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Saturday, October 22, 2005

Board to buy land for longer runway

By Bill Gisel

AUBURN — With the sale of a \$2 million bond issue closing Oct. 27, the DeKalb County Airport's board of aviation commissioners is proceeding with plans to buy the remainder of the Lloyd and Barbara Dollier farm east of the airport.

A closing on the property has been set for Nov. 1, the board heard Friday afternoon. The \$440,000 cost will give the airport the remainder of the property it needs to lengthen the airport runway to accommodate larger jet aircraft.

Other uses for the bond issue, as approved by the DeKalb County Council when it authorized the bond issue, are:

- \$750,000 for the expansion of the terminal building to provide space for existing and future airport tenants, and
- about \$600,000 for taxiway and ramp expansion associated with a new corporate hangar being built by Rieke Corp.

Federal reimbursements will pay back a portion of the ramp and taxiway costs, according to board member Brad Stump.

Friday's meeting saw the seating of new board member Phil Rader. He was appointed by the county commissioners after the state Legislature approved expanding the aviation commission from four to five members.

Todd McCutchan of Victory Aviation, the airport's fixed-base operator, reported Mid America Avionics will continue to lease space for a satellite operation at the airport after it completes a move to the Huntington airport.

According to McCutchan, Mid America, which sells, repairs and installs aircraft avionics, will keep two employees in Auburn. He said the lease will be for a month-to-month operation that leaves the company with the opportunity to grow both locations.

McCutchan also announced that Victory has hired a full-time flight instructor. He joins a staff



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of four part-time flight instructors.

Aviation gasoline sales have not increased since earlier this year, when the board dropped a 7 cents per gallon fuel flowage fee from the price of gas sold by Victory.

The board agreed it will revisit the issue next May. McCutchan and airport manager Russ Couchman will look at ways to improve personal relations with recreational aircraft owners, who generally buy fuel at other airports.

According to McCutchan, some airports that don't have a big turnover of fuel had lower-price gasoline because they purchased it before fuel prices spiked.

Couchman reported that snow removal equipment has been ordered, and while not all of the equipment will arrive before winter weather sets in, the airport should be able to adequately clear runways of snow.

"It won't be as good as we want it to be, but we will get there," he said.

Airport receives statewide award

AUBURN — The DeKalb County Airport has been named Airport of the Year by the Aviation Association of Indiana.

The award will be presented to the DeKalb County Commissioners at 11:15 a.m. Oct. 31 by a representative of the AAI, according to airport manager Russ Couchman.

The award comes with a \$1,000 grant to be presented to a not-for-profit community organization, and the board of aviation commissioners has selected the Hoosier Air Museum as the recipient.

Couchman said the award is given after an evaluation of Indiana airports' work in promoting aviation safety, education, economic development and corporate citizenship.

The DeKalb airport was a finalist in the AAI competition last year.

Participating with the AAI in the award are the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Indiana Department of Transportation Aeronautics Section and other aviation industry sponsors.

The award was announced last week during the AAI's annual convention at Pokagon State Park.

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