

Aviation park gets \$600,000 for next two years

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EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP — The county will provide \$600,000 over two years to further fund the operations of the National Aviation Research and Technology Park in the township.

The \$300,000 a year will cover part of a contract with the New Jersey Innovation Institute to administer and market the park, as well as costs associated with running it, said Atlantic County Chief of Staff Howard Kyle.

The funds came to the county from the Atlantic County Utilities Authority, and were then given to the Atlantic County Improvement Authority, which approved the disbursement at its meeting last week.

The ACUA has provided the same amount annually to the park for the past three years, said County Administrator Jerry DeRosso.

NJII, however is a newcomer, having contracted with the park starting in December.

“(NJII staff) will be the individuals working with the FAA on trying to entice other entities in the aviation field to come in to look at the park,” said DeRosso.

NJII is a corporation of the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and will report to the aviation park’s board of directors.

The \$600,000 is not seed money for a second building, DeRosso said. If a tenant were interested in a second building, the park’s board would need to decide on moving forward with additional funding.

The meeting was held in the first building to be built at the park, a 66,000-square-foot building. Its first floor will house NJIT and its NJII, the Federal Aviation Administration and a private firm whose lease is being finalized, said Improvement Authority Executive Director John Lamey.

The private firm is expected to pay about \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year to lease its relatively small space, said Lamey.

“This is an economic development project, not a real estate project,” said Lamey. “We are looking to cover costs. Our goal is for this building to kick off interest in the rest of the park.”

He said interest from companies is much greater now that there is a first building to visit.

The FAA’s 7,000-square-foot space is being provided for free in exchange for the FAA providing the land for the park, said Lamey.

The second and third floors are expected to be leased by a large entity that is pursuing the possibility of New Jersey Economic Development Authority tax credits, Lamey said.

That process has postponed finalizing of the lease, he said.

In 2016, Atlantic County guaranteed up to \$15.5 million in bonds for the first building in the aviation park in Egg Harbor Township and issued up to an additional \$7.5 million in county bonds for design and construction of the first building.

In other business, the Improvement Authority also approved a resolution for the county golf course, the John F. Gaffney Green Tree Golf Course in Egg Harbor Township, to participate in a reciprocal program with Ocean and Mercer counties.

It will allow Atlantic County residents to play two courses in Ocean County and two in Mercer County at the county resident rate, and residents of those counties to play at Green Tree at the Atlantic County resident rate, said Lamey.

The ACIA also authorized the ACIA to provide project management services to Atlantic County for \$4,500, for a project to make the Estell Manor Park Nature Center accessible to people with disabilities. The project is funded by a Community Development Block Grant.