

Maine Aeronautical Advisory Board Meeting
Maine Department of Transportation
Augusta, Maine
March 23, 2017 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Report to Selectmen, Machias Airport Committee, Town Manager and Airport
Manager by Jim Whalen**

Attendees: Stacie Haskell, Sue Moreau from Maine DOT (Tim La Siege was sick)
Michelle Ricci, Luke Garrison, Steve Barker, George Fantelli: all from FAA @ Burlington, MA
Airport Managers from Sanford, Presque Isle, Bangor, Brunswick, Portland, Waterville,
Wiscasset, Auburn. Jim Whalen from Machias as Selectman and Member of the Airport
Committee
Airports that were there had one representative
Shane McDougall from Stantec and Josh Dickson from Life Flight were not there
Erv Deck and Janice Bland, Planners for Stantec were there.
Lisa Reese from Maine Aeronautics Board

REPORT:

Machias was mentioned a few times in the context of being furthest behind in development compared with (see ASCE Report Card item below) other remote airports of similar size such as Rangely. I had to correct the record. Machias does not have a 4000' runway. Our runway is 2900 ' and that is it.

FAA update: 1. Status of federal budget is unchanged. New administration has not put out any details on infrastructure projects. 2. Federal Register was closed for publication in January and has just re-opened. 3. There is a hiring freeze on personnel except for military and Homeland Security 4. All federal agencies must remove two regulations for every one introduced.

Michelle Ricci for FAA: right now there is no discretionary money.

"Open for Business" and MaineDOT funding beyond Airport Improvement Program Match:

Much discussion. An important point is that MeDOT will look very favorably on any project proposed if there is a return on investment to State of Maine or to local economy. More funds can be found when Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner can see money coming into State or local economy from an airport project.

"Open for Business etc." continued.

For example, Northeast Kingdom Airport in Vermont had a \$22 million dollar expansion when Jay Peak, the ski area and the Chamber of Commerce pushed the State of Vermont.

Since Maine has energy expenses not present in Southern States, we have to circumvent higher costs of energy by incentivizing: having manufacturing facilities on the airport grounds with reduced rent or purchase. Solar panels on facilities. Energy costs are always the 'killer'.

Machias is below water on economic incentives and not able to compete because of our short runway. Imagine Bar Harbor with a short runway. Jackson Labs would be out of there.

The \$150K the FAA grants every year with 90/5/5 is a fixed amount. That is not indexed to COLA so that \$150K in 2017 buys a lot less product than the same \$150K in 2010.

Airports in Maine have a real burden of trying to pay for the engineering plans and the construction activity in the same year. FAA will **not** consider splitting the years for engineering in one year and construction in the following year.

OPINION-----

The first priority of Machias is to develop a 5000' runway able to take cargo planes.

The very first step is to find out if Machias property currently under consideration for a 5000' runway is for sale and to execute a sale agreement.

This is a binary issue: property is either for sale or is not for sale. If it is for sale, immediate steps should be taken with partners/stakeholders (Machias Savings Bank, Machias Valley Chamber of Commerce, etc) by a small subcommittee with prior approval of the Airport Committee to purchase land with help of MaineDOT, federal legislators and our local legislators). This should be explored no later than end of April. Airport Committee has been discussing this since beginning of Winter. Very next immediate step is to get a plan on paper we can present to MaineDOT, state legislators, and federal legislators laying out the Plan for Economic Development as a Candidate Plan.

If it is not for sale—absolutely not for sale—then Airport Committee should re-visit surrounding towns and the unorganized townships for a new site. Until we have a 4000'-5000' runway with space for hangars, fuel, parking, and manufacturing facilities space there will be no interest from State of Maine in a little Machias Airport with a 2900' runway.

With a short runway, only thing Machias Airport has going for it is a new beacon and a re-built blue shack. Not good enough.

Life Flight of Maine is not a critical driver of Machias Airport development. Their requirement for a longer runway for their fixed wing aircraft will not curtail their helicopter service. Fixed wing aircraft gives Life Flight of Maine the ability to go to Portland, or Boston, or Worcester but those long flights are the exception, not the rule.

For Machias Airport to have Life Flight fixed-wing aircraft, all safety features of Instrumentation approach and take-off, weather devices, obstruction removal, have to be in place. Machias is just now completing obstruction removal and that has been tough.

ASCE Report Card on Airports for 2016: presented by Erv Deck from Stantec

This is a nationwide report by American Society of Civil Engineers on Maine Airports prepared every four years.

Report is developed for Maine State Legislature.

Only looks at 35 airports

Checks the following points

- Trees and obstructions on final approach
- Runway Safety Area
- Life Flight capable. Airport must be open 24/7 and cannot close down at night(NA)
- Fuel availability
- Weather facilities AWAS
- Instrument Approach System

Machias is behind in almost every category.

Over-all, state of airports for State of Maine receives a grade of C. Every airport needs money. There is no money readily available.

Aviation Fuel Tax

I didn't quite understand everything but it is a lot of money. Whether airport gets to keep profits or it is pooled into State revenues I am not sure. At this point, for Machias, it does not apply.

Other Business:

AIP Grant Application Process: Make sure you use latest forms and not old forms.

Maine Aviation Systems Plan: nothing

Airport Wildlife Hazard Management Training: nothing

Aviation Day: nothing

***Lobbying legislators*:** Maine is the only New England state where we do not lobby. Airports do not reach out to congressional delegation. An Aviation Caucus with our Maine legislators in Augusta has just been formed. Our local Airport needs to invite Will Tuell, Robert Alley, Larry Lockman, and Senator Joyce Maker to inform them of plans—**when we have a plan.**

In summary: We need to get a 4000'-5000' foot runway located and nailed down on paper. As matters now stand, we will not get any serious attention in airport development or economic development from Augusta with the present airport and no specific plans for immediate and future economic development. And, the airport real estate property has to have land/space available not only for hangars but most importantly space for manufacturing facilities on the property with leases/purchases of that property at preferred rates to incentivize.

These meetings are held quarterly. Next one is probably sometime in June.

Jim Whalen