

Hanscom Area Towns Committee (HATS)

June 22, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerks of HATS member towns, the HATS meeting convened in a hybrid meeting at the Lexington Community Center and via video conference on June 22, 2023, at 7:04 pm.

Present:

Select Board Members: Doug Lucente, Lexington Select Board and HATS Chair; Emily Mitchell, Bedford Select Board; Jim Hutchinson, Lincoln Select Board; Linda Escobedo, Concord Select Board (via Zoom).

Other HATS Members: Margaret Coppe, Lexington at-large; Charles Hornig, Lexington Planning Board Member; Gary Taylor, Lincoln Planning Board Member

Guests: Amber Goodspeed, Massport; Anna Winter, Save Our Heritage; Brooks Read; Carolyn Frost; Julie McCay Turner, *Lexington Observer*; Mike Vatalaro, Massport; Olivia LeDuc; Rob Hamilton; Simone Monteleone, NPS; 603-505-7894; Glen Kernusky, Hanscom Air Force Base; Terri Ackerman, Concord Select Board; Jeanne Krieger, Lexington

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Lucente welcomed attendees both in person and via Zoom and affirmed the meeting protocols. Members introduced themselves.

Presentation by Neil Rasmussen, President of Save Our Heritage

Mr. Rasmussen gave a presentation on the proposed North Airfield expansion at Hanscom Field, with a focus on greenhouse gas emissions.

The project goal is to expand infrastructure for private jets in response to expected growth in demand. Mr. Rasmussen asserted that the project conflicts with the Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy, as outlined in Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2021, which requires every sector of the economy to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Mr. Rasmussen emphasized the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions now, to avoid compounding issues in the future, and noted that the private jets expected to be housed in the new hangars serve a very small population. He noted that private jets incur no sales tax, and private jet hangars are not assessed property tax on Massport property. State and local taxes on jet fuel are prohibited under federal law, although the taxes assessed at Hanscom Field are allowed, since they were in place prior to new regulations in 1984. In response to a question from Mr. Taylor, Mr. Rasmussen noted that the fuel tax revenue is shared among the four towns, and amounts to roughly \$100,000–\$200,000 per town annually.

Mr. Rasmussen questioned the developers' claim that the new hangars would promote energy efficiency and reduce flight operations by eliminating "ferry flights." He also questioned Massport's assertion that flight operations at Hanscom Field are declining. While total flight operations are declining, most of the decline comes from single-engine piston flights; jet operations increased 10% in 2022, from 33,400 to 36,808.

Mr. Rasmussen discussed the possibilities for low-carbon aviation, either through electric aircraft or sustainable aviation fuels, asserting that neither option is practical or available now or in the near future. Electric aircraft are expected to replace propeller aircraft, not jets. Sustainable aviation fuel still emits roughly the same CO₂e as traditional aviation fuel.

Mr. Rasmussen asserted that constraining jet expansion at Hanscom could serve to reduce overall demand for jet flights and impact the entire jet aviation system. Mr. Rasmussen noted that neither towns nor the state legislature have regulatory authority over this expansion, and Massport does not have the power to affect or curtail operations once facilities are built.

The initial public comment period for the project occurred in February, with more than 300 comments received from municipalities, organizations, and private citizens. Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA) issued a scoping document that required a full Environmental Impact Form (EIF) for the project, which should be available in the fall. There will be another public comment period once the draft EIF has been filed.

Mr. Rasmussen proposed that the Select Boards in the four Hanscom towns submit a joint letter to the governor offering a unified message opposing the process because it conflicts with state and local plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Hornig commented that having a presentation about the proposal in general would have been helpful, as many people are not familiar with the project plans. He asked what aviation operations would be acceptable at Hanscom Field, as having options to propose to the governor would be helpful in finding an overall solution. Mr. Rasmussen said that waiting until electric or sustainable aircraft were available could be acceptable.

Mr. Hutchinson noted that the Lincoln Select Board has already discussed the contradiction between the emissions from this project and the state and local reduction goals. The Lincoln Select Board are on board with a joint letter from the HATS towns Select Boards to the governor that narrowly points out that contradiction.

Mr. Hutchinson asked if there is an issue with state vs. federal control over emissions. Mr. Rasmussen said the state plan notes that aviation emissions are a problem but did not offer solutions, given the confusion over jurisdiction. There is no regulation of aviation emissions by the state, and the state cannot discriminate against aviation operations by type. The FAA has nothing in its mandate about controlling or reducing emissions.

Ms. Mitchell noted that the Town of Bedford would hesitate to take a position opposing the project outright, as whatever development might happen at the site would affect Bedford's infrastructure regardless. She was open to Mr. Hutchinson's proposal for a letter outlining the narrow objection, but felt it would be harder for Bedford to sign on to a broader statement.

Mr. Taylor noted that this is a major investment in a long-lived capital asset, and once it has begun it would be hard to back out of to meet emissions-reduction goals by 2050.

Terri Ackerman of the Concord Select Board noted that she has been designated to draft a joint letter from the four towns, brief and narrow in scope, which the Concord Select Board will review at its June 26 meeting. Ms. Ackerman will share the letter with the other HATS Select Board members, so they can bring it to their boards for comment over the next few weeks. Ms. Escobedo cautioned that the letter should clearly state that it is a draft and not yet reviewed or adopted by Concord. The committee discussed the ideal timeframe for sending a letter to the governor, and determined that, while there is no clear deadline, sooner is better. Ms. Coppe reminded the committee that in the past, proposed developments at Hanscom failed due to extensive public opposition; the governor did not step in to delay or stop a project.

Municipal Updates

Bedford: The Town is accepting applications for a new Town Manager, with the hope of having someone in place in the early fall. The new fire station building process is underway: the building committee, architects, and owner's project manager have held meetings with abutters, the Historic District

Commission, and the broader community, and the Fire Department is almost finished compiling its programmatic needs. The Energy & Sustainability Committee is requesting that the Select Board support a Town Meeting article in the fall to opt in to the state's Specialized Energy Code.

Concord: Preparations are well underway for the 250th; the challenge now is to see what kind of support (particularly financial) will come from the state. The Town is engaged in a campaign to bring MBTA Communities zoning to the next town meeting and has hired consultants to help with those efforts.

Lexington: The Town is starting a composting pilot program July 1 through Black Earth with 2,000 homes, aiming to reduce tipping fees and trash volumes. The Select Board recently voted \$500K from the Town's ARPA funds to go toward the 250th celebration. Mr. Hornig said that the Planning Board is implementing regulations to go along with MBTA Communities zoning, in expectation of applications coming in within several months. Ms. Coppe reported on the Tracer Lane solar installation on the Waltham line, noting that abutters and other entities are suing the Planning Board due to the proposed cutting of 800 trees to support the solar array.

Lincoln: Initial cost estimates for the Community Center project came in quite high, due to inflation. The Select Board will be reviewing a report from the climate action plan team on Monday night. Mr. Taylor noted that the Planning Board is working on its response to the Housing Choice Act, rezoning parts of community to be compliant. They are also considering rezoning Lincoln's mall area to be consistent with HCA, although that would not fall under the act since it is a commercial area.

Hanscom/Massport Updates

Hanscom AFB: Mr. Kernusky from HAFB reported that the May 23 hiring event in Burlington to fill 400 positions went very well, and they may hold a similar event in the future. The base is currently planning to replace its substation to improve its energy resiliency. HAFB was also recently selected as a pilot base for the nontactical vehicle fleet electrification program, to replace 70% of its nontactical vehicles with electric vehicles. The Sartain Gate upgrade is well underway, and the project is expected to be done in early 2024. Col. Enriquez, the base commander, would love to come speak to HATS at a future meeting.

Massport: Ms. Goodspeed from Massport reported on the 2022 Annual Noise Report, which she presented at HFAC on June 20. Massport is testing an electric transit van for its maintenance department. Signature Flight Support is moving into its new facility and will demolish its old facility this summer. Construction for the Runway 5-23 rehabilitation project began June 5 and will continue through mid July; Massport has received no complaints from residents or public safety thus far.

National Park Service: Ms. Monteleone reported on the Great American Outdoors Project. Construction on Phase 1, to rehabilitate buildings, is in full swing, and Phase 2 for trail rehabilitation has started. Phase 3, landscape rehabilitation, is out with the contracting office, with pre-bid walkthroughs scheduled for June 29. They are looking to award that contract by the end of the fiscal year on September 30.

Discussion of Future Meeting Schedule Topics

Mr. Lucente reviewed the list of potential meeting topics discussed in May.

Ms. Coppe suggested adding state legislators as guests. Mr. Hutchinson agreed that hearing from state representatives would be of particular interest. Ms. Mitchell noted that Christopher Eliot, chair of HFAC, has been in touch with staff from Rep. Katherine Clark's office, and may be able to help arrange a joint meeting of HFAC and HATS to discuss issues around the North Airfield project and the jurisdiction thereof.

Mr. Hornig suggested MBTA Communities zoning would be of great interest as well, since most towns are bringing this issue to Town Meeting this year.

Updates on administrative action items

- Ms. Mitchell reported that Mike Rosenberg, former HATS representative from Bedford, is still working to transfer ownership of the website domain. Mr. Hornig has access to the website and has updated it with all the material he currently has.
- Mr. Lucente noted the vacancies in HATS representatives among the four towns.
- Mr. Hutchinson reported that Mr. Dwyer, former HATS representative from Lincoln, cannot locate minutes from the June 2022 meeting; neither can Ms. Escobedo.

Approve Meeting Minutes from May 18, 2023

Mr. Hutchinson moved to approve the minutes from May 18, 2023, as amended; Ms. Mitchell seconded. Roll call vote: Ms. Mitchell, aye; Mr. Hutchinson, aye; Ms. Escobedo, aye; Mr. Lucente, aye. The motion passed 4-0-0.

Adjourn

Mr. Hutchinson moved to adjourn; Ms. Mitchell seconded. Roll call vote: Ms. Mitchell, aye; Mr. Hutchinson, aye; Ms. Escobedo, aye; Mr. Lucente, aye. The motion passed 4-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:39pm.

Future Meeting Dates: September 21, 2023 (remote), and November 16, 2023

Respectfully submitted,
Emily Mitchell
Bedford Select Board Member