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New authority governs DeKalb airport

Published:: Wednesday January 26, 2011

AUBURN – The DeKalb County Board of Aviation dissolved Jan. 3 to make way for the newly created DeKalb County Airport Authority, according to the authority's commissioners. The authority was created the same day.

An independent entity, the authority is charged with the operation and oversight of the DeKalb County Airport, just as the board was before. The difference, according to commissioner Brad Stump, is that the authority is now its own taxing unit, although he said county residents won't see any increase in their tax bills with the switch.

"The same amount of monies will be allocated to the airport with no tax increase," Stump said. "But we can now move forward from the traditional borrow-spend-repay mentality to a save-spend-save method." That, in turn, will benefit county residents, he said.

Jim Mason has been elected president of the new Authority, with Stump serving as vice president. George Wappes is the secretary and Russ Couchman, airport manager, will be the treasurer. Each will hold his post for one year.

Laura Gaerte, co-owner of Century Aviation, the airport's fixed base operator, reported that Century Aviation won a bid to be a preferred FlexJet landing site for the next two years. FlexJet is a fractional jet ownership subsidiary of Montreal-based aircraft company Bombardier.

"The airport can hope to see increased traffic due to winning this bid," Couchman said. "(That) means increased fuel sales, increased revenue due to ramp fees, hangar fees, lavatory service fees and fuel flowage fees, etc." Couchman said the new contract won't necessarily be a monetary windfall for the airport, but added, "It is a very positive event for Century and the airport authority."

The authority also has approved a new capital improvement plan. Paul Shaffer, civil engineer and manager of airport development with Butler, Fairman and Seufert, said a proposed 2,000-foot runway extension dominates the plan. He added that the extension could be completed by 2015 if funds from the Federal Aviation Administration are dispersed in a timely manner.

The next meeting of the airport authority commissioners will be Feb. 18 at 1 p.m. at the airport.

This story was posted on dekalbstar.com at 11 a.m. Tuesday.