

Foundation plans to spend \$3.25 million at Winter Haven airport

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WINTER HAVEN —

It appears there will be more seaplanes in Winter Haven's future.

A new development focusing on seaplanes is planned at Winter Haven Municipal Airport, which is surrounded by five lakes.

City commissioners on Monday night unanimously approved a resolution agreeing to a lease with the Seaplane Pilots Association Foundation for its "worldwide headquarters."

The foundation is an arm Seaplane Pilots Association, a non-for-profit organization advocating seaplanes and their safe use.

The development on Lake Hartridge will be on about 2 acres of airport land and will include a hangar, apron, offices and parking area, which are expected to cost \$3.25 million to build.

Airport Director Leo Treggi said the deal is the largest private investment in the airport's history.

The city will lease the land to the SPA Foundation for \$1 per year for 30 years, with a possible extension for another 20 years.

Construction is expected to begin in about two years and the organization is expecting to move from its Lakeland facility within four years.

The area is already home to Jack Brown's Seaplane Base at Lake Jessie, which is involved in the SPA Foundation.

City officials, including Treggi, said the deal will bring people and business to Winter Haven. The new development is expected to bring seaplanes, fuel sales and maintenance work to the airport.

Commissioner J.P. Powell, the commission's liaison to the airport, praised the SPA Foundation as a first-class organization and said he was "excited" they want to be at the airport.

Steve McCaughey, executive director of the SPA Foundation, said the organization has been nomadic for a long time and was looking for a home.

They're now at Lakeland Linder Regional Airport, but, McCaughey said, the Lakeland airport has no water and Winter Haven's does.

McCaughey said Sun 'n Fun has already expressed an interest in having its annual Splash in at the new facility.