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# Newton Municipal Airport - Earl Johnson Field approved for name change

Johnson on hand to receive honor, round of applause from the room

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In a unanimous vote, followed by a round of applause the Newton City Council on Monday approved a name change to the airport, which will now be know as Newton Municipal Airport - Earl Johnson Field. Earl Johnson was in attendance to hear that he was being given that honor.

“It was Earl Johnson and Fred Maytag that took off from Newton’s grass strip in 1952 to find the location for Newton’s current Airport,” President of Johnson Aviation Ethan Nasalroad said. “We feel it would be only fitting after years of dedication and exceptional service to aviation in Newton and all of central Iowa to rename Newton’s airport. Doing so would only cement for future generations what so many of us in our industry already recognize as a remarkable individual that we all owe so much to in so many ways.”

Johnson created Johnson Aviation in October 1949. During his career in the airport fixed based operator business, he drove change and growth in general aviation. He was charged early on with growing and developing high standards for aviation in central Iowa, Nasalroad said.

As an aircraft dealer, charter pilot, corporate pilot, airport manager, flight instructor and pilot examiner in the new and growing industry, he set an extremely high standard for safety and quality.

“We fly over Des Moines to pick someone up, we may be talking in the air space for 10 minutes and in that time I always run across someone that worked for Johnson Aviation, was trained by Johnson Aviation or was it was an aircraft that was sold by Johnson Aviation,” Nasalroad said.

As an instructor, Johnson had a way of teaching a person without knowing them knowing they are being taught and had a reputation as a tough examiner who always gave a fair and thorough check ride, he said.

After he became an airport manager, he was always the one who was up early and out late to keep the runway open and clear of snow, often for him to use later on that day, Nasalroad said. He was instrumental in keeping the airport up-to-date with current technology and new safety standards as the field became more complex.

Johnson has been recognized in the Iowa Aviation Museum in Greenfield as a first generation Fixed Based Operator and at the Spaulding Center for Transportation, Iowa Transportation Museum as a “hero of industry and technology.”

Mayor Mike Hansen told a story about taking his first ride in a multi-engine airplane that happened to be piloted by Johnson.

“We kind of tooled around the Red Rock Reservoir and came back. While I’m in there I don’t know what is going on. The aircraft had just gone through maintenance and pretty soon one of the props quit running and my heart rate goes about 300 miles per hour. It was just some of the things he was going through to check to see if it was working, I learned afterward,” Hansen said. “Thanks for the thrill Earl.”

In other business:

- Stop signs were approved at several locations including at First Street North and North Third Avenue, West Fifth Street South and South Third Avenue West, East 10th Street South and South Sixth Avenue East, West Seventh Street South and South Third Avenue West, South Fourth Avenue and West Fifth Street South and West Fifth Street South and South Sixth Avenue West.
- A 2 percent salary increase was approved for City Administrator Bob Knabel.
- The council approved the Erik Christiansen Design Group of West Des Moines for professional services for the design and bid documents to upgrade the Westwood Golf Course irrigation system in the amount of \$40,500. A 72-inch John Deere 155- TerrainCut commercial front mower was also approved for purchase for the golf course from Van-Wall Equipment in Colfax at a price of \$17,259.56.

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