

BURLINGTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

MEETING OF JANUARY 31, 2013

The Airport Strategic Planning Committee meeting for January 31, 2013 was convened by Co – Chair Paul Sisson at 5:45 PM at the Hamilton Room of the Airport. Present were committee members Karen Paul, Paul Sisson, Vince Dober, Chris Cole, Jeff Munger, Jane Knodell, Louise Stoll, Ann Beland and Jeff Shulman. Also present were staff members Joseph McNeil, Gene Richards, Bob McEwing, Heather Kendrew and Ryan Betcher, Commissioner Bill Keogh, South Burlington City Council Chair Rosanne Greco and BFP reporter John Briggs.

Upon motion of Vince Dober and second by Louise Stoll the meeting agenda was approved.

There were no speakers at the public forum.

Upon motion of Vince Dover and second by Jeff Schulman the minutes of the meeting of January 10, 2013 were approved.

Chris Cole reported on the deliberations of the subcommittee that was appointed to review the RFP and responses. He noted that the proposals were substantially in excess of the available budget and that consequently there should be a motion made to reject all of the bids. He also reported the subcommittee's view that the final adoption of the SPC should be put off until a new Director of Aviation was on board. Finally, he noted that the question of future Airport governance could be separated from other SPC considerations and continue to proceed to the point of a recommendation

Mayor O'Brien asked what the implications would be a putting off the strategic plan adoption process until a new director is on board. He asked how much the work of the committee would be delayed. Paul Sisson indicated that the committee would extend its time until completion of the Committee's work, assuming the Committee agreed with the delay. Karen Paul agreed that the Director should be on board before the SPC report is finalized, but that the work of the Committee should not stop. She believed that the governance consideration should continue and that there was more work generally concerning of the strategic plan that the committee could accomplish on its own.

Louie Stoll asked what it would take to change the governance of the airport. Joe McNeil stated that it would require either a resolution for a nonpermanent type change or a charter change process for a change with more permanency. Vince Dober indicated that the Committee should stay focused upon governance in the short term. Gene Richards noted that we should look at the changes that have already occurred since the Committee convened and concentrate upon matters yet to be accomplished. Vince suggested the Committee should take out the original list of charges from the City Council and check it against the progress made. Mike O'Brien agreed and said the committee should step back and develop a new game plan for itself.

Luis Stoll asked Gene Richards to explain the big changes that have occurred since the Committee began its work. Gene indicated that much has been accomplished in terms of financial management and record keeping; that marketing is about to be enhanced with the addition of a marketing person and a more aggressive advertising plan; that enplanements should be helped. Especially in the long term, with the new Delta service to Atlanta and that significant assistance was now being given to the Airport by the Mayor's office. Louise said all these points were excellent, but not representative of the contents of a strategic plan. She thinks it is imperative that the committee decide its position and make recommendations concerning the Airport's future relationship with the Mayor, City Council and municipal governance structure, as well as its relationship with the State of Vermont and neighboring communities.

Jane Knodell observed that the Committee has, however, identified strategic issues and can identify them for the consideration of the new Director and the Airport Commission. Vince agreed with Jane that it made sense to proceed to the creation of a plan.

Chris Cole and Paul Sisson both recommended a focus on governance in the short term, and then a concentration on the charge issues would make sense. Chris stated that the Committee had still not made even a preliminary report to the mayor concerning governance nor received the benefit of the Mayor's thoughts on this issue. Louise agreed on the process of consideration, indicating she was not sure there was even yet any consensus on the Committee as to the best Airport governance structure for the future.

Vince expressed the belief that the Committee should be listing the expectations that should be present for the Airport and that it should contrast or compare those expectations with those typically present in an airport of Burlington's size. He noted that there had already been some great commentary with regard to marketing and increased enplanement needs.

Jeff Shulman emphasized that the Committee ought to be putting forth its vision for the future and should indicate what it believes is necessary for the Airport to both survive and thrive. He stated this was his view of a strategic plan. Jane Knodell indicated that the Committee should start with a vision statement, reference the goals of the Airport and then speak to practical steps that could be taken to achieve the goals. Chris Cole noted that it would be helpful to have the assistance of a facilitator with regard to the development of the strategic plan. There was general consensus that Adam Whiteman would be an excellent facilitator for the group and Gene Richards stated that once negotiations were completed concerning the continuation of Frasca's contract Adam would be made available to assist the Committee.

The committee then heard from Mr. Guy Rouelle who is a Division Director of Airports for the Vermont Agency of Transportation. Guy presented a proposed organizational structure for a partnership between the Airport and the State. He noted that there were many potential advantages to be gained through cooperation and partnership, particularly with regard to economies of scale, equipment sharing, maintenance facilities, finances, block purchases, including the purchase of fuel and perhaps enhancing the opportunities for FAA grants as well. The committee was interested in exploring these potential sharing advantages.

Jeff Schulman asked whether an advantage of partnership with the state could well be the reduction or elimination of taxes paid by the airport. Joe McNeil explained the statutory standards for taxation all of land owned by one municipality but located in another. Gene Richards observed that he saw the potential for reduced expenses and enhancement of revenues in several areas including such items as electrical use savings and SMURF funding. Chris Cole stated that Vermont has been very aggressively using SMURF funding for energy improvements. Mr. Rouelle handed out a report on containing these possible savings for the consideration of the Committee.

Louise Stoll asked what the downsides of a partnership with the State might be. Karen Paul recommended that the committee revisit the analysis performed by Adam Whiteman. Chris Cole indicated that it would be possible to have both the new partnership with the State and participation by other all interested municipalities.

On motion of Vince Dober and second by Jeff Monger the Committee voted to region reject all of the RFP bids.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the committee would be February 21 at 5:30 PM and that the committee would work on both a governance recommendation and the draft vision statement.

On motion of Vince Dober and second by Chris Cole the Committee voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph E. McNeil, Clerk