

Friday Night on the Square a success, Airport forging ahead with plans

Written by

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The Washington County Chamber of Commerce recently met on Thursday, May 23, 2013 at the Piper Flight Museum, located on the Salem Airport grounds. Lowell and Rhonda DuPoy, co-owners and operators of the museum, sponsored this month's meeting.

The 2013 spring edition of Friday Night on the Square was another big success this year, according to Adam Kelly, Vice President of the Chamber Board. Kelly led the meeting in the absence of Board President Hank Jacobi, who was unable to attend this month.

Marketing Director Anita Bush said they had 90 booths set up around the square this year, and she estimated about 2800 people visited the festival. She added that many of the booths were set up by new vendors to FNotS.

Bush said plans for the classic fall iteration of the festival were already well underway. The Chamber is planning to bring back the climbing wall, a favorite at the May 17th event, and will hopefully have a mechanical bull set up on the square if a few electrical issues can be resolved in time.

Lowell DuPoy talked about recent activities at the Piper Flight Museum, reminding those in attendance that the facility is open on a regular basis and is available for group visits and activities. DuPoy said a new display called "Early Aviation Legends of Washington County" is currently in the works. The display will include educational facts about Piper and other aviation pioneers with some connection to the area.

"We've been blessed to live a dream here" he said of the museum's existence. DuPoy hopes residents of Salem and the county realize what a valuable resource they have in the Salem Airport and the Piper Flight Museum, and encouraged everyone to come out and experience what the museum has to offer.

In addition to housing four genuine, vintage Piper aircraft, the flight museum also contains a flight simulator, a Wright Brothers wind tunnel replica, and many items of Piper Aviation memorabilia. DuPoy was excited to announce that he was conversation with donors possibly interested in donating two more aircraft to Salem's exhibit, however, the deals have been put on hold due to a lack of space at the museum, a two room facility sharing roughly 3000 square feet. DuPoy said they would be able to expand the flight museum as part of the overall scope of the new Salem airport.

His comments segued smoothly into a brief overview of the Airport's progress presented by Cory Harper, an airport planner with BF & S Engineers. Harper said they hope to open up a 5000 foot runway in 5 years' time. He further explained that 5000 feet would comply with Federal Aviation Association (FAA) safety regulations for jet aircraft. Consequently, the longer runway would attract more traffic to Salem from larger aircraft. The current runway is 2600 feet long.

Harper cautioned that they needed to take smaller steps towards that goal, thus BF & S Engineers' current goal is to expand Salem's current runway to 3000. This length would elevate the Airport's status to the FAA enough that finishing the project would likely become a priority to the association.

BF & S Engineers signed on to oversee the Salem Airport project earlier this year, replacing longtime overseer R.W. Armstrong.

When asked when they expected to break ground, Harper was optimistic that construction could begin as early as next year. He said a lot hinges on how the FAA's current sequester plays out, which in turn will affect how much grant money Salem can expect to receive from the

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organization this year. But with the city and the county's cooperation, Harper hopes a 2014 date can be achieved.

The Washington County Chamber of Commerce meets on the fourth Thursday of every month. If you are interested in attending June's meeting, please contact the chamber at info@washingtoncountychamber.org.