

Currituck, COA officials take look at design for Regional Aviation and Technical Training Center

By LINDA CAIN

A COA presence in Currituck. Marketable skills for citizens. Good salaries. The opportunity to have a future where born and raised.

There's a lot coming together in Currituck County right now — made even more brilliant by the dismal economy still hanging over most of the rest of the country.

It's been a long time getting to this place — understandably so, given it began with a vision and little on the ground besides potential. Staying true to that vision over the years is a feat in itself.

As county leaders change, citizens support waivers, political battles emerge, money comes and goes, the challenge to keep that vision moving forward is a real one. And those who remained steadfast, take a bow.

County manager Dan Scanlon was called once again "the man with the plan" Monday evening, when county officials got together with College of the Albemarle leaders to go over revisions of what will become the new Regional Aviation and Technical Training Center, a project that will bring multiple layers of benefits to Currituck County, its citizens and beyond.

"This will be good for Currituck County and the region,"

Scanlon said about the training center as he pointed to the partners that have come together at this central site in blip: local education, in the presence of Central Elementary School, and North Carolina State University via Currituck's Center for the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (and the location of Monday's meeting).

And now the third educational link with the fourth campus of COA at the training center, that

will sit just off the end of the runway at the county's airport.

But that's not all.

Scanlon went on to talk about other links at the same location — the county's commerce park, situated a distance behind Central School, is getting ready for business with a final phase of infrastructure, and a waste treatment plant (that will also serve others at the site) under construction, along with new roadways and entrances.

Not only will future businesses find sites that suit, they will also find job training and continuing education options onsite as well. Add to that the amenities to be found next door at the county's community center (that will also house a new senior center and the Parks and Recreation Department) and YMCA, along with the space and possibilities for hosting special events.

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As envisioned



COUNTY AND COA OFFICIALS got a look at architectural renderings of the new Regional Aviation and Technical Training Center that is expected to be ready for students by the fall semester of 2013. The project is a joint venture between Currituck County and College of the Albemarle and will become the college's fourth campus. (rendering courtesy M&A Architecture)

DESIGN

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In addition, the commerce park has the unique distinction of being located next to the county's airport, an ideal set up for many businesses. Then toss in the mid-county bridge and the link to Currituck's Outer Banks and people will be able to mix business, or participation in regional or national events and tournaments, with a vacation as well.

Adding another linking partner, later Monday night, the commissioners approved a lease agreement with Sentara Life Care as a tenant at the community center that will provide sports medicine and physical therapy.

"Job creation. Job creation. Job creation." That's what it's all about, Scanlon noted. It's not about the facilities drawn on the master plan, but the vision in that master plan, he added.

Homing in on the COA component in that vision, board of commissioners' chairman Vance Aydtlett commented that for a long time eastern North Carolina has been lacking job-training opportunities for students getting out of high school and for adults as well, thanking COA for partnering in the new training center.

One of those making comment on behalf of COA was Roger Lambertson, who was a manager of the county's airport a few years back and said he was impressed by how quickly the project is coming together, adding that when it's all complete, people will be job-ready when they walk out the door, opening employment opportunities for

people in the seven county region served by COA.

Angela Crawford Easterday with M&A Architecture out of Raleigh, commented that the training facility will put Currituck County on the map for aviation training, and will be a facility that others will visit to see what Currituck County and COA are doing right.

A primary design element inside the building will be visibility. A view when entering the building will be of the glass-fronted hangar. People will be able to see through transparent walls students working in the labs. They'll also be able to sit at an outdoor patio and watch the planes taking off and landing on the runway behind the building.

Easterday pointed to flexible classroom space, a roof design that gives wings to the front of the building, and added the facility will be visible to those playing ball on the ballfields at the community center/YMCA.

Inspiration Potential

The 40,000 square foot building (that grew from an initial 25,000 square foot concept) will offer aviation systems technology classes (including those that will be relocated from COA's Elizabeth City campus), machining technology and mechanical drafting — skills needed for jobs in aviation, but that will transfer to other industries as well, Dr. Kandi Deitemeyer, COA president, explained.

She thanked Scanlon, county commissioners and COA trustees for coming together on the vision for the facility, and said she is most grateful because it will be putting people to work in good jobs.

Dr. Deitemeyer commended the "incredible design" of the building and said she is excited about the hands-on learning that will be going on there, promising COA will provide the right equipment and right faculty.

As for the timetable, it was said of Harry L. Davis III, presi-

dent of Sussex Development Corporation (the same group that is bringing the community center/YMCA in ahead of schedule and under budget) "You can't ask for a better partner than that," Scanlon said earlier then told the group Monday night that the design documents and cost estimates will be completed by the end of the year.

Construction could then begin early in 2012, finished about a year later. Some classes could be offered for the spring semester of 2013 and all classes ready for the fall semester of 2013.

Chairman Aydtlett also pointed out that about nine months were shaved from the process that takes a project from design to completion by local legislation from the General Assembly that gave Currituck County a design/build option for construction projects — first put in place at the community center/YMCA, that will be finished just in time to get started on the training center.