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## Gundersen helicopter could be permanently based here

Sarah Strandberg, News Editor  
 Thursday, June 22, 2017 9:54 AM

One of Gundersen Health System's Medlink Air helicopters could be permanently based at the Decorah Airport by fall. Gundersen currently has a temporary lease for space at the airport for one of its helicopters, paying the city \$500 per month. At its meeting Monday night, the Decorah City Council approved an engineering agreement for the design of a large aircraft hangar for Gundersen. Clapsaddle - Garber Engineers of Cedar Rapids was hired for the concept design, design, bid letting and distribution of plans and specifications for the project at a total initial cost of \$123,900.



"Gundersen is looking at basing a helicopter at our airport including crew living quarters. There are several other steps coming and we will continue to work with Gundersen on a final design," City Manager Chad Bird told the Council. He said Gundersen is committed to a long-term hangar lease. Council member Dan Bellichard asked what would be considered a long-term lease, and Bird said that would probably be 20 years. Bird explained the lease would be for a long enough period of time to cover the cost of the hangar. "The hope is that it's a net zero for the city," Bird said. "It certainly is a feather in the cap of the municipal airport to have a corporate entity like Gundersen even consider basing a helicopter at our airport," Bird said after Monday's meeting. "It speaks well to the management and operation of our airport, but I think more importantly this is something really important for our community in terms of the quality of medical care that is being afforded to our community and that we will have in our community," he said. Gundersen also has a helicopter based at the Sparta-Fort McCoy, Wis. Airport. According to Gundersen officials, having the two helicopters based in Decorah and Sparta helps to better cover Gundersen's entire service area in southwest Wisconsin, Northeast Iowa and Southeast Minnesota.



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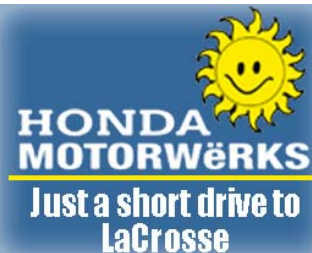
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