

Local pilot managing city airport

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Former manager resigns in early October; interim hired.

Local pilot Robert Mann is taking care of day-to-day operations at Gothenburg City Airport.

Mann was hired as interim manager by the airport authority board after former airport manager Dennis Brown submitted his resignation in early October, according to airport authority chair Craig Bartruff.

The Browns have since left Gothenburg to winter in Texas.

Bartruff said Mann will continue as interim manager until the board hires a permanent full-time manager.

The board has started the search process and has received several applications, he said.

Mann, who is secretary/treasurer of the airport authority board, said he took the job because he owes the airport.

“I learned how to fly here in 1972 and it’s given me about 1,400 hours of flying pleasure,” Mann said. “The airport is part of the reason I moved back to Gothenburg.

Mann taught shop at Gothenburg High School from 1972 to 1975 and then started his own woodworking business.

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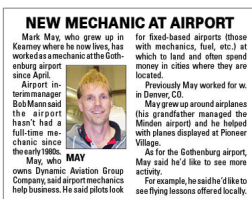
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He moved to Durango, CO, where he taught shop for 20 years before retiring and moving back to Gothenburg in 2005.

Coming out of retirement to manage the airport has been fun, he said.

“I get a sense of accomplishment from learning something new and getting it done,” Mann said.

Mann said he likes the size of the airport and hopes it stays like it is.



“Smaller airports are the greatest,” he explained. “There are no traffic worries and they don't have the rules and regulations of larger airports.”

Mann said he hopes people realize that the airport is for the community.

“Not just for individuals who own their own planes,” he said.

The 72-year-old said he wants to start a Friend of the Airport program where pilots and others volunteer their time keeping it maintained.

“So we don't have to hire people to do these things,” he said.

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For example, Mann said there's an office in an hangar that needs to be removed.

As far as improvements, Bartruff said the airport received a \$17,000 grant from the Nebraska Department of Aeronautics and approval to install a card control system for fuel.

Bartruff said the system works much like using a credit card to gas up at a service station.

Currently, local pilots use a key system to get fuel for their planes.

The airport will pay 30% of the cost and the state 70%, he said.

Mann said they hope to have the new equipment installed next month.

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