

Start-up Delayed

Aeronautical institute plans pushed back

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Editor's Note: Since this article went to press, new developments have arisen. According to announcement made March 19 by CV-TEC director Dr. Barry W. Mack and Dr. Frederick Woodward, Clinton Community College interim president, the start-up date for the Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute has changed. The institute will now open in September 2009 instead of this fall. The change is to ensure "the entire facilities, program and curriculum will be completed and ready to receive students with the highest possible standards in place."

PLATTSBURGH - An institute to train potentially hundreds of students in the field of aviation technology is still planned to be established as early as this fall.

According to project coordinator James R. McCartney III, the Champlain Valley Educational Services Board of Education unanimously agreed March 13 to pursue a lease agreement with the Clinton County Legislature for the old CommutAir building facilities at the former Clinton County Airport. The buildings would be used to house the Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute, a joint venture between CV-TEC and Clinton Community College, beginning as early as this September. Currently, the former Clinton County Airport buildings are being utilized by CV-TEC to house equipment for the institute.

Several details of a lease agreement have to be ironed out, said Mr. McCartney, including cost and the length of the contract.

"The details of the lease are still forthcoming, but we're very, very optimistic that we'll be able to affordably lease the former CommutAir facilities in such a way it will at least provide us the opportunity to begin the renovation work and to begin adapting the space for our instructional needs," Mr. McCartney said in an interview last Friday.

CVES Board of Education President Larry G. Barcomb confirmed the decision, stating the board is still involved in ongoing negotiations with the county and the college.

"We think it's going to come along fine, we really do. There are just some details we need to work out between county, CV-TEC and Clinton Community College," said Mr. Barcomb. "I'd say in the next 30-60 days we hope to have some real, definitive answers."

The key elements to get the institute off the ground are already in place, said Mr. McCartney. The curriculum for the institute is nearing final approval by the State University of New York system and state Education Department and the majority of equipment and instructional material necessary to obtain Federal Aviation Administration certification has been obtained. Last year, approximately \$4 million worth of aviation equipment was acquired from the College of the Ozarks in Branson, Mo., and more than \$80,000 worth of aircraft engines, new engine stands and training manuals was obtained from Lycoming Engines, an aircraft engine manufacturer based in Williamsport, Pa.

In addition, the institute is expected to receive two more aircraft, a T-39 Sabreliner and a fully-equipped Huey helicopter, said Mr. McCartney.

"The one remaining variable that is so critical is the establishing of our campus, and that is why we're so very pleased with our board's decision last night," Mr. McCartney said.

If an agreement is struck for the former CommutAir building, the facility would provide more than 40,000 square feet of instructional space. The facility, in addition to the institute's curriculum, would still need to meet the approval of the FAA.

Currently, CV-TEC is also waiting for the finalization of a memorandum of understanding with Clinton Community College for the operation of the institute. It is expected the curriculum for high school students would be overseen by CV-TEC

during the day and by Clinton Community College for adult students during the night.

High school enrollment is "promising," said Mr. McCartney, with seats still available for junior and senior students in Clinton and Essex counties for next year.

An overview of the aeronautical institute and demonstration of a turbine engine will be part of an open house at CV-TEC this Thursday, March 27, from 6-8 p.m. The public will be invited to tour the temporary PAI hangers at 13 Airport Road in addition to the CV-TEC facility on Military Turnpike.