



FLIGHT PLANS

Friday Economic Roundup | 03.24.2017

WMU board OKs agreement with Florida's Charlotte County

KALAMAZOO, Mich.-The Western Michigan University's Board of Trustees has approved an economic development investment agreement with Charlotte County in Southwest Florida.

The agreement paves the way for improvements at Punta Gorda Airport designed to enhance WMU's ability to deliver aviation flight training at the facility. Up to \$500,000 in improvements will be done by the county to an airport hangar complex WMU is leasing for the program. WMU trustees approved that \$1-per-year lease in December.

The new agreement calls for WMU to:

- Establish and begin the flight training program at Punta Gorda Airport no later than January 2018.
- Invest no less than \$2 million in building improvements and/or equipment and training prior to July 1, 2018, to support delivery of a bachelor's degree in aviation flight training.
- Continuously operate the program at Punta Gorda Airport for no less than five years or refund \$100,000 to Charlotte County for every year less than that five-year period the program operates.
- Appropriately staff the program and within five years maintain an average student enrollment of 150 students per academic year with a provision for significant market disruption.

David Powell, dean of the WMU College of Aviation, presented the recommendation to the trustees and told them some of WMU's agreement requirements are already nearing reality.

"We will start Sept. 5, 2017," Powell said of the new aviation degree program at the Punta Gorda Airport, noting that the WMU's investments in the facility and program also would be completed early.

He said the program goal is to bring in 50 new students per year, and he expected to reach an average annual student enrollment of 150 in three years.

The agreement has already been approved by the Charlotte County Board of Commissioners. The WMU board approval means the agreement can be finalized and implemented immediately.

Halfacre Construction Selected to Build New Preschool

Commercial construction company Halfacre Construction Company was selected to build the new preschool at the SKY Family YMCA in Venice. The \$1.5-million project is slated to begin in June 2017 and wrap up by the end of the year. The existing preschool and SKY Academy locker room will be demolished, and a new 10,000-square-foot building will take its place. The new facility will include a 12-classroom preschool for children ranging from infants to five years old. Previously, Halfacre Construction Company completed three projects for the SKY Family YMCA, including a renovation of the facility's gymnasium and gymnastics centers, a cafeteria and kitchen addition and updates to its SKY Academy, a tuition-free, Sarasota public charter middle school. Located at 701 Center Rd. in Venice, the new facility will incorporate a feng shui aesthetic with an abundance of natural light.

Florida Economic News

- BayCare and Publix Pharmacy to partner for health services ([News Release](#))
 - Calusa Brewing in Sarasota to sell beers in stores, bars and restaurants ([Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#))
 - New \$7 million bottle recycling facility planned for Jacksonville ([Plastics News](#))
 - Biotech giant Amgen to open Tampa center, creating up to 450 jobs ([Tampa Bay Times](#))
 - Nevada company buys 1,300 acres in Manatee County ([Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#))
 - Plans for fourth Jacksonville Amazon facility under review ([Florida Times-Union](#))
 - Florida eco-friendly town opens for business ([Phys.org](#))
 - St. Lucie area manufacturing makes gains, set for new growth ([TCPalm](#))
 - Florida cities among the biggest population gainers ([AP](#))
 - Region ranks as 10th fastest growing in the nation ([Sarasota Herald-Tribune](#))
 - Is Gainesville Florida's biotech hub? ([Industry Week](#))
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Entrepreneur News

- How to say 'No' in the business world ([Ron Stein](#))
- Small business battle names four finalists in Orlando ([Orlando Sentinel](#))
- Florida SBDC Network celebrates Inaugural SBDC Day on March 22, 2017 ([Florida Trend](#))

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Charlotte County Economic Development Office
18501 Murdock Circle, Suite 302, Port Charlotte, FL 33948

Port Charlotte, FL 33948 | 941-764-4941
FloridaEDO@CharlotteCountyFL.gov
<http://Cleared4TakeOff.com>

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