

## COA air training building on track

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CURRITUCK — College of The Albemarle is on track to occupy its new aviation center in Currituck in February or March.

Currituck County is building the \$6.8 million, 40,000-square-foot facility at the airport. COA is responsible for providing the equipment and manpower to operate it as a training facility for students who want to learn aviation trades.

Tuesday night, the COA board of trustees approved a lease agreement with Currituck. The initial term is for eight years, and the lease cost to COA is \$40 the first year and \$1 thereafter.

“That sounds like a heck of a bargain,” said Douglas Gardner, a member of the COA board.

The agreement also gives COA two years to vacate the facility if for some reason Currituck County wanted to cancel the agreement. That was something COA pressed for, President Kandi Dietemeyer told the board. She wanted to make sure that if a student started the aviation program, COA would be able to honor that commitment.

COA has already gotten its first airplane. The Piper Cherokee is not flyable, nor is it ever supposed to be used for flight.

“We don’t want it to fly,” Dietemeyer said.

The plane will be used by students learning to install and remove equipment and learn about aviation sheet metal repair.

Currituck isn’t the first county to provide COA with a facility. Dare County has paid for construction and improvements there and Chowan provides funds for the campus there.

When it was created more than 50 years ago, COA’s mission was to serve a seven-county area even though its main campus would be in Elizabeth City. The Chowan and Dare counties offer some of the basic courses the main campus does, but they also offer classes that the main campus does not.

Chowan’s signature programs include culinary classes and green energy. Dare County’s campus offers jewelry programs.