

Airport Study Committee
Room 203
Pittsfield City Hall, 70 Allen Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
Thursday, February 25, 2016

Members Present:

Thomas Sakshaug, Chair
Councilor Donna Todd Rivers
Councilor Melissa Mazzeo
Councilor Chris Connell
Jonathan Lothrop
Mike Lyon
Jeff Cook
Chris Pedersen
Ashley Sulock

Also Present:

Bob Snuck, Airport Manager
Brian Spencer, Assistant Manager

Chair Thomas Sakshaug called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded in accordance with Mass. General Law.

1. Public Comment Period: No public comments made.

2. Approval of Minutes 2-11-16: Motion to approve minutes as presented made by Chris Pedersen. Motion seconded by Councilor Rivers. Unanimously approved.

3. Schedule Next Two Meetings; Consider Timing of Inviting FAA/MassDOT Representatives: Two future meetings were confirmed:

Wednesday, March 9, 2016, 7:00 p.m. – City Hall, Room 203
Thursday, March 23, 2016 7:00 p.m. – City Hall, Room 203

4. Discussion of Annual Reports 2012-2015; Operating budgets; Income and expenses; Fee and property cost comparisons.

Jonathan Lothrop noted that he had begun reviewing the financials discussed at the previous meeting. He is attempting to obtain tax information from the assessor and hopes to present his evaluation on 3/9. Ashley Sulock noted for the record a discrepancy in the surplus reported for FY2015 in the 2015 annual report.

Chris Pedersen questioned the mission of the committee to help better direct the conversation. Councilor Connell noted the goal is to examine the financial health of the airport, identify potential efficiencies and determine where we can realize savings, for example: can we have a surplus without relying on taxes?

Jeff Cook asked Chris Pedersen if there were specific areas of the annual reports we should refer to. Pederson noted that the safety improvement project had deterred some usage but there had been minimal closures. The staff is beginning to identify ways to increase revenue while running on a lean team.

An in-depth discussion followed as committee members looked to Chris Pedersen, Mike Lyon, and Bob Snuck to define aircraft operations and explain which operations currently generate revenue. Operations include planes in the air space as well as those that touch and land. The committee also worked to understand the current landing fee structure.

Bob Snuck assured the committee the structure was standard, but given the tiers, Councilor Connell noted the majority of aircraft do not pay fees, yet the airport continues to suffer wear and tear. Councilor Rivers initiated a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of charging fees. Jonathan Lothrop inquired about the frequency of landing fees reviews.

The committee worked to learn how fuel flowage fees were determined and if there were opportunities to increase the fees. Mike Lyon explained there was little opportunity in terms of competitive margin. Also, the City does not own the fuel farm, so the City does not stand to profit.

The committee struggled to find direct correlation between business growth and retention with so little existing data on the use of the airport.

The discussion concluded with additional opportunities for revenue generation. Bob Snuck expressed there was a strong demand for T Hangar space, as more aircraft prefer indoor storage. The Pittsfield airport requires less land preparation, which could decrease costs, but federal funds are still lacking. Chris Pedersen and Bob Snuck also noted the commission was in there early research phase of solar options. Bob Snuck offered to conduct a tour of the airport. The committee could not identify a suitable date and decided to defer the discussion to the 3/9 meeting, recognizing the tour should be conducted prior to meeting with FAA and DOT officials.

5. Discussion of Westwood leases with PERC representative (if available): Westwood leases were not available for the meeting, and a PERC representative was unable to attend. Deep discussion of Westwood leases postponed.

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor Connell. Motion seconded by Chris Pedersen. Unanimously approved.

Meeting Adjourned 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Sulock