

Airport industrial park soars with new leases



The Walla Walla Regional Airport Industrial Park isn't just filling up. It's also filling out.

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In a remarkable showing of new construction, the Port of Walla Walla commissioners on Wednesday approved three new leases — two long-term at 50 years each, Port Executive Director Jim Kuntz said.

“This is the first time that I can remember having on one agenda three major leases — two long-term — coming before the commissioners at one meeting,” Kuntz said this morning.

All three are wine industry leases. Two of them will involve construction of separate 10,000-square-foot buildings. The third is expected to also add new square footage in the next year or so, Kuntz said.

The two new buildings join new construction already in the works or recently completed, including a new 5,000-square-foot building for Tompkins Appliance Service and Integrity Laundry Services, and a 3,600-square-foot building for work by machinist Jim Ferraro. Those are in addition to expansion plans for Walla Walla Roastery and a major expansion for Reiff Manufacturing.

“In all the years I’ve been out here at the Port since 1990 we’ve never had this much building activity at the airport,” Kuntz said this morning. “It bodes well. The airport business park just gets better and better.”

Existing buildings at the industrial park are also nearly all occupied with the exception of three buildings, not including storage space, airport Manager Jennifer Skoglund has said.

“It’s exciting to see the growth of the airport industrial park with new and existing businesses. We have an eclectic mix of uses which adds to the charm of the airport,” she said.

Kuntz said he believes the increasing demand can be attributed to three main factors: a transformation of the business park’s roadside image by the Port; reasonable real estate prices; and accommodating zoning that attracts an eclectic mix of tenants.

“When I first got here the business park was kind of the default. If you couldn’t find a space somewhere else, people would come here,” Kuntz said. “I think we’ve absolutely transformed that. The airport business park is not looked at as a last resort.”

Among the latest leases is a tenant for one of the airport’s most in-demand properties at 202 A St. The longtime former home of Cougar Crest Winery and most recently Trust Cellars, the building had been the subject of so many inquiries that the Port decided to find a new tenant via the bidding process. Minimum acceptable bids were \$750 per month plus leasehold tax and utilities. The Port received just one bid, from Shaw Estates Wines LLC, which offered just over \$1,100 a month, Kuntz said.

The wine company, which recently bought Russell Creek Winery and also opened a tasting room in downtown Walla Walla over Spring Release, now has a five-year lease with five one-year renewal options at the A Street property. Kuntz said operators plan to expand with a production facility at the property in about a year.

Commissioners Tuesday also approved a potential 50-year land lease — a five-year agreement with nine five-year extensions — for Ron Coleman, owner of Tamarack Cellars. Coleman plans to build a new 10,000-square-foot wine production facility at 108 W. Beech Ave., near the old terminal building. The land lease will cost \$389.60 per month plus state leasehold tax. Coleman will build the facility at his sole cost. That project is estimated at \$600,000 to \$700,000, according to the Port.

The same property rental timeframe applies to the third lessee approved at the Port meeting: Sean Boyd of Proletariat Winery and Rotie Cellars. Boyd plans to build a 10,000-square-foot wine production facility at 510 E. Boeing Ave. on the 55,020-square-foot lot directly east of the Port’s maintenance yard at Boeing Avenue and F St. That lease fee is \$912.42 per month plus state leasehold tax. The construction cost of the facility is estimated at \$700,000 to \$800,000. The latter two leases are slated to begin July 1.