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News XML

Posted on Sat, May. 27, 2006

Operator doesn't OK DeKalb airport lease

By Angela Mapes
The Journal Gazette

AUBURN – The DeKalb County Airport's longtime fixed-base operator announced Friday that it couldn't accept the terms of a lease renewal.

The Board of Aviation Commissioners voted to hire a consultant to draft and market a request nationwide for proposals for a new fixed-base operator.

As the fixed-base operator, Victory Aviation leases space from the airport and receives its cash flow from fuel sales and its charter air operation.

The board and Victory Aviation have been working since the beginning of the year to renew the operator's lease for five more years.

Victory Aviation has operated the airport since 2002, when it was formed from Kruse Aviation.

Victory Aviation could not accept a rent increase of five-percent every year for five years that the Board of Aviation Commissioners wanted, Todd McCutchan, president of Victory Aviation, told the board.

Victory Aviation officials felt the increase was above fair-market value, McCutchan said. The company, however, intends to submit a proposal.

"I think this is the fairest way to go about this," airport manager Russ Couchman said after the meeting. "The fairest thing is to let the market decide."

The company has been operating the airport on a month-by-month basis.

McCutchan said Victory Aviation will continue operating the airport in the interim.



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During the March meeting, Victory Aviation owner Dean Kruse told the board his company already is being charged too much for the space, based on comparisons Victory Aviation made to fixed-base operators at larger airports, such as Kokomo, Muncie, Goshen and Elkhart.

Board Treasurer Brad Stump said at the time that Misner and Associates of Fort Wayne had appraised space in the airport's terminal building at \$4 per square foot and in the service hangar at \$2.65 per square foot.

Victory Aviation has the option of getting another appraisal at its own expense but has not done so, and board members have been hesitant to dismiss the professional appraisal, which cost \$7,500.

The board's next public meeting will be at 1 p.m. June 16 in the airport terminal building, 2710 County Road 60 in Auburn.

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