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Accomack approves sale of Wallops park property

*By Carol Vaughn
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PARKSLEY -- Accomack County supervisors unanimously approved the sale of more than three acres of county property in the Wallops Research Park to developers who plan to build an educational facility there.

The park master plan includes provisions for such a center, including a business incubator.

Completion of the first building is scheduled for about the same time as the first launch of Orbital Sciences' Taurus II rocket from Wallops sometime in mid-2011.

The Garrett Companies, based in Stafford, and Stoladi Property Group, of Washington, D.C., announced a development plan to build a 60,000-square-foot facility initially at the Kearsage Circle property, according to Economic Development Director Larry Forbes. Terms of the sale were not discussed at the board meeting.

The multi-purpose building will include classrooms and office space for government contractors serving the Wallops complex, as well as offices for the research park executive director and the board appointed to oversee the park -- about 2,000-square-feet will be for county use.

Additionally, the facility will provide meeting space as an alternative to holding meetings on NASA property, where security is stringent, especially for foreigners.

The developers are the same group that built a 1 million square foot commercial development just outside the gate of Quantico Marine Corps Base, Forbes said.,

"We have a proven development model serving a who's who list of government contractors at Quantico and look forward to putting this same plan to work at the Wallops Research Park," Andy Garrett said in a prepared release about the group's plans.

The companies also have a particular interest in aerospace education, Forbes said.

The Stoladi Group was one of the founding companies of the Challenger Center for Space Science Education in Washington, D. C. The center was begun in 1986 after the Challenger space shuttle disaster to give school children a positive view of space exploration, Forbes said.

Jim Stokes of Stoladi said in the release that the group has "ample experience in property management in both government and private environments and look(s) forward to putting our sound property management practices to work serving the Wallops complex and its government contractors."

He said Garrett and he "have been especially appreciative of the can-do attitude of the folks with Accomack County and WRP, as well as the representatives of the Commonwealth involved with the project. Additionally, I'm particularly interested in this project because of my personal interest in aviation."

There were no speakers at a public hearing on the land sale.

The Garrett Companies will serve as the project development partner and Stoladi Property Group will serve as the property management partner, according to a prepared release.