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FLY-IN AND CAR SHOW 2022

A NEW Media Special Section



Shawano City-County Airport continues to grow, improve

Budget continues to be in black as state, federal funds utilized

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

Big changes are transforming the Shawano City-County Airport, but they're not taking a chunk of local taxpayer dollars.

Doug Engel with the airport commission informed the Shawano Common Council on July 13 that the facility is actually expected to come out ahead of its annual budget, which is \$130,625 this year. That is because much of the improvements and future plans come from state and federal funding, he said.

"We are a much bigger thing than the line item on your budget indicates," Engel said. "We are a small item on your budget, but we spend an awful lot of money out there, and it's Federal Aviation Administration money and state money (from the Bureau of Aviation)."

Engel said the airport is working on upgrading its management. He noted that Clarence Schampers, who has been part of the airport for decades, helps to maintain the airport. However, due to changes coming down the line to make it a much more viable part of the community for residents and tourists alike, the commission is seeking someone to handle all aspects of the airport, a task currently undertaken by the commission members themselves.

"We've got to upgrade the leadership of the airport," Engel said, noting there is no staff at the airport beyond mowing and plowing.

About \$50,000 has been budgeted for airport management, but the commission has not yet "pulled the trigger," according to Engel, claiming unspecified reasons. That is one of the main reasons the budget is expected to be well in the black by the time the year ends, he said.

The commission sold two hangars jointly owned by the city and Shawano County, according to Engel, noting that the doors on those hangars were too small to be used for certain aircraft. He said the commission also bought a hangar from Tom Wunderlich, who no longer needed his hangar.

"They were outdated and didn't work for our needs, so we did some shuffling," Engel said of the two municipal hangars sold. "We can use this to store transient aircraft in. When people come up for the weekend and want to have their plane indoors, we can actually rent space to them indoors. That moved our strategic plan up quite a bit, because we thought we were going to have to build a building, and that was going to take time and money to accomplish."



Various models of airplanes are parked all along the runway for visitors to observe at the Shawano Municipal Airport during the inaugural fly-in in 2021.

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The Ercoupe Owners Club brought 21 vintage planes to the Shawano Municipal Airport in July 2021.

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Fly-In aims to have something for whole family



Shawano resident Brian Wetherall sits in the front of a helicopter to learn the controls and act like he is flying at the 2021 Shawano Municipal Airport Fly-In and Car Show.

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At least 2,000 people flocked to the Shawano Airport for its first fly-in event in 2021, and Doug Engel of the airport commission says they've been working to build on that success for the 2022 event on Aug. 20.

This year's plans include combining it with a car show, increasing the number of Warbirds flying in, parachute jumpers and "an award-winning food truck," he said.

"From a tourism standpoint, this is huge," Engel said. "We're going to make it bigger and better."

The commission also plans to expand its Young Eagles program, which helps children ages 8-17 "to fly and experience flight," according to Engel. Nationally, 3 million children have gone through the program; at last year's fly-in, 76 children got to participate.

"We're going to do that again this year," Engel said.

The Fly-In and Car Show is scheduled for 9 a.m.-2 p.m., with a variety of antique, classic and warbird aircraft on display on the tarmac and dozens of vintage cars and trucks expected to drive in. Admission is free.

Learn to Fly Intro Discovery Flights with Pilotsmith Inc. are part of the show, with a fee required, and young people ages 8-17 may take a free flight thanks to EAA Young Eagles Flights.

For more information, visit www.shawanoairport.com

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Shawano airport is good for local businesses

During his report to the Shawano Common Council this summer, Doug Engel of the airport commission said that increased activity at the airport means increased activity in local businesses, especially those that cater to tourists.

"We're getting people to fly into Shawano again," Engel said. "The activity is picking up. They're going to the local restaurants and hotels. They're walking off the airport. It's working out pretty well."



DOUG ENGEL

The commission is in the middle of a master plan update, Engel said, something that is necessary in order to continue to receive FAA and state funding. While other small airports in the state are pushing back on having to do master plans, Shawano's stepped up to show it can be done, he said.

"We volunteered to do it. The bureau asked us if we'd be the first general aviation airport to get it done," Engel said. "The Bureau of Aviation and FAA are paying for this master plan and reengineering project — a \$450,000 master plan update being taken care of for us."

The commission is also working to return fuel operations to the airport. Engel said that it had fueling capabilities when it could all be done manually, but the commission plans to take that back at the beginning of 2023.

There are a number of projects planned for the airport in the future, much of it being paid for with state and federal dollars. This includes a \$1 million parallel taxiway, \$400,000 for rehabilitating the airport's sea plane base, another \$400,000 for snow removal equipment, \$250,000 to remove obstructions at the airport and \$230,000 to set up runway glide paths.

"It just makes sense for us to manage the fuel system," Engel said. "The city and the county both have fuel vendor licenses and insurance to cover that. There's no reason that needs to be done by someone on the outside."



Proud old warbirds will again be again be on hand for the second annual Shawano Municipal Airport Fly-In and Car Show on Aug. 20.

FILE | NEW MEDIA



LEFT: Frank Swartz puts the finishing touches on the reconstruction of Runway 1230 at Shawano Municipal Airport in August 2021. RIGHT: Visitors to the 2021 Fly-In and Car Show were treated to a variety of vintage and customized cars.

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