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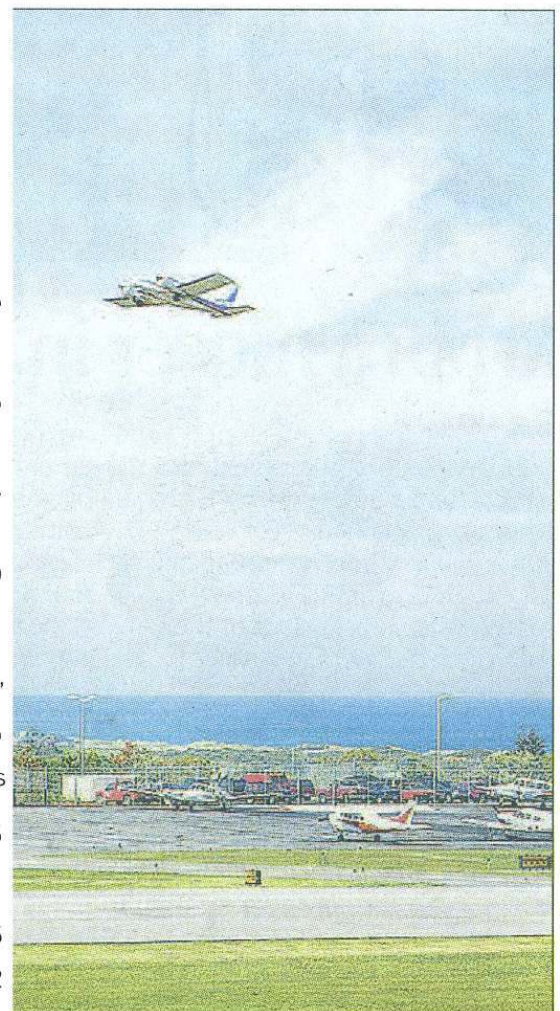
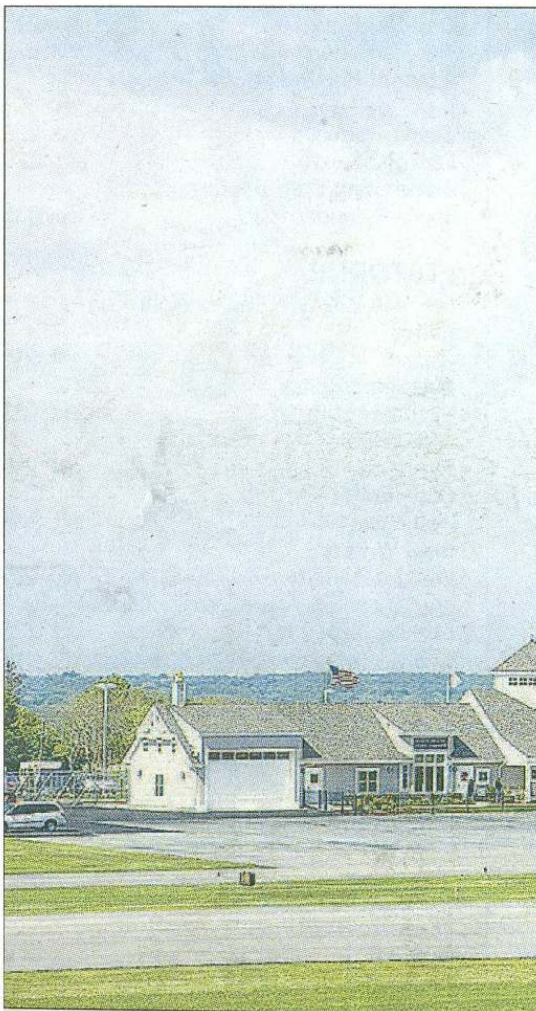


PHOTO COURTESY R.I. AIRPORT CORPORATION

GROUNDING FLIGHT: The Block Island Airport company will receive \$150,000 annually, with

ed by AvPORTS under a new agreement. The or all profits or losses.



PBN PHOTO/RUPERT WHITELEY

SOMETHING BREWING: Mark Hellendrung, Narragansett Beer CEO, says he needs between \$750,000 and \$1 million for equipment and “build-out” costs for a new brewery.

Narragansett Beer still seeking R.I. brewery

BY DENISE PERREAULT
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Saying he is making progress toward his goal of opening a brewery in the state, Narragansett Beer CEO Mark Hellendrung hopes the introduction of a new product – a summertime ale – may provide the extra revenue needed to return the brewing of Narragansett beer back home to Rhode Island.

The Providence-based business has since May 2 been selling Narragansett Summer Ale, a new product, at package stores and taverns throughout New England – and at least one package store in Narragansett reports that sales have been brisk. “It’s going like crazy,” said Toni O’Neil, co-owner of O’Neil’s Package Store on Point Judith Road.

“In the summer, with the high temperatures and humidity, people like something a little bit lighter and refreshing,” Hellendrung told Providence Business News in a recent telephone interview, explaining the decision to offer a summer brew.

The Rhode Island native and Brown University graduate, who bought the rights to Narragansett Beer in 2005, said sales of all his company beers this year are up 50 percent throughout New England and 20 percent in Rhode Island alone, compared to last year, though he declined to provide actual sales figures.

“The beer industry is in a little bit of a lull right now, so for us to be growing 20 percent in Rhode Island is a testament to how much people in this state like Narragansett beer,” Hellendrung said.

In round numbers, he said, he needs \$750,000 to \$1 million for equipment and “build-out” costs to establish a basic brewery in Rhode Island, one that would produce draft beer and not bottled or canned products at first.

“We’re about 30 percent away [from our goal]. We’re getting really close and really serious about this,” Hellendrung said. “We’ve looked at a few sites [in Rhode Island] and we’ve had preliminary talks with the state and organizations

like the [Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation], and we’ve had preliminary talks about financing.”

Possible sites he mentioned for the brewery include the former C.J. Fox building near downtown Providence, the former American Tourister plant along the river in Warren, as well as places in Pawtucket, where a new water-treatment system was installed about two years ago, and Cranston, longtime home to the former Narragansett Brewery.

“We’ve toured about a dozen facilities in Rhode Island,” he said.

A decision is about one year away, he added, though much depends on future sales. “We need a few more bars to put Narragansett on tap,” Hellendrung said. He estimated that 250 bars and taverns in Rhode Island alone offer ‘Gansett on tap, but “there are still another 500 who don’t

have us on tap,” he said.

Narragansett Summer Ale is brewed under the supervision of award-winning brew-master Sean Larkin, of Trinity Brew House in downtown Providence, working with Cottrell Brewery in Pawcatuck, Conn., and High Falls Brewery in Rochester, N.Y. Narragansett beer is now brewed at these three sites as well as at a brewery in Latrobe, Penn.

The ale, available on draught and in ‘Gansett’s signature 16-ounce “tallboy” cans, features “two row pale malt and citra hops,” a popular new variety of hops with citrus and passion fruit aromas, according to a news release from the company.

Among the most distinctive aspects of the new product, says Toni O’Neil, is the 16-ounce can with sky-blue background that features a graphic reproduction of the famous Narragansett Towers, along with a surfer catching waves.

In June 2009, Hellendrung announced a campaign to sell 7.5 million cases of Narragansett beer annually, in order to make the opening of a Rhode Island brewery possible. He told PBN the company, which employs 12, now has its sights set on a smaller-scale facility only for draft beer. ■

‘We need a few more bars to put Narragansett on tap.’

MARK HELLENDRUNG
Narragansett Beer CEO