

NEWS RELEASE
October 26, 2010

For Immediate Release

For more information:
Valerie Byrnes, President
Barry County Economic Development Alliance
269-945-2454

Barry County Economic Development Alliance and the Barry County Chamber of Commerce Boards of Directors take a position in support of the Hastings City/Barry County Airport Millage

The Hastings City/Barry County Airport is a vital part of a regional infrastructure providing a gateway to Barry County for small business, corporate and tourist travelers. The Hastings City/Barry County Airport is the only paved, public airport in Barry County serving a greater region and representing a healthy and vibrant airport community, paramount to the continued development of Barry County.

The Barry County Economic Development Alliance and the Barry County Chamber of Commerce have both recently voted to take an official position in support of the millage proposition on the November 2, 2010 ballot to provide funding for the maintenance, operation and capital improvement of the Hastings City/Barry County Airport. The Airport Commission is requesting a millage of one-tenth (.1000) of a mill for ten years. If approved, the millage would be levied in December of 2010 and provide funding for the 2011 calendar year. It is estimated that a property owner in Barry County with a taxable value of \$50,000 will pay \$5.00 in the first calendar year of the levy.

According to the Barry County Economic Development Alliance, airports are economic engines and serve as a reflection of the communities they represent, Barry County being no exception. As such, airport traffic is often used as an indicator of the level of economic development and business activity within a region. Recreational use at an airport can also serve as a key indicator for demographics, regional tourism and potential growth of an area. Land development on or near airport sites for industrial uses, but also for tourism and recreation, generates additional economic activity through investment and job creation.

The recent ribbon cutting at Soaring Concepts Aerospace celebrating their new facility is an indication that new business development at the airport is not only possible, but feasible. "For a local company to be growing at a time when the economy is at a low point, it is a sign that we

are sitting on untapped business development opportunities right here in Barry County right now,” stated Valerie Byrnes, President of the Barry County Economic Development Alliance. “The Hastings City/Barry County Airport has an opportunity to play a progressively greater role as a local economic hub and community support of the upcoming millage vote will help to solidify the future opportunities for business growth and additional job creation,” she added. Soaring Concepts Aerospace will move in to their new facility at the Hastings City/Barry County Airport before the end of the year bringing 11 jobs with 9 to 11 new jobs to be added over the next 12 months.

The following facts on the importance of community airports have been published by the National Business Aviation Association:

- Fact: Community airports serve a vital role for towns with little or no airline service by providing transportation lifelines for small to mid-size businesses, schools, universities and humanitarian organizations, and serving as regional development engines that generate jobs and economic activity.
- Fact: Community airports are essential for providing air transportation access for postal service, firefighting and disaster relief, medical evacuations, law enforcement, homeland security and military operations, patient and organ transport to emergency centers and other services. In short, *all* Americans benefit from a robust system of large and small public-use airports.
- Fact: Companies of all sizes, but primarily small to mid-sized businesses, make up the business aviation community; business aviation generates over a million jobs and helps companies of all sizes be more efficient, productive and competitive.

While quantifiable data has not yet been reported to include the recent business development and investment by Soaring Concepts Aerospace at the airport, data was collected in 2009 by The Michigan Department of Transportation’s Airports Division quantifying the direct and indirect economic impacts of community airports in Michigan with the following results reported specifically for Barry County. (On-going Contribution to Local Economy 2009 – Barry County)

	Jobs	Income (\$)	Output (\$)
Direct Effect:			
Airport (incl. FBO and air related tenants)	4	\$6,000	\$539,000
Airport Tenants: non air related	1	\$48,700	\$109,335

Off Site: supported by Visitor Spending	9	\$121,518	\$399,400
Off Site: Staff or Cargo Reliant	0	\$0	\$0
Supplier and income re-spending effects*			
Due to Airport and Related activities**	4	\$6,345	\$221,795
Due to Visitor Spending	2	\$44,473	\$150,929
Due to reliance on Air Transport	0	\$0	\$0
Total Impact from Airport activities	20	\$277,036	\$1,420,459

* Impact on the Service-area economy as defined

** Supplier and income re-spending effects pertain only to air-related and air support activities

Developed by Economic Development Research Group, Inc., Boston, MA

As noted by MI-DOT, business aviation is the fastest growing segment of general aviation as an industry sector and a community airport's value is multiplied as time becomes more critical to businesses. Expedited overnight delivery to receive materials for manufacturing or make product shipments can have a distinct impact on company profits and success. Additionally, with agriculture in Barry County being a substantial portion of the local economy, it is noted by MI-DOT that America's crop yields would drop by 50% without routine agricultural general aviation use. Air service for police, firefighting, search and rescue emergencies along with critical health & safety services (air ambulance, organ transplant) are time and life savers in harder to reach rural communities. Community airports in remote or rural areas such as Barry County become a necessity rather than a nicety.

MI-DOT data shows that over \$704,000 of Federal and State funding were invested in the Hastings/Barry County Airport in 2008 requiring a local financial contribution of only \$28,125 (less than a 4% match). "The financial model of local airports being able to leverage such substantial amounts of Federal and State funding requiring only minimal local investment is a model not to be overlooked or taken for granted. There are not many incentives like this to develop the infrastructure of a community and ultimately incite economic growth and business development," added Byrnes.

Airports are a major force in the local, regional and national economy with an impact that goes well beyond the airport fence. The importance of the financial and structural stability of a

community airport cannot be emphasized enough. As globalization continues to move forward, the competitiveness of business and industry increasingly relies on airports and the aviation infrastructure to stay connected in an ever-expanding market. The importance of community airports as an economic catalyst will only increase in the near future.

It is for these reasons that the Barry County Economic Development Alliance and the Barry County Chamber of Commerce support the proposed Hastings City/Barry County Airport millage request.

For more information on the Alliance or the Chamber please see mibarry.com or call Valerie Byrnes at 269.945.2454.

#####