

Hills' Economy in charge at Metro

By RALPH R. ECHTDAW
STAFF WRITER

Wayne County Executive Edward McNamara has introduced Economy into the operations of Metro Airport.

Stephen Economy, that is. The former Ameritech lobbyist officially replaced the retiring Jack Dodge on Jan. 30 as deputy director of Metro Airport.

A Farmington Hills resident, Economy was hired after the Wayne County Commission waived the residency ordinance. He will be paid \$81,000 per year.

Economy holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan-Dearborn and a master's of business administration from Michigan State University. He is fluent in modern Greek.

Airport Director Bob Braun said Economy, 56, "is going to be a tremendous asset to me," mostly because of the contacts he made as an lobbyist.

Economy's background includes a statewide network of political, education, business and labor contacts.

How do you do?

Braun agrees. "Every time I go down there (to Washington, D.C.) I have to meet new people," he said. "He's going to be able to introduce me to three people."

Economy comes to Metro in the middle of the largest, costliest expansion and modernization in the airport's history. Projected to cost more than \$1 billion before it's over, the plan calls for new runways, access roads, parking structure, control tower and noise mitigation for nearby homeowners.

Much of that is already done, but the most ambitious portion of the project is a \$368-million mid-field terminal and an \$82-million update of the two existing terminals, which may include a gambling casino and aviation charter school.

Northwest Airlines, which accounts for about 70 percent of the airliners using Metro and has some say in airport operations, has been reluctant to go along with the new terminal.

Financial issue
Although negotiations continue, Economy said, "I think they agree in concept. Everything comes down to money."

Braun said Economy can be a big help in the negotiations. "We're just at the point where we're going to get very serious in discussions with Northwest," he said.

The size of the mid-field terminal will depend on how much Northwest can afford, Braun said, but the airport's "absolute priority" is to include a 25-gate international terminal in the project. Construction is scheduled to begin in 1986 and be completed in 1998.

The airport casino idea was introduced by McNamara, who said it would be for use by ticketed passengers only. Profit would offset the cost of building and operating the terminal.

Charter school

An aviation charter school is another idea to train people for careers in the airline industry. "Northwest is extremely interested," Braun said. "I'm working with the airlines to bring them to

the table to find out what their needs will be."

Elected officials in Lansing and Washington, D.C., will see a lot of Economy in the future as he makes McNamara's case for issues at the airport.

For the immediate future, Economy said he will be busy "making the airport user friendly to the passengers."

For example, Economy hopes to have luggage carts available for airline passengers to rent by April 1.

And he wants the airlines to improve some aspects of their service, particularly in the area of baggage. "We're working with the airlines to provide better service."

Friend of Ed
Economy and McNamara, 68, knew each other at Michigan Bell when their duties overlapped between 1965 and 1970.

McNamara left Bell in 1970 to become Livonia mayor, but stayed in touch with Economy, who also lived in Livonia and subsequently worked on McNamara's campaign. A photo-

graph of the two friends on a sliding vacation adorns the wall behind Economy's desk.

Economy moved to Farmington Hills in 1980 as his career with Michigan Bell (later Ameritech) prospered. Having joined Michigan Bell right out of the University of Michigan in 1965, Economy worked his way up the chain of command, and by 1978 was in charge of telecommunications requirements for the 1980 Republican National Convention.

By 1984 Economy was an executive assistant to the president and responsible for Michigan Bell's federal lobbying program.

As vice president of external relations in his last two years with Ameritech, Economy was involved with charitable contributions on the company's behalf to colleges and universities.

But Economy is in a whole new world now, and spends much of his time now just learning the singular lingo of aviation.

"You read these reports and they abbreviate everything," he lamented. "It's just a whole new lexicon."

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