

**Middlebury Airport Communications Task Group
Meeting Notes
July 18, 2022**

Purpose: Enhancing communications between the Agency of Transportation, Town of Middlebury, Middlebury Airport Neighborhood Association, and users of the Middlebury State Airport to generate regular, centralized communications to highlight news, events, issues, opportunities and to reduce miscommunications between all parties.

Task Group Members: Anne Christie (replacing Prem Prakash) (MANA), Nick Artim (Town), Dan Delabruere (AOT), Michele Boomhower (AOT), Prem Prakash.

Meeting Guest: None

Agenda Items/Discussion

1. Review and Update of Action Items from June 15th Meeting

Action Items

- a. Enhancements to the Airport webpage on the Town of Middlebury Site (Michele to follow up with Town staff on a few modification to their web content for the airport – all current documents are on the AOT Aviation webpage for Middlebury located [here](#)) – **In Process**
- b. Communication with Act 250 District Coordinator re: webpage linkage to Act 250 database for airport permits and contact information for questions (Michele – will coordinate with Town staff regarding posting the link to the Act 250 database for the airport permits and provide the contact information for the Act 250 District Coordinator at the site as well. She will also make sure a similar link is placed on the AOT webpage for Middlebury. **In Process**
- c. Posting of the Airport Master Plan documents on the State and Town websites by COB June 24th (Michele) **Completed.**
- d. Review tree cutting contract to determine if trees are available as salvage (Dan) – Dan is still working on this with AOT contracting staff to determine if the terms of the contract include wood salvage. **In Process**
- e. Follow-up with Cisco regarding airport communications (Dan) Dan did speak to Cisco to help him in understanding the need for consistent responses, but not that he should never speak to people who call him with operations related questions. **Completed.**

General Question Regarding the Plane Count at Airport

Anne – People are concerned that there are mixed messages coming from VTrans – specifically regarding the number of planes located on the airport – someone is asking for that information from multiple sources at VTrans.

Dan – the answer to this question is not straight forward

- FAA can provide you with information regarding plane owners who register their planes as being based out of the Middlebury airport.

- A plane may be located at Middlebury multiple months of the year, but it could be registered at an airport out of state.
- Cisco may have provided count information based on counting planes on the ground at the airport.
- Bill Hanf may have planes that are at the airport for a number of months which are waiting for service, these may or may not be counted and may or may not be registered with the FAA as being based at Middlebury.
- Dan outlined the fact that the number is ever changing.
- If a person has questions regarding the plane count at Middlebury, they should contact Dan Delabruere (802) 279-2647 or daniel.delabruere@vermont.gov ; with additional information regarding the specifics of what the questioner is looking for, Dan can provide context and also FAA contact information.

2. Master Hangar Act 250 Permitting Process ([Permit Application # 9A0158-12](#))
 - a. The Permit application has been submitted and posted to the Act 250 database (link above)
 - b. Act 250 District Commission (DC) Staff deemed the permit application complete on June 3, 2022
 - c. DC staff still working with Commission regarding scheduling of the hearing and issuing the public notice. (On July 20th Michele received a communication from Josh Donabedian of the District Commission that the Commission had tentatively settled on Friday, August 19th, for the first hearing.)

Contact Information for Josh for all Act 250 related questions:

Josh Donabedian, District Coordinator
 District 6 & 9 Environmental Commissions
 Vermont Natural Resources Board
 111 West Street | Essex Junction, VT 05452
joshua.donabedian@vermont.gov

3. Other Private Act 250 Permits Issued/Pending at Middlebury Airport
 - a. [9A0158-14](#) - Thomas Spencer - Construction of a new 40' by 41' hangar at the Middlebury Airport on a site leased by the applicant located directly to the south of the existing terminal/maintenance hangar. Permit issued 1/5/2022 (attached)
 - b. [9A0158-13](#) – Donald Arnold - Construction of a new 60' by 60' hangar at the Middlebury Airport on a site leased by the applicant located directly to the south of the existing terminal/maintenance hangar. Permit application under review.
4. Master Plan Process Updates
 - a. The TAC Meeting held on June 7th and the documents reviewed at the meeting are posted to the [VTrans website for the Middlebury Airport](#)
 - b. The Public Meeting was held on June 30th – details and documents are posted at the [Middlebury Town Website Aviation webpage](#) and on the [VTrans website for the Middlebury Airport](#).

- c. Next steps following the Public Meeting on June 30th
 - i. The Public Comment Period on the Draft Plan was discussed. Anne noted that the handout from the public meeting indicated that the comment period would run through July 31st. Michele noted that the consultants and staff had left it open ended at the public meeting. Prem recommended setting a specific date for the close of the public comment period, all concurred.
It was decided that final comments for this round will need to be submitted by August 31st to allow staff and the consulting team to incorporate comments into the Plan draft which will be presented to the TAC later in September.
 - 1. Michele will clarify with project manager and consultants that the deadline will be August 31st
 - 2. Michele will have the project team place a notice on the Town of Middlebury website and on the VTrans website that comments on the current version of the draft plan will need to be submitted by August 31st.

Anne asked if all public comments submitted will be included in the record and will be responded to – Michele confirmed that was the case.

 - ii. September TAC meeting (date TBD)
 - iii. October Public Meeting on the Final Draft Plan (date TBD)
 - iv. A deadline for the public to provide additional new comments on the final draft of the plan will be provided at the public meeting, it will be a 30-day comment period.
 - v. November through early 2023 - FAA review and sign off
 - vi. Early 2023 - Secretary of Transportation sign off

5. On Field Planned Activities for the coming month(s)

- a. Continued advance coordination for the Winter/Fall Tree Trimming - AOT will be completing the activities authorized through Act 250 Permit 9A-0158-11. This will involve selective cutting in the winter of 22/23 of trees not included in the area wide cut undertaken earlier in 2022.

Details can be found at this link:

<https://anrweb.vt.gov/ANR/Act250/Details.aspx?Num=9A0158-11>

- b. VTrans continues to work with the aviation fuel vendor to advance the fuel tank cleaning and inspection. Once the inspection is complete and the tank is deemed satisfactory, then fuel will be reinstalled. If the tank is not able to accept fuel, then a secondary plan will be developed to assure there is onsite fuel available.

The fuel was tested and found to have particulates, which could have come from the tank or could have come from the delivery truck. AOT trying to secure a secondary vendor to undertake the inspection and cleaning of the tank sooner than the usual vendor.

Prem asked if there was any leakage of fuel or impacts to the aquifer. Dan reported that there are no leaks from the tank and there is no danger to the aquifer.

Anne spoke to Cisco last week. She asked about the fuel. He indicated that there is no problem – but did not provide the details related to the fuel sales discontinuance.

Anne noted prior communications protocol – Cisco, Chris Beitzel, were contacts. How should this protocol be updated? Dan indicated that all questions should be directed to him for response as he has the highest level of awareness of the overall activities at the airport.

Nick noted that it is important for Anne to work with MANA constituents to clarify what their questions are so they can be funneled to the correct person at VTrans, which will typically be Dan and/or Michele.

Prem noted that an effective way to funnel questions is concisely – approach Michele/Dan/Nick regarding whether there are any clarifications needed in order for them to be able to answer the question.

6. Communications Round-up

- a. Dan – there is nothing outside of the norm in terms of questions from the community. It has been helpful to have Prem and Nick on the ground communicating with members of the public and MANA members.
- b. Nick – The consultants did a good job considering the diversity of the members of the public in attendance. Nick noted that all Selectboard members have reviewed the meeting tape.
- c. On Monday, the 11th, Senator Hardy took a tour of Bill Hanf's business, she met young people employed by Bill who either grew up in Middlebury or moved to the town for these opportunities. Bill was able to take Senator Hardy and Nick on a flight, including outlining the safety procedures and processes which pilots must adhere to.
- d. On Tuesday the 12th the Selectboard received an update from Prem, Nick and Eugene Roy. The Board is considering that the airport serves the entire community. They have not reported any recent complaints from community members.

7. Other Items

Anne noted as a newcomer to the Communications Task Force, she wanted to take the opportunity to share the feelings MANA. She noted that the purpose of MANA is to keep the disruption people's lives to a minimum as it relates to airport operations and to prevent the airport from creating more disruption – Prem clarified that there was a mission of keeping the airport as a community scale airport. Anne indicated that neighbors want to assure that VTrans is hearing their needs and continue to work on building trust. There remain concerns that there is not a feeling of security with regards to the future of the airport and that there is

still concern that the needs of MANA members and the community of East Middlebury are not being prioritized.

Michele noted that AOT is working to balance the needs of all users, including safety for pilots, recognition of the size, scale and lighting requirements which the MANA has expressed, and how all considerations will be balanced going forward.

Anne, asked if there would there be more air traffic if there were lights. Prem noted that in conversations with businesses, they would anticipate continuing to operate mainly during daylight hours, however, there may be users who currently use the airport who would consider expanding their hours of operations, in particular when we have darker periods of the year (fall/winter). Nick noted that Shawn Flynn of Silver Maple indicated that his business has 65 employees, he flies folks to the broader New England area. He would like to be in a position to have his employees working the same number of hours, regardless of the season, by being able to take off and return during fall/winter hours in the same manner he can during the summer.

Anne asked if increasing hangar space, and the currently available tie down space, will increase airport utilization. Dan noted that the current proposal calls for adding 9 hangars, which could result in additional planes deciding to base at Middlebury; it is likely that planes currently using tie downs may choose to move to hangars. Taxpayer funding supports the airport; therefore we want it to be used, but we are working to scale the addition of hangars to the scale of the airport. There is no guarantee that people will want to build a hangar, in that case, there would not be an additional hangar or the potentially additional aircraft. Prem noted that in speaking with businesses, the creation of hangars is not going to result in people buying planes, but these hangars will be built by people who already own planes and can moved them from the tie downs into hangars. Businesses which have planes on site for repair, could store those planes in hangars versus outside during the duration they are at the airport. Dan noted that during the runway expansion project in Middlebury, if Bill Hanf had had the opportunity to place planes he was working on inside a hangar during the closure, it would have been much more efficient. Nick noted that Shaun Flynn has a plane that is often stored outside, in the winter de-icing a plane results in lost productivity versus storing the plane in a hangar and having it ready to deploy.

Anne noted that after the airport expansion there were bigger planes coming in. Nick noted historically there were 1-2 regional carrier planes coming in for prior businesses which had used the airport and that plane numbers are cyclical, often based on business activities. Dan noted that the extension of the runway did not change the class of aircraft which could use the runway.

As the Selectboard Rep. to the Communications Task Force, Anne asked Nick if the Selectboard has an appreciation of the position that the East Middlebury neighbors are in with regards to their adjacency to the airport. East Middlebury

residents want to be sure that the town is representing all of the residents and balancing the community needs - working for MANA as well as other constituencies. Nick noted that the Selectboard needs to balance the needs of all and that there are neighbors in East Middlebury who have come forward in support of the airport, there are business voices, and the broader needs of the community which the Selectboard is considering. Nick assured that the Selectboard is hearing from everyone and taking all input into consideration.

Nick asked if Dan and Michele to convey his appreciation to the consultants for the manner in which they managed the meeting.

8. Next Meeting - Wednesday, August 31st, 1:00 in Person at the Middlebury Airport
5. Action Items
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6. Next Schedule meetings of the Middlebury Airport Communications Task Group
 - a. Monday, August 31st at 1:00, Middlebury Airport
 - b. September - later
 - c. October – later (2-hour time differential)