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## **Waterville's LaFleur Airport is ready to take off**

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The City of Waterville is investing in its economic future by revitalizing one of its prime assets - LaFleur Airport. Over the last two decades the airport has been under-valued and under-served; just under the radar - sort of there, but not functioning near its potential. Some area residents didn't even know there was an airport in Waterville. This has all changed due to the concerted efforts of the City, Waterville Development Corporation (WDC), Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce (MMCC), and Central Maine Growth Council (CMGC).

For starters, the City completed an Airport Master Plan Update in December, 2011 to chart a future course for the 500 acre airport. Soon after, the role of the Airport Manager was expanded, and the WVL Airport Advisory Committee was formed to move the project forward. Improvements to the airport began to take place. They started by creating a new logo and putting up new signage. The airport lounge was newly improved and renovated, the facility was painted, a new access ramp was installed, and the grounds were landscaped. Now for the bigger stuff: Crosswind Runway 14-32 which was closed for the last four years is now open. The City utilized a \$750,000 grant from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to reconstruct the 2,300 s/f runway. The project was completed in October, 2012. The 5,500 s/f. Main Runway 5-23 will be reconstructed in 2014 with the assistance of an estimated \$7 million FAA grant. Randy Marshall, WVL airport manager said, "I am really excited about all of the progress the airport has made in the last year; and I am looking forward to seeing what is coming."

The city partnered with WDC to purchase a key 62 acre parcel adjacent to the airport with its transferrable Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ). CMGC is working with the FTZ board in Washington, D.C. toward Re-issuance of FTZ Authority Status; to generate economic development and investment; and offer duty free savings on international goods for local businesses. This could make Waterville's airport a logistical hub for Maine businesses and catapult the region to be more globally competitive. CMGC is doing major business attraction & marketing in site selection magazines, trade shows, and multi-media to promote the airport world-wide. Locally, the City/CMGC will be hosting a Business after Hours at the airport on June 19, 2013.

Investment, development, and relocation opportunities abound in Central Maine. Several companies are expanding in Waterville, Winslow, and Fairfield. The airport property and its adjacent properties have permitted TIF Sites with Foreign Trade Zone benefits. All are situated within a mile of Interstate 95. All three communities are inter-connected and have commercial/industrial sites that range from a few thousand square feet all the way up to a 1.4 million s/f facility. Not only is the airport taking off but many connected companies are getting off the ground!

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