

Airport needs loan to make bond payment

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AUBURN - The DeKalb County Airport Authority plans to ask the DeKalb County Council for a loan from the county's rainy day fund. The money would be used to cover part of the airport's final remaining bond payment, which expires this month.

In the past, the airport has had two bond payments per year, which coincide with the spring and fall property tax payments. The final payment of \$244,800 is due June 30 and presents some challenges for the airport, said authority treasurer Brad Stump.

"When the bond payment is due later this month, we are only collecting the spring taxes at that time," Stump said. "That leaves us with half of the amount to make the bond payment."

Paying the entire bond payment out of the airport's current funds would leave operations quite lean, Stump said.

That leaves at least two other options to handle the situation, he said. The most preferable solution is to tap into the county's rainy day fund, Stump said. He and airport manager Russ Couchman pitched the idea to council members at a meeting Monday. A more formal request will be made at the council's next meeting, Stump said.

"We don't know what the shortfall will be until we know how much in taxes will be collected," Stump said. "We will essentially be asking to borrow just enough to cover the bond payment."

In the proposal, the county would pay the shortfall from the rainy day fund, and then reimburse itself when the fall tax payments are made.

The balance in the rainy day fund is nearly \$1 million, which would be enough to cover the bond shortfall, said DeKalb County Auditor John Fetters.

If, for some reason, using rainy day funds doesn't pan out, Stump said he is optimistic the airport could take out a short-term, commercial loan to cover the shortfall. The airport authority, though, will leave that option on the table as a last resort.

"(A commercial loan) would be our last choice. We'd hate to waste the taxpayers' money on paying interest, if we don't have to," Stump said.

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