airports. Lisa Lesperance said the different rules with each funding legislation would have to be reviewed. Grants.gov may have opportunities for funding.

Walter Kyle, pilot and attorney, spoke of the tort claims act, noting Vermont is more liberal than the federal tort claims act. VTrans should check with legal counsel on whether the state would be liable if someone crashes into the mountainside before removing the safety net of the beacons. Section 324 applies to state action in Vermont. VTrans and the state could be held liable. FAA regulations are considered minimum standards, and to tie policy to the opinion of an engineer out of a Boston district office is not being safe.

It was mentioned that John Hickey, retired former Director of Certification at the FAA, was contacted regarding liability and he said the FAA is giving guidance and there is a potential exposure legally if there is an accident. A pilot not concerned about this issue who flies in Vermont has not yet been found. The beacons should be a priority.

5. VERMONT AIRPORT SYSTEMS PLAN UPDATE

Costa Pappis reported the draft airport system plan was issued for public review on March 1, 2021. Rick Lucas, McFarland Johnson, summarized public comments received on the plan which highlighted the following:

- “n/a” in the plan means the data are not applicable, but in the process of being reconciled.
- New terminals are a local and master plan issue.
- No improvements are identified. Some projects are not at the statewide or system level. Projects specific to an airport should be part of the local master plan process.
- Intermodal connectivity should be through work with local and regional planning commissions on intermodal planning.
- Policy and infrastructure spending will support new and emerging technologies such as electric aircraft charging.
- Land use controls are needed to prevent obstructions next to airports.
- Aviation education needs support.

Dan Delabruere noted there is a difference between how the system works versus a master plan at an airport. The process is working. The plan is working. The airport plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State and the FAA.

6. MASTER PERMITTING UPDATE

Steve Ireland with McFarland Johnson briefed the Aviation Council on permitting at state airports:

- One stormwater permit is done, three are in review with ANR, and four are in the design process.
- One sewer permit is in review, one was previously permitted, and three are not being reviewed.
- One Act 250 application has been submitted for Middlebury Airport. Others are in process in various stages.

Cliff Coy asked if the taxiway is included in the permit. Dan Delabruere said hangar development areas are being considered. Taxi lanes that connect to a taxiway or apron are included. Cliff Coy asked if there is any funding for taxi lanes to new construction. Dan Delabruere said AIP guidance shows priorities (i.e. center line of runway out) so hangars are lower priority.

Bob Flint suggested a future agenda item be discussion of expectations for the builder and state when building a hangar so there is clarity.

7. PROJECT UPDATES

Paul Libby and Bruce King reported on the following:

- Morrisville-Stowe Airport construction of runway and taxiway, fuel farm installation, runway safety improvements and lighting
- Rutland Airport taxiway construction work, signage and pavement markings, and airfield marking maintenance
- general airport maintenance work, airfield markings at Bennington (Morse Airport), Middlebury Airport, and NEK Airport

8. SPRINGFIELD AIRPORT – DMV USAGE

Dan Delabruere reported the use of Springfield Airport for DMV truck tests is temporary and should not affect airside operations.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

New Member

Bill Hanf, Green Mountain Avionics, is a new member on the Aviation Council.

10. NEXT MEETING and ADJOURNMENT

Next Meeting

July 27, 2021

Adjournment

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 3 PM.

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