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Local Port Authority plans new building

Facility could keep AIS on Heath campus

BY KENT MALLETT
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HEATH -- The Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority began planning Friday for a new building designed to keep a company on site or attract new business.

The Port Authority's planning committee discussed on Friday a two-story building with 32,000 square feet of office space and an 8,000-square-foot clean room for working with micro-electronics.

The building occupant could be Atlantic Inertial Systems, an electronics supplier for the Defense Department now using 13 locations on the Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center campus.

The Ohio Tax Credit Authority earlier this year approved a 45 percent tax credit for six years to AIS for a \$3 million expansion for inertial sensor research and development operations at COATC.

The company was considering other out-of-state locations and has not announced if it will accept Ohio's offer and expand here. The expansion would retain 45 jobs and add about 10, the company said in February.

"If they leave Heath, that's not good for the long-term viability of the base, so we've got to do what it takes to keep them," said Rick Platt, executive director of the Port Authority.

If AIS chooses not to move into the new building, however, Port Authority officials hope other companies will be interested.

"It's got the flexibility to accept any number of scenarios for development," Platt said.

The building will replace Flight Line Cafe and two adjoining buildings closed last year and being demolished.

The speculative building might be the first of several on the 350-acre COATC campus, previously the home of the Newark Air Force Base.

"We've saved the base and stabilized jobs, now we need to get new work in here," Platt said. "If we're going to take it to the next level, we've got to start building new. We're 99 percent leased out, so we can accommodate very little.

"In this economy, we're investing in the recovery. Because, if we wait for the recovery, we're too late."

The Port Authority's \$5.5 million capital improvements budget for 2010 includes \$4 million for a potential building project. Platt said he hopes construction on the building can begin next year.

Additional Facts

ABOUT COATC

The Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center is among Ohio's five largest concentrations of the aerospace and defense industry. Combined, the employers at The Base employ more than 900

with an annual payroll in excess of \$55 million.

There are 18 companies on the campus, including Boeing Co. and its strategic partners, Atlantic Inertial Systems, Draper, Honeywell, Kearfott, Northrop Grumman and L3 Communications.
