

Published March 21, 2008 04:45 am - Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute now plans to open in the autumn of 2009 in the former CommutAir buildings at the former Clinton County Airport.

Aeronautical school delays opening one year

Plattsburgh institute now plans to open fall 2009

By DAN HEATH
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PLATTSBURGH -- Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute has delayed its opening until the autumn of 2009.

CV-TEC and Clinton Community College remain partners in development of the institute, a Federal Aviation Administration-certified Part 147 Airframe and Powerplant school.

The partners originally intended to open the school this fall.

CV-TEC Director Dr. Bary Mack and Clinton Community College Interim President Dr. Frederick Woodward issued a joint e-mail detailing recent developments that led to the delayed opening.

"While regrettable, this time delay will enable us to provide a world-class aeronautical facility for your students," Mack said.

The Development Corp. has been contracted to manage the project, which includes engineering design and renovations. Mack said that work is expected to begin this summer and last until the end of the year, which will delay the school's projected opening.

LEASE FOR SITE

In an interview last week, Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute Project Coordinator Jim McCartney said the FAA has given approval for Clinton County to temporarily lease the 17-acre CommutAir property at the former Clinton County Airport to CV-TEC. He said the Champlain Valley Education Services Board of Directors had unanimously agreed to move forward on a lease with the county.

When the county officially closes the airport, it must obtain fair market value for the property, McCartney said. The former CommutAir facilities at the Clinton County Airport were recently appraised at \$1.09 million.

FUNDS SOUGHT

CV-TEC, as managing partner of the Aeronautical Institute, recently submitted a \$2 million funding request to the Empire State Development Corp., McCartney said.

That would cover the money to acquire the CommutAir buildings at fair market value, \$610,000 for renovations of the buildings and \$300,000 to install an environmentally friendly photoelectric system.

CV-TEC would turn that money over to the county, which could then use it at Plattsburgh International Airport, McCartney said.

"That would finally get us by the fair-market-value issue that constrained our progress."

McCartney said Aeronautical Institute officials are grateful to U.S. Rep. John McHugh, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, State Sen. Betty Little and Assemblywomen Janet Duprey and Teresa Sayward for their support of the institute.

job prospects

McCartney said CV-TEC and Clinton Community College began discussions to create the school in 2004, well before Laurentian Aerospace Corp. announced its plan to build a maintenance, repair and overhaul facility at Plattsburgh International Airport in 2006.

Laurentian has thus far been unable to secure financing for construction of two hangars large enough to allow work on wide-bodied aircraft, an operation that is expected to employ hundreds of workers.

"Since that time, our vision and goal has not changed," McCartney said. "We are committed to establishment of a vitally important program that will have business-related, education-related and financially related positive ramifications for the North Country."

The Aeronautical Institute has received communications from airports, including Newark International, Albany International and Burlington International, indicating their interest in graduates from the school.

"We know from other schools, their students are hired even before they graduate," McCartney said.

He said Mack and Plattsburgh City School District Superintendent Jake Short are working on a plan to allow students from other school districts to attend a half day of classes at Plattsburgh High School so they can participate in the aeronautical program.

That would be especially beneficial to students from southern Essex County, where the distance between the schools would otherwise make participation difficult, if not impossible.

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