Pickens County OKs extra funds

By John C. Stevenson
STAFF WRITER
jstevens@greenvillenews.com



JOHN C. STEVENSON / Staff

A student pilot practices take-offs and landings at Pickens County Airport.

PICKENS – Delays in executing planned improvements at the entrance to the Pickens County Airport are costing the county $30,000.

That is part of the county's match for a $122,000 grant designated for new lighting, landscaping and signage at the airport, according to County Administrator Chap Hurst.

The project is in addition to several improvements at the airport that are either ongoing or recently completed, including the construction of a new terminal facility and the addition of several new hangars. The projects have been ongoing for about two years, Hurst said.

The project stalled as changes required additional time for state Department of Transportation approval, council Chairman G. Neil Smith has said.

"When you're dealing with the DOT, every time you change something, you're looking at months" of delays, Hurst told council members at a meeting in January, when they were informed of the need for the additional money.

"I'd like to go on record kicking and screaming that I think it's ridiculous that it's taken this long" for the project to reach this point, Councilwoman Jennifer H. Willis said Monday night, during discussion of the motion.

Hurst said after council members voted unanimously to pay the $30,000 that it is still virtually a wash for the county, which would have likely paid that much for the needed signage at the intersection of U.S. 178 and Airport Boulevard.

"We really aren't out anything," he said. "We would have had to buy the sign and do some landscape work, too."

An additional $30,000 will come from the C Fund Committee, to make up the total $60,000 shortfall between the $162,000 amount that was initially approved and the $221,643 new cost, based on a low bid received from Clary Hood Inc., Hurst said.

"When you look at all the improvements, we're talking about a very small investment that the county had to make," said council Chairman G. Neil Smith. "But I do agree with Councilwoman Willis."

Hurst said the improvements at the intersection will benefit the entire county, but especially nearby Liberty.

"Because of the close proximity to Liberty, I think it will begin to kind of set up an entranceway to the town," he said.