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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Camden County Outlines Decision to Refocus FAA Review to Small Launch Vehicles

**WOODBINE, Ga. – December 19, 2019** – Camden County is nearing completion of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) process for approval to build a commercial space launch site. In coordination with the FAA, Camden County's application has been revised to focus solely on small launch vehicles, which are the types of vehicles manufactured by commercial entities that are expressing the highest interest in operating from Spaceport Camden. Small launch vehicles generally pose fewer environmental and safety concerns, which is of utmost importance to Camden County.

County Administrator Steve Howard clarified the application revision to respond to recent media reports that characterized the revision of Camden County's application as a setback.

"The space industry has progressed dramatically since we started this process," Howard said. "Smaller launch vehicles and small internet and defense satellites have become far and away the biggest market segment for Spaceport Camden."

Camden County is concerned with reports characterizing the FAA as struggling to get safety information from Camden County. This is not the case. First, Camden County sent its full flight safety analysis to the FAA in April 2017 and took the unprecedented step of publicly releasing an ITAR compliant version of its Flight Safety Analysis in 2019. Second, the actual emails released from the FAA in response to FOIA show that the FAA repeatedly calculated that Camden County could meet the regulatory thresholds with hundreds of people on Little Cumberland Island. Further, these emails demonstrate that the FAA explored opportunities with Camden County to ensure compliance with the FAA's requirements.

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On numerous occasions, including as recently as this week, Camden County asked the FAA if the FAA's analysis showed that Camden County could not meet the FAA's regulatory thresholds. The answer received has always been that "the FAA had not come to that conclusion" and that "if the answer was going to be no, they would not waste county tax dollars or federal tax dollars." This fact is also proven by a recently released email in which one FAA engineer wrote in 2017:

*"[Tom Braun] will run the analysis to make a final determination if it will be possible for either of those rockets (Falcon 9 or smaller Vention-type rocket) to fly at that location so that we can tell the Commissioner that is at least possible so that he will continue funding the project. His words at the end of the call: "If it isn't possible, why am I still spending money on it?"*

Since embarking on the Spaceport Camden project, small rockets have emerged as the most important market segment for Camden County. Communications satellites are changing rapidly. What used to be the size of a school bus is being replaced by a satellite the size of an ink-jet printer. Demand for small rockets that can cost effectively launch these smaller payloads is where the space industry is heading. Camden County is positioning itself to capture this market.

Camden County's application for a launch site operator license originally included small to medium-large launch vehicles. Our intention was for this application to capture all of the potential launch vehicles that might operate from Spaceport Camden. Unfortunately, as the 180-day review period wound to a close, it became clear that the FAA was only planning to evaluate the medium-large rocket and not the small rockets Camden County is also seeking.

On October 17, 2019, the FAA first notified Camden County that their independent analysis suggested that a launch of a medium-large rocket included populated areas within an overflight exclusion zone. This information did not comport with the expert analysis conducted by the Aerospace Corporation on behalf of Camden County and released to the public. Analysis from the Aerospace Corporation showed that neither their overflight exclusion zone calculation nor their individual risk curves (100 times more stringent) reached Cumberland Island or Little Cumberland Island.

As a result of the October 17<sup>th</sup> letter, Camden County sought an immediate meeting with the FAA to compare the flight safety analysis prepared for Camden County by the Aerospace Corporation with the FAA's 3<sup>rd</sup> party flight safety analysis. This meeting was not granted until December 10, 2019, six days before the expiration of the 180-day application review period.

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In this meeting it was revealed that the FAA’s own data largely supported the Aerospace Corporation’s conclusions. Notably, that the independent analysis performed on the FAA’s behalf demonstrated that the overflight exclusion zone for a medium-large launcher and the individual risk contours did not extend to habitable structures or private property on Cumberland Island or Little Cumberland Island even if they possibly touched the islands or marsh. Unfortunately, because the FAA delayed notifying Camden County of this issue, it could not be resolved with less than one week before the expiration of the 180-day review period.

Given the regulatory uncertainty and the shift in market potential, Spaceport Camden determined it must focus on the interest from the small launch operators. Camden County and the FAA agreed to toll the license review and refocus the application on small launch vehicles. Camden County believes that narrowing the application to include operation of only small launch vehicles with no first-stage returns is more consistent with the types of operations that will be conducted at Spaceport Camden and will streamline the review process at the FAA.

Camden County stands by the public safety review performed to date and believes that a medium-large launch vehicle with a first-stage return would meet all applicable public safety requirements, even when conservative assumptions are used. We look forward to working with the FAA on small launch vehicles to demonstrate strong compliance with the FAA regulations.

**More about Spaceport Camden:** Our Vision is to develop a successful world class spaceport through a public-private partnership that establishes Camden County as the Commercial Space Center of the United States. Our Mission is to create the premier spaceport strategically positioned to provide economic diversity with a competitive advantage for the space sector, Camden County, the State of Georgia and the United States of America. For more information, please view our website at [www.SpaceportCamden.us](http://www.SpaceportCamden.us).

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