

Plane maker ready for takeoff

By TIM TRAINOR
Redmond Spokesman

REDMOND — Commercial airlines have had a difficult few years. Travel restrictions, mask mandates and soaring fuel prices all reduced demand for their services.

But over that same stretch, a group of aeronautics engineers in Redmond had a productive time testing and tinkering on a jet of their own design.

This summer, Redmond-based Stratos Aircraft plans to go public with its finished product: the 716X. The single-engine, six-passenger plane will be marketed as a less expensive, more efficient private aircraft.

Carsten Sundin, the chief technology officer for Stratos, said the pandemic restrictions were not much of a problem for the company. It had its funding in place before the first economic rattle hit — and employees weren't yet ready to go out to pound the pavement and entice buyers.



Cliff Ng/Submitted Photo

Redmond-based Stratos Aircraft plans to start sales to the public of its 716X, pictured here.

"We've been hunkered down," said Sundin. "We have continued to do what we needed to do on the development side. It would have been far harder if we were at the stage when we needed to have

customers traveling to the area to make sales."

That time, however, is soon approaching. The company expects to start selling its jets in July or August, according to Sundin, who said the final

product would be roughly "95 percent engineered and built in Central Oregon."

Stratos operates out of a facility on Franklin Street in southeast Redmond. It currently has 18 employees, most

of whom are longtime veterans of Central Oregon aeronautics companies, including Lancair and Epic Aircraft. Stratos' Redmond operation includes both a composite shop and metal shop.

There were issues in the supply chain, of course. Machine parts — especially carbon fiber — became more difficult to find. Raw materials became more difficult to locate and were more expensive. The company started to order specialized parts months in advance to be sure each would arrive on time.

"The price change on some of the materials has been incredible," said Sundin. "Aluminum has just about tripled in the last year."

And then there's the transportation industry, which was ravaged by COVID-19 lockdowns. Commercial flights ground to a halt as people canceled trips. Business travel took a major hit as more people worked from home and business conventions were canceled. And recently, a big

jump in fuel prices has led to a big increase in tickets prices.

Sundin thinks the disruptions to air travel from 2020 to 2022 will ultimately benefit the company.

"I don't see any issue with it," said Sundin. "I think more people, if they can afford it, are going to want to fly privately (rather) than commercial. There's just so many hassles ... security, rules and stipulations."

If sales go well, Sundin said the company is going to have to expand — and quickly. He did not want to speculate on how many employees would have to be added, but Stratos is likely to do significant hiring in its manufacturing division. Others will have to be added in sales and human resources, and more space could be needed to meet the demand.

"(The number of employees) depends on number of orders," he said. "I expect that by early fall we will see what the response is and evaluate."

John Day reboots city manager search

By JUSTIN DAVIS Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — John Day's search for a successor to outgoing City Manager Nick Green will have to start anew after the city rejected two candidates who had applied to be his replacement.

Green announced in January that he plans to step down by the end of June.

The John Day City Council held a brief meeting on April 26 to plan the next steps in the process after deciding not to hire either of



Green

Lundbom

the two candidates for the job.

The city now turns to Washington-based consulting firm CMP Consultants to search for qualified candidates for the position. The search will cost the city between \$15,000 and \$25,000, but councilors at the April 26 meeting stressed

the firm guarantees qualified candidates.

John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom said he can't say much about the applications of individual candidates but that they weren't the fit the city was looking for.

"They just didn't meet our expectations. They weren't what we were looking for. We just decided to open it up again for people to apply."

As it did with the initial candidates, the city has decided to go with a confidential hiring process for its renewed city manager search. The names of the applicants will not be disclosed until the city announces who it has hired for the job.

According to Lundbom, state law allows government bodies to discuss hiring decisions in executive session, outside the normal public meeting process.

"I don't have that executive session number off the top of my head, but this is all spelled out in how we're doing it," the

mayor said. "Some of those things you just can't talk about in public."

The failure to find a qualified candidate in the first crop of applicants for the city manager position raises questions as to what the city is going to do in the interim between Green leaving in June and hiring a new manager to replace him. Lundbom says the solution could be a number of things, from Green working on a contract basis to Community Development Director Corum Ketchum filling the void until a new hire is made.

When asked about that contingency, Lundbom said the city is "working on that now."

"We started working on an agreement to help us finish the projects that Green started," the mayor said. "This may be in addition to that or not."

Lundbom said the City Council didn't know which direction it was going to go until the April 26 meeting,

when it decided to look for more candidates through CMP Consultants.

"That opened up another set of discussions about what we're going to do. If the search takes four months and Nick is only going to be here for two, what's going to happen?"

Lundbom said Ketchum can handle some of the city manager work, but city councilors don't want to "shove the responsibilities of city manager onto our community development guy."

Long term, the failure to hire a new city manager won't affect the projects the city is already working on, according to Lundbom. Short term, the city will have to find somebody to run City Council meetings and come up with an agenda for those meetings after Green's time as city manager expires.

"The big projects and the stuff that is in the works — the planning, the permitting, the contracts — all that is going to be taken care of by

(Green). We may have to figure something out for day-to-day things."

Green's role with the city after transitioning out of the city manager position is still up in the air. Green has started his own consulting firm and is in talks with the city to take on a consultant role when he leaves his post in June.

"Nick has presented a proposal; I haven't seen it yet, but that's what he's working on," Lundbom said. "Then we will sit down and review that to find out if it is something we can afford and something we want. I think he wants to help us finish the jobs — I think we just have to agree on how that is going to happen."

It will take some time for CMP Consultants to assemble, vet and interview a new crop of city manager candidates, according to the discussion at the April 26 meeting.

Lundbom said it will likely be at least August, and possibly later, before a new city manager can be hired.

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