

# Sioux Center works on closing old airport

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AgriVision Equipment Group technician Brent Van Leeuwen works on a forage chopper in the hangar of the former Sioux Center Municipal Airport. Sioux Center has rented the hangar out to the company since about February, and it's helped them have extra space in which to work. Sioux Center has no plans yet on what they will do with the former airport property in the long term.

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**SIOUX CENTER**—Sioux Center Municipal Airport has ceased operations six months ago after the Sioux County Regional Airport opened its runway November 2018.

Able to handle much larger aircraft, including business jets, the regional airport is able to bring a new level of service to the county.

Sioux Center city leaders continue to discuss its former airport future as they work to have it officially deactivated by the Federal Aviation Administration.



When the Sioux County Regional Airport opened, the Sioux Center Municipal Airport fixed-base operator moved off the property.

Portions of the property are being rented to different entities. The former home on the property is being rented out to contractors working on the All Season's Center Aquatic Center. Sioux Center city manager Scott Wynja expects them to move out once work on the pool is completed, and then the city will be able to rent out the house again.

"We'll continue to rent it out until we come up with another alternative plan," Wynja said.

The maintenance hangar has been rented out on a temporary basis to AgriVision Equipment Group since about February. How long they'll be able to work there will

depend on how soon the airport goes through the closing process and plans are formed for what to do with the property next.

Business has been good for AgriVision Equipment, according to regional manager Dale Vathauer. The company has locations in Ireton and Doon, and more work has come through for them, and they've been working to recruit more employees. Short on space in which to work, the ability to use the hangar has allowed things to continue to run smoothly in their main locations. They've used the hangar to work on forage choppers.

Vathauer said that they are still committed to their Ireton and Doon locations, but added with recent growth in service sales, they're quickly outgrowing their facilities. They're probably going to look at a new facility plan, he said.

The main task the city is undertaking now with the old airport is having it officially deactivated so that it can't be used as an airport anymore, whether the city continues to own the property or a private party owns it later on. This deactivation (and that of the Orange City Municipal Airport) is required by the FAA and was part of the requirements for opening the Sioux County Regional Airport.

Deactivating an airport is "kind of a painful process," Wynja said.

The airports in Sioux Center and Orange City also must go through an appraisal process. Sioux Center must go through one, while Orange City must go through two due to their use of federal funds. The results of the appraisal must then be sent to the FAA, followed up by more paperwork between the city and the FAA before deactivation occurs.

When it is finally deactivated, discussion can then turn to what to do with the property. One question yet to be determined is whether the city should retain control of the property and find some new use for it or to sell it.

How long it'll be before the airport is deactivated is unknown.

With his experience so far, Wynja said it seems to take at least three to six months for things to be processed and sent back. He sent the city's deactivation request in mid-March.

"By the time we submit our appraisal information, which to me is a lot bigger than just requesting to take off the landing approaches, I'm going to throw out a broad range of

the next six to 12 months before it's probably officially closed. I think that's realistic," he said.

Despite the patience that comes with the back and forth processing of paperwork with the federal government group, Wynja said he's found the people he's worked with to be helpful.

"The FAA has been great to work with. Communication's been very good, and we have a great relationship with them. It's just going to be a process we have to go through to get it completed," he said.

And in the meantime, there is no rush for the city to come up with a plan. Thanks to them renting out the house and the maintenance hangar, they're drawing some revenue from the property to continue to cover costs for maintenance.