

# County plans could solve dispute near airport

## Land might be purchased for aviation campus

BY RICHARD CRAVER

Winston-Salem Journal

A potential land transaction by Forsyth County could resolve a legal dispute between Piedmont Advantage Credit Union and Pied-

mont Hawthorne Aviation LLC.

The promise of a resolution to the lawsuit persuaded federal Judge Catherine Eagles to issue a 90-day stay last Thursday, until Sept. 28, on considering legal motions.

PACU alleges in a complaint filed Jan. 11 that Piedmont Hawthorne, doing business as Landmark

Aviation, damaged the 17,532-square-foot facility at 3810 N. Liberty St. "by the knowing and unabated continued migration of oil and other hazardous substances from (its) aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul facility" at 3820 N. Liberty St., a 74,568-square-foot building on a 7.93-acre site.

The property is across

the street from Smith Reynolds Airport.

Landmark responded Feb. 15 by requesting that the lawsuit be dismissed.

The role of Forsyth County Board of Commissioners was explained in Eagles' response.

As part of the \$2 billion Connect NC bond proposal that was approved in a statewide referendum

in March, \$350 million in funding was dedicated to N.C. Community College System projects.

Forsyth Technical Community College is proposing a \$16 million aviation campus at Smith Reynolds Airport to provide training that people need for jobs at companies around the airport.

Money for the project

would be part of a proposed \$65 million bond referendum that Forsyth commissioners are considering for the November ballot, said Gary Green, Forsyth Tech's president.

If voters approve it, Forsyth Tech could begin construction within two to three years and the campus could open by 2019.

**AIRPORT, Page A6**



# Airport

From Page A1

The legal filing indicates that some of the Forsyth bond referendum funding could be used by the county to help pay for buying the property in the dispute. The filing did not disclose a potential land purchase estimate.

"The parties believe that if the property is purchased by (the county), such may result in a settlement and amicable resolution (of complaints) without involving the court further and promoting judicial economy," according to the filing.

"All parties agree that they do not want to proceed further on the pending motions without first exhausting the possibility" of a settlement.

David Plyler, chairman of the Forsyth commissioners, declined to comment Friday when asked about the board's potential involvement in buying the land.

## Suit claims negligence

PACU claims that Landmark is violating the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act and the federal Oil Pollution and Hazardous Substances Control Act, in addition to claims of private nuisance, trespass to real property, and negligence to adjoining landowners.

The defendants deny each claim.

The credit union requests reimbursement and punitive damages for costs and losses because of environmental contamination to its property. It wants the court to issue a permanent injunction requiring Landmark to abate and remediate the site.

PACU said it has been unsuccessful since August 2014 in trying to sell the site because of the contamination issues. The defendants said they have refused two requests from the credit union to buy the property.

Landmark acknowledges that contamination has occurred on its property and that it is cooperating with the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality on remediation for that property. It said it is cooperating with the DEQ's investigation of the other property but denies it "knowingly permitted any migration of contaminants onto the PACU property."

In a legal twist, Landmark filed a third-party complaint against Jim Taylor, retired top executive of Landmark and current chairman of PACU. Taylor has filed for a dismissal of the complaint.

Piedmont Hawthorne said that Taylor should be

"Our existing tenants are always seeking qualified people. ... We think it will revitalize and help Smith Reynolds Airport."

Mark Davidson  
airport director

held liable, if a court or jury finds Landmark liable, since Taylor had management responsibilities over the Landmark facility. In that scenario, Landmark wants a judgment entered against Taylor in its favor "for contribution and/or indemnity."

## Aviation industry training

The Forsyth Tech campus would train technicians and mechanics for companies, such as North State Aviation, B/E Aerospace, Aero 8 and Signature Flight Support, airport officials said.

Green said that the proposed campus would address the need for more employees in the aviation industry.

College officials are considering buying and renovating a 75,000-square-foot hangar across North Liberty Street from the airport, Green said. Forsyth Tech also is considering building a new hangar that would be between 100,000 to 125,000 square feet.

"We don't have any drawing on it yet," Green said.

The college would offer an associate's degree in aviation technology at its airport campus, Green said. The school is considering an aviation electronics program that would train people to work on the electronics in planes.

The Federal Aviation Administration would certify those training programs, he said.

Forsyth Tech's campus at the airport would complement similar programs at Guilford Technical Community College, Green said. "The demand for these jobs would be more than Guilford Tech alone could provide."

Airport officials support Forsyth Tech's plans, said Mark Davidson, the airport's director.

"Our existing tenants are always seeking qualified people in metal work, aircraft mechanics and avionics," Davidson said. "We think it will revitalize and help Smith Reynolds Airport."

rcraver@wsjournal.com  
(336) 727-7376  
@rcraverWSJ