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## Civil Air Patrol may make airport its home

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AUBURN — The DeKalb County Airport may be landing a new tenant. Airport manager Russ Couchman announced at a recent DeKalb County Airport Authority meeting that the Civil Air Patrol Squadron is looking for a new home to base its flight planning and equipment storage.

Laura Gaerte of Century Aviation, the airport's fixed base operator, said the patrol is looking to consolidate locations. The patrol is already storing its plane in the airport's T-hangar, but currently holds its meetings at the Hoosier Air Museum and houses its equipment at Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Fort Wayne, she said.

"We consider it an honor to have the Civil Air Patrol want to call our airport home," Couchman said. "We pride ourselves on our operational readiness, and clearly this is a pretty important for the patrol as well."

The proposed relocation would see the patrol using the airport for office space as well as for flight planning, briefing, debriefing and more, Couchman said.

"We want to be selective and lease the open space to aviation tenants that will have a positive impact for the airport and local community," Couchman said. The potential added revenue is a good thing as well, Couchman said.

The potential revenue may come in handy, as the airport's final bond payment of \$244,800 is expected to be paid off in June. According to Couchman, DeKalb County has budgeted for the payment, but because taxes are collected twice per year, the airport will only receive half of the bond payment in June, with the remaining balance paid in December when the second round of taxes is collected.

"Unfortunately due to the timing, the county will be short on the due date," he said. To make up for the shortfall, Couchmans said authority board members have spoken with the DeKalb County auditor about possible solutions.

"We have spoken to the county auditor, and one possible solution would be for the county to pay the payment out of (its rainy day fund) and then pay themselves back later in the year, when taxes come in," Couchman said.

The Federal Aviation Administration has accepted the airport's environmental application for a runway extension. Paul Shaffer, civil engineer and manager of airport development with Butler, Fairman and Seufert, said the FAA likely would spend a few months tweaking the application before it is approved and ready to be taken to the public.

"Once the FAA is satisfied with the (application), we can then start the project which, as always, it contingent on funding," Couchman said. The project will include building wetlands to replace those that will be modified during the extension, burying power lines, purchasing property near the proposed extension and construction of the new runway. Couchman said the project has a 2015 timeframe.

"For the most part, it will be difficult for the outsider to tell that we are even in the process until we start moving dirt several years from now," Couchman said.

*This story was posted on dekalbstar.com at 10 a.m. Thursday.*