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### George Ford

George Ford has spent decades covering business news across Eastern Iowa. Ford is a native of Lexington, Ky., but has [...]

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Updated: 25 June 2012 | 4:22 pm in B380

## Eastern Iowa Airport close to having one fixed base operator

Landmark Aviation is acquiring the assets of PS Air

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**CEDAR RAPIDS** — For the first time in decades, the Eastern Iowa Airport may have only one fixed base operator after July 1.

The Eastern Iowa Airport is now served by two FBOs — Landmark Aviation of Houston, Texas, and locally owned PS Air Inc.

Eastern Iowa Airport is acquiring the assets of PS Air, the Cedar Rapids Airport Commission was told Monday.

Commissioners on Monday approved a resolution assigning three building leases from PS Air to Landmark Aviation through 2031. The approval is needed for Landmark and PS Air to complete the sale of assets by July 1.

Terms were not disclosed.

Airport Director Tim Bradshaw told the commission that the lease assignment is contingent on the airport and Landmark Aviation reaching agreement on performance standards.

“We’re going to a single fixed base operator airport,” Bradshaw said. “We want to make sure that there are adequate measures in place to assure fair, competitive pricing and levels of service.”

Fixed base operators provide aircraft services such as fueling,



Landmark Aviation has reached an agreement to purchase PS Air, one of two fixed base operators at the Eastern Iowa Airport. If the deal is finalized, it will leave Landmark as the sole provider of aircraft services like fueling, hangaring, tie-down, parking, rental and maintenance. (George C. Ford/The Gazette)

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hanging, tie-down, parking, rental and maintenance. Flight instruction and air taxi service also are offered by many FBOs, although those services are increasingly provided by other businesses.

Bradshaw said the resolution approved Monday by the airport commission outlines the business terms that the airport is requesting. If there is no agreement with Landmark Aviation by July 1, the agreement approved Monday will not take effect.

“Any change in the lease agreement would require it to come before the commission again in a special meeting,” Bradshaw said.

Having a single FBO is not unique. The Des Moines International Airport and the Quad City International Airport in Moline, Ill., are served by a single FBO — Elliott Aviationboth airports.

Bradshaw said the number of fixed base operators has fallen with the drop-off in general aviation.

“General aviation has really declined over the years,” he said. “Our takeoffs and landings have fallen in recent years as fewer people are flying due to a variety of factors. It is really changing the way that FBOs are operated.”

In 1981, there were 827,000 active pilots, according to the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association.

By 2009, the number had fallen to 594,285 as the cost of fuel and insurance caused many pilots to stop flying, according to the General Aviation Manufacturers Association.

Bradshaw said federal law prohibits airports from granting FBO exclusivity. He said any business that can meet the operating criteria required by the airport would be allowed to compete with an existing FBO.

Landmark Aviation is one of the largest FBO chains in the world with 41 locations in the United States and 11 in Europe and Canada. The company, legally known as Piedmont Hawthorne Aviation, bought Signature Flight Services’ operations at The Eastern Iowa Airport in May 2000.

Gordon Peterson and Joe Spreitzer started PS Air, 3411 Beech Way SW, in 1991. It acquired Tibben Flight Lines in January 1996. The company has grown from two full-time employees to more than 25 full- and part-time associates.

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