

County Supervisors approve airport contract

By Eric Petermann

BISBEE — Sometimes the timing works out well. Plans to improve the taxiway at the Bisbee-Douglas International Airport have been waiting for federal funding since 2013 and were moved forward on Tuesday by the Cochise County Board of Supervisors.

Members approved spending \$136,270 to contract Armstrong Consultants for engineering services on the reconstruction of Taxiway A at the county airport.

The vote comes at the same time that Cochise County is determining the costs of accomplishing improvements recommended by Northrop Grumman, a company with offices in Sierra Vista that contracts with the county to use the airport.

“The plans for this were on the board long before Northrop Grumman was working at the airport,” said Cochise County Facilities Management Director Jay Howe, after Tuesday’s presentation to Supervisors.

Howe said 90 percent of the \$1 million reconstruction of the taxiway will be paid for through grant funds from the Federal Aviation Authority and the Arizona Department of Transportation. He said Armstrong Consultants was hired in 2013 by Cochise County to assist in airport planning and engineering. Supervisors also approved a resolution to extend the amortization of the county’s Public Safety Pension Retirement System liability from 20 to 30 years.

County Administrator Ed Gilligan said the change would provide Cochise County with more flexibility in affording the annual pension cost.

Supervisor Pat Call asked if there were additional costs in extending the amortization of the county’s PSPRS liability.

“Oh, definitely,” Gilligan answered. “Think of it like extending the mortgage on your house payment. In the end there will be additional interest costs over the life of that loan.” He said the extension is a one-time option made available to counties and municipalities by a law adopted by the State Legislature and signed by the governor. Gilligan said the option would afford the county financial flexibility in the short term and he said PSPRS investment returns are expected to eventually lower the contributions by local governments in the future.

#