

Forsyth Tech seeks \$16M aviation campus

Smith Reynolds facility part
of potential bond package

BY JOHN HINTON

Winston-Salem Journal

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.

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

Forsyth Tech President Gary Green said the proposed campus would address the need for employees in the aviation industry.

"There are great opportunities to grow jobs around the airport and in our region," Green said. "Some employers need an ongoing workforce of skilled technicians. That's our mission, to provide these type of workers with these opportunities."

The money for the project would be part of the proposed \$65 million bond referendum that the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners is considering for the November ballot, Green said. If voters approve it, Forsyth Tech could begin construction within two to three years. The aviation campus could be open by 2019.

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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 degree in aviation technology at its airport campus, Green said. The school is considering an aviation electron-

ics 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," Green said.

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

"Our existing tenants are always seeking quali-

fied people in metal work, aircraft mechanics and avionics," Davidson said. "We think it will revitalize and help Smith Reynolds Airport."

Scott Piper, the chairman of the Airport Commission of Forsyth County, agreed with Davidson. The commission oversees operations at the airport.

"This is very necessary," Piper said of the proposed campus. "It will provide educational opportunities and jobs to the area."

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