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Wednesday, August 25, 2004

DeKalb airport gets new manager

By Bill Gisel

AUBURN — The DeKalb County Board of Aviation Commissioners has found a new manager for the DeKalb County Airport.

Russ Couchman of Milwaukee, Wis., will assume the duties of airport manager in mid-September, said Brad Stump, aviation board treasurer.

Couchman replaces Wade Troth, who left the job earlier this month for a similar position in South Dakota.

“We received 45 to 50 resumes and narrowed the field to three very solid candidates that we interviewed,” Stump said.

The DeKalb County Commissioners on Monday approved offering Couchman the job. His identity was not released until he accepted the offer.

“He has experience at McClellan-Palomar Airport in San Diego and General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee,” Stump reported.

Before his interview, Stump said, Couchman spent several hours driving around DeKalb County and northern Allen County.

“He feels DeKalb County is a great place for his wife and him to raise their three children,” Stump said. “The board is excited to have him join the airport.”

Stump said a \$150,000 Federal Aviation Administration grant to the DeKalb County Airport, announced Tuesday by U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar, will be used for wetland mitigation planning.

“It is a yearly entitlement formerly called AIR-21 funds and now known as Flight 100 funds,” Stump explained. “DeKalb County has taken advantage of this source of funds for the last four years.

“The grant money this year is to be used for wetland mitigation planning and a traffic study of the roads around the airport,” he said.



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According to Stump, the wetland mitigation planning is needed “because we are running out of space for new hangars along the north side of the airport, and hangar development along the south side has to contend with existing wetlands.”

The plan is to determine the location and extent of the wetlands, then create a plan for mitigating them as funds and suitable mitigation sites come available, he explained.

“Once the plan is in place, the existing wetland on the airport will be removed, and new wetlands will be constructed at locations away from the airport,” he said.

“This will not only allow for hangar development, but also should remove a bird attractant and reduce the potential for aircraft striking birds.”

The traffic study will provide information for planning of future runway extensions, which would impact C.R. 29, Stump said.

“Exactly what impact that would have is not yet known,” he said.

He said runway expansion is a necessary part of the airport’s continued growth. The current runway is 5,003 feet long and the Airport Layout Plan shows the potential for lengthening the runway to 7,000 feet.

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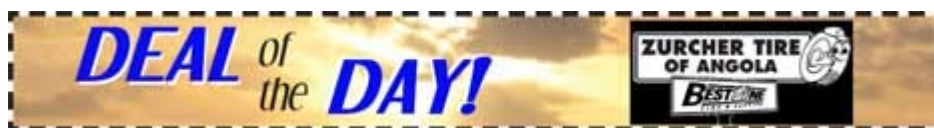
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