

Study Outlines Recommendations to Maximize Economic Potential of Dutchess County Airport

Poughkeepsie, NY ... The Dutchess County Airport serves as an important county asset that currently provides an economic impact benefit of more than \$44 million annually. To optimize efficiency and effectiveness of the Dutchess County Airport, an independent operational and financial assessment was recently completed by airport industry experts Steven Baldwin Associates LLC. The assessment compares the Dutchess County Airport to several other comparably sized airports and evaluates survey input provided by airport users and stakeholders. Seven major initiatives are identified as necessary to implement for the airport to achieve financial self-sufficiency and best serve the County as a transportation and economic development resource.

Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro said, “The Dutchess County Airport is an important economic asset and already provides huge economic benefit for our community. We must maximize its potential as an unparalleled economic asset. Privatizing airport operations will assist in this important effort.”

According to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Master Records, the Dutchess County Airport ranks third among General Aviation airports in the New York State for total operations – takeoffs, landing and total based aircraft. (The FAA defines General Aviation airports as those not designated as commercial, cargo, or reliever.) Dutchess County Government currently serves as the airport’s Fixed Based Operator (FBO), operating as Dutchess Aviation. (An FBO is responsible for airport operations and can provide aeronautical services such as fueling, hangaring, tie-down and parking, aircraft rental, aircraft maintenance and other services). Additionally, the County subsidizes the airport to close any operating deficits, with the subsidy being reduced by 35% over the past two years.

The Operational & Financial Assessment report compared the Dutchess County Airport to five other municipal airports of similar operational size or competitor based on geographical location – Danbury Municipal Airport in CT, Lawrence Municipal Airport in MA, Reading Regional Airport in PA, Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport in Janesville, WI and the Waterbury-Oxford Airport in CT. The comparison found the Dutchess County Airport was the only one to provide its own FBO services, among other findings. The study also noted that airport maintenance was commonly the responsibility of the municipality and the County should continue to be responsible for the maintenance of the airport property as it was viewed

favorably in the survey input.

The final recommended initiatives for the Dutchess County Airport provided by Steven Baldwin Associates include:

- 1.) Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a privately-operated Fixed-Based Operator (FBO) to replace Dutchess Aviation.
- 2.) Initiate a water and sewer feasibility analysis.
- 3.) Develop an Airport-focused Marketing Plan.
- 4.) Restructure the Airport Advisory Board legislation to clarify membership criteria, meeting frequency, and board duties and responsibilities, among other items.
- 5.) Market existing vacant Airport property and real estate/land parcels.
- 6.) Engage current valuable tenants in talks to ensure continued tenancy at the Airport.
- 7.) Continue County operation of the facility, but consider relinquishing the FAA's Part 139 airport operating certification to achieve cost reductions.

In his 2014 State of the County Address earlier this week, County Executive Molinaro identified the need for water and sewer at the Airport and the opportunity to privatize operations with a contracted FBO as the two most critical of the recommendations. There is already progress on getting critical water and sewer infrastructure to the airport site. In December, the County was awarded a \$750,000 economic development grant through the Mid Hudson Economic Development Council and other funding opportunities are actively being pursued.

The County Executive also announced the County would shortly begin requesting proposals (RFP) to seek a privately-owned Fixed Base Operator, with the goal of smoothly transitioning from the County's FBO to a private firm without disruptions of critical aviation services (fueling, tie-downs, hanger leases).

The recommendations and other suggestions outlined in the operational and financial assessment will be reviewed over the next several weeks in conjunction with the Dutchess County Legislature and the Airport Advisory Committee and other interested parties to make final determination on the most appropriate path forward for this valuable County asset.

The full Dutchess County Airport Operational & Financial Assessment report can be found on the County's website at:

http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/Airport/AirportStudy_Dec2013.pdf

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