

Burlington International Airport  
Strategic Planning Committee  
Meeting of April 9, 2013

The Airport Strategic Planning Committee meeting for April 9, 2013 was convened at 5:36 PM at the Burlington International Airport by Co-Chair Karen Paul. Present were committee members Karen Paul, Paul Sisson, Ann Beland, Pam McKenzie, Jane Knodell, Ed Colodny (by phone), Louise Stoll, Jeff Munger, Jeff Schulman, Chris Cole and Michael O'Brien. Also present were staff members Joseph McNeil, Heather Kendrew, Robert McEwing and Ryan Betcher. Frasca & Assoc. Principal Adam Whiteman was also present, as was South Burlington Councilor Roseanne Greco, Airport Commissioner Bill Keogh and Burlington Free Press writer John Briggs.

There were no speakers at the public forum.

The approval for the meeting minutes of the March 7, 2013 and March 21, 2013 meetings were approved.

The group reviewed the Strategic Plan submitted by Adam Whiteman, the seventh draft of the report that is dated May 16, 2013. The committee began to review the draft report, and engaged in the following discussions and developments:

The City of Burlington's Livable Wage was identified by comparing the Livable Wage versus the prices for concessionaires. Adam Whiteman recommends leaving the item as "Livable Wage vs. Competitive Pricing for Concessionaires". Afterwards, Ed Colodny inquired into the difference between the Livable Wage and market wage, and questioned the rationale behind Skinny Pancake being granted an exemption to the Livable Wage. This question initiated conversations between committee members as to the relevance of the Livable Wage as it relates to the Airport and whether or not its tenants and Airport operators would or would not be willing to pay such a wage. Ann Beland stated that the Airlines operating from BTV do not currently pay the Livable Wage and that it would be an item of concern during the negotiations between the Airport and the Airlines prior to signing new use and operating agreements. Jane Knodell requested that the Livable Wage be reviewed in more detail at a later date.

Continuing with the review of the SWOT Analysis, Ed Colodny noted that Federal Funding Cuts to Competitor Small Airports not be considered an opportunity, which the committee agreed with and removed from the analysis.

The next item of discussion with the SWOT analysis was the Economic Development section, which Jeff Schulman stated that he believed should focus on ways to reach out to additional and existing air carriers as opposed to focusing on obtaining additional tenants on the airfield. Various committee members agreed that they too

would like to see it differentiate economic development from property development.

As a result of the conversation on economic development, Ed Colodny inquired as to why the Airport does not divest un-used land, which he referred to as “underperforming assets”. Paul Sisson addressed the question by stating that the idea of selling property would involve a variety of parties and could prove to be difficult. Bob McEwing added that most of the vacant land on the Airport is to be incorporated into the Airport’s 2030 Master Plan, and that the plan does not include underperforming assets. Rosanne Greco of South Burlington noted that underperforming assets may also include South Burlington neighborhoods included in the FAA Land Acquisition program.

The next item discussed was the Mission and Vision Statement. Louise Stoll, Jeff Schulman and Michael O’Brien all agreed that marketing and air service should not necessarily be linked. Rosanne Greco stated that including wording pertaining to an environmentally sustainable airport is crucial, an example of such wording being “continuously working to soften the Airport’s environmental footprint”.

Ed Colodny began the conversation on Strategic Goals by stating that an additional goal should be for the Airport to have a certain amount of capital within a set amount of time. Ed then asked Bob McEwing how much unrestricted cash he believed the Airport should have on hand, which Bob responded that the Airport should have at least six months worth. Adam Whiteman added that most airports have approximately twelve months of unrestricted cash.

For the section on Challenges and Goals, Rosanne Greco proposed including surrounding communities.

Following the discussion of the Strategic Plan, the committee began discussions of governance structures. It was agreed by all committee members that privatization was not ideal for the Airport, however based on feedback from Joe McNeil, the Airport should not reject the idea of a regional authority. Mike O’Brien identified that from the point of view of Winooski, the “buy in” would be the outstanding factor as the question is how much money each community would need to contribute in order to have a vote on the committee. Chris Cole also feels that a State/City Airport could have many positive benefits for the Airport.

Louise Stoll and Ed Colodny stated that they believe the Airport needs to be self-sufficient and that a strong Commission may be the best choice as such a Commission would help avoid City politics, and eliminate the need for the City to divest the Airport, which would ultimately be very difficult.

Joe McNeil stated that the City Council could delegate additional duties as a way to further strengthen the power of the Commission, although certain duties may require a charter change. Jeff Munger said that these additional duties would be

essential to increase the strength of the Commission, as the current Commission is only considered advisory. Ed Colodny noted that one such duty the Commission should have is the ability to hire and fire Airport staff, including the Director of Aviation.

Aside from the strengthening of the Commission, Karen Paul said that she believed the Airport finances should be done in the Airport as opposed to the Clerk Treasurers Office. Paul Sisson confirmed Karen's request by identifying that the Airport utilizes a considerable amount of the Clerk Treasurers Office resources relative to other City departments.

Joe McNeil identified that one City department that the Airport could possibly be modeled after is Burlington Electric, where the Commission has the ability to make all decisions, with the City Council retaining the right to veto. Karen Paul confirmed that the Burlington Electric plan seems to have worked fairly well, and could prove to be beneficial to the Airport.

According to Joe McNeil, a strong Commission would reduce the layers for approval involved with the City, which was a concern raised by the rating agencies. The Committee agreed to see a draft document of what a strong Commission would look like, with Louise Stoll stating that a strong Commission would reduce the risk associated with a change in the Mayor's office.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:33PM.

Submitted by:

Ryan Betcher