

GREENE COUNTY AIRPORT MASTER PLAN

WAYNESBURG — the Greene County Commissioners commissioned L. Robert Kimball and Associates to prepare a Master Plan Update for the Greene County Airport. The update is scheduled to be completed in 2008 and will include a business plan and marketing plan and will contain strategies to maximize the potential of the Airport in terms of economics and recreation.

The master plan calls for the demolition of several older hangars south of the runway. New ones will be erected to replace them in an area north of the runway. ASI also will investigate the feasibility of demolishing and relocating the brick administration building, which houses airport offices, a restaurant and District Judge Glenn Bates' office.

The change will free space on Route 21 for the development of various businesses. Snyder said that the opening of the nearby Wal-Mart SuperCenter will increase customer traffic and, he hopes, will increase an interest in business development as well. The Wal-Mart store should open next month. Having businesses on the airport property also should generate more revenue and make the airport more self-sufficient. In its present state, the airport loses money and the county uses money from the general fund to offset the shortfall. "We want to make the airport into something that the taxpayers don't have to support," said Commissioner Archie Trader.

The state Bureau of Aviation eliminated one way the airport makes extra money when it banned car racing at municipal airports two months ago. The airport hosted drag races for the past two summers and the county received a portion of the admission proceeds.

The bureau banned racing in response to Federal Aviation Administration policy, which stipulates that federally obligated airports should not close for non-aeronautical events.

The change prompted commissioners to consider making the airport independent and free of most state and federal regulations. "Right now, the FAA gets to decide how the airport will be used, but by privatizing the airport, the (control) goes back to the county," said Nic Applegate of ASI. An independent airport may make the county ineligible for state and federal grants for airport improvements, but commissioners contend that they never received much grant money anyway. The county accepted a \$200,000 federal grant last year to help pay for the master plan. But, other than that, the last time the county received significant grant funding for airport improvements was in the mid-1980s. "It's not like the Bureau of Aviation is sitting on a huge pool of money that we get every year. We don't get much money anyway," Snyder said. Lease agreements with businesses interested in locating at the airport should pay for the cost of any construction needed, Applegate said.

