

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT – AUGUST 2002

During August we worked out the wording for the lease of airport property to RGM Air for a new hanger. The lease document that you approved has been sent to Mr. Robert McCoy, President of RGM Air, but he has not sent back a signed copy yet. It is my understanding that his attorney is looking it over. His hanger will cost about \$100,000 and will measure 80' X 110' and will house two large twin engined propeller aircraft to be used for air charter service. The aircraft should be worth eight or ten times more than the hanger.

Milton and Margo Barnes are ready to built 10 t-hangers on the property they own at the airport. The Barnes' operate Helicopter Associates, a business that rebuilds Hughes 500 D's for resale. A t-hanger is a small t-shaped hanger meant to house one aircraft as long as it isn't really large. Typically they are 46 to 50 feet wide and about the same depth. Milton is confident that he can fill them as there 62 aircraft on the waiting list for hangers just at the Monroe Airport.

Still on the topic of the airport, yesterday Chris and I were interviewed at the airport by Channel 14. Chris and I covered the big picture idea of how the runway and the other infrastructure assets in the area are an important part of our overall economic development effort and also talked about specifics such as how the runway is being paid for, how many new hangers may be built, what new hangers and more aircraft will do for the tax base and the opportunity for an industrial park in the same area.

Hobbs Upchurch has met with the Airport Commission to discuss the recently completed sewer study. The study originally presented four options, but armed with more detailed elevation data, Hobbs refined the choices to two, with one standing out from a cost and practicality standpoint. One of the issues discussed was should we put a steel casing under the runway now while it can be done in a trench just in case we need to get sewer to the far side of the new runway in the future. The Airport Commission decided that doing it now rather than boring under the runway later would be a wise thing to do. That will be part of the recommendation stemming from the sewer study. Another issue was how to get water and sewer to the area where we plan for new hangers (north of the current hangers). The recommendation will be to put water and sewer on either side of a 25 foot county right-of-way that abuts the railroad right-of-way behind the current hangers.

The Draft Airport Policy has now been reviewed by the Airport Commission and by Jeff Cloud. All seemed to like it the way it is. A copy is included along with this report.

Jan Benton and I have done some additional work on the subdivision regulations, but still have a little more work to do to accommodate the request by several local realtors and attorneys to create a new type of subdivision mid way between a minor subdivision and a major subdivision. The new type, tentatively called a linear subdivision, would require large lots along a publicly maintained road, not needing utilities and causing minimal impact on the community or County Government. There are precedents for this in other parts of North Carolina, so this would not be an experiment, but would be following a trend used elsewhere.

I am working on a new project that is very interesting and has a lot of potential. A gentleman named Barry Jacobs has, for the past 18 months, been developing a business plan to grow fish (striped bass primarily) indoors in tanks. His facility would also include processing. The water would be filtered and reused as many times as possible and then the water would be used to grow hydroponic vegetables and shrimp both indoors and outdoors. I am setting up appointments for him with Wachovia, USDA Rural Development and Carolina Farm Credit. This project could mean as much as a \$10,000,000 investment and about 40 decent paying jobs. I would guess that we are several months from nailing down all the financial commitments he needs to make the project work. He has the interest of a local property owner in the Lilesville area, but that location isn't nailed down yet either. I took Barry to meet with Russell Sikes and Richard Melton at Extension and they were impressed with his plans. It helped that Barry had already made contact with the right people at NC State where an aquaculture program is ongoing.

I am still working on the rail project in Ansonville. There will be meetings with local truckers in late September. Right now it looks like the 27th, but that could change a day or so. The first use of the siding will be to offload pilings and poles onto trucks for delivery to customers or wholesalers.

Chris, Don Altieri, Fred Sparger and I attended the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) Committee meeting in Rockingham recently. That group is the steering committee set up to apply for a federal grant to help us devise a policy for the 8th Congressional District that will help all ten counties mitigate the loss of manufacturing jobs. A consultant, Flour Daniel, has been hired to do the application and to develop the strategy. The strategy will be developed on a county by county basis and on the district level. Our contact in Anson County, Clark Gillespy, began interviewing people from business and industry today. I set up nine interviews today and will set up four more next Thursday. The interviews are designed to let Flour know what the challenges and issues are here and also to learn something of our assets.

I have been working with a small company that wants to locate here that is in a fairly specialized business. The name of the business is Carolina's Medical Supply and they sell durable medical equipment especially to nursing homes. I told them about Medical Specialties and Hornwood because both companies

manufacture goods for the medical field. The business would start small, just a few people, but the potential for growth is there.

The Credit Union is looking for property to build a brand new, much larger facility. I have been asked to assist in the search for the site and I am delighted to do that. We are looking at three places at this time, but there are no stand outs yet. The new facility will cost about \$1,000,000.

I was out of work for about a week at the beginning of this month with pneumonia and a partly collapsed lung. I was in the hospital in Monroe. The finally figured out what to do and I am much better now.

The latest unemployment rate for Anson County is back up a little to 11.4% while the state rate increased to 6.8%. Richmond County is at 11.2%, Scotland is at 10.1% and Montgomery is at 9.0%. Our most recent high was in November of 2001 at 12.2%, our most recent low was in April of 2000 at 4.8% and this time last year we were at 11.6%.