

Airport expansion carries \$3 million price tag

Tenants currently lease the airport's 32 small hangars.

By JEFF M. HARDISON

Plans for significant improvements to one of the economic engines that provides growth to Lake City remains on track.

One could say this future construction project is preparing to fly.

Lake City Municipal Airport will have a new terminal and a string of new hangars at an estimated cost of almost \$2.8 million, which includes a 15 percent contingency of almost \$360,000.

Other concepts presented for the future terminal and hangars started at \$3.2 million. But the Airport Committee voted Thursday to recommend City Council approve the least expensive and most effective version. The matter is scheduled to be on the Nov. 3 City Council agenda.

Passero Associates, a Jacksonville-based engineering firm, started the design phase of the new terminal and a string of hangars to add to the existing hangars. The startup designs are shapes of buildings with square-feet, Passero Program Manager Don K. Ramdass said.

This is the initial design, with complete designs and permits slated to be ready in May of 2009. Bidding is to start in June of 2009, according to the current plan.

The cost of construction is estimated at \$180 per square foot, and furniture is incidental to the cost. In other words, there is no line-item for furniture.

Funding for the project comes from the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and from local sources, Mayor Stephen Witt said. The local funding is generated at the airport, Witt added.

Tenants currently lease the 32 small hangars and the four, big, corporate jet hangars, according to Airport General Manager Tom Sawyer.

The airport serves as a sort of magnet for more business. Corporate jets from various companies often use Lake City Municipal Airport, Sawyer said, because of its 8,000-foot runway.

Aircraft fuel sales comprise another portion of the economic activity at the airport. There is a 12,000-gallon



Don K. Ramdass of Passero Associates of Jacksonville (left) speaks Thursday with Roland Luster of the Florida Department of Transportation about plans for Lake City Municipal Airport. The men were among the people at the Airport Committee meeting in City Hall. JEFF M. HARDISON/Lake City Reporter

tank for jet fuel and a 10,000-gallon tank for airplane fuel on the property, Sawyer said.

The future terminal and hangars are anticipated to be under construction starting in October of 2009, Sawyer said. The new terminal will be 6,000 square feet, he said. A conference room, an office and possibly a restaurant are to be part of the facility.

Sawyer, Witt, City Councilman George Ward and City Manager Scott Reynolds are the Airport Committee.

Lake City Municipal Airport covers 1,100 acres. Runway 10-28 runs northwest to southeast and is 8,000 feet long by 150 feet wide. Runway 05-23 runs north-northeast to south-southwest and is 4,000 feet long by 75 feet wide.

Lake City Municipal Airport is one of the 112 public-use general aviation airports in Florida, according to an DOT study on the economic impact of aviation in Florida. Community airports support more than 23,000 jobs in Florida, the DOT said.