

# Airport Authority seeks lower gas rates

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**MT. VERNON** Mt. Vernon Airport Authority approved an agreement with Affordable Gas & Electric on Tuesday night for the company to negotiate lower natural gas prices for the Authority.

Rob Wielt of AGE presented a proposal to the Authority in November, which board members tabled. On a 5-0 vote, the Authority gave Wielt and the company the authority to negotiate natural gas prices.

Wielt told the board he will not see a reduction in prices until at least May 1, when the new contract will go into effect. Ameren had set a deadline of Jan. 31 for new customers to receive the negotiated rates, however, Wielt said that deadline has been extended to March 12. That in essence gives Wielt and partner Jeff Haarmann another six weeks to have the ability to get other municipalities and/or government agencies signed up to meet the deadline.

"In March, we'll make a recommendation to purchase natural gas at a fixed rate to get a lower rate in the summer," Wielt said. "We will recommend a conservative approach, rather than having to sell on the open market. By signing this contract,

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you're in the game and will get lower rates in May." Wielt also said the company will recommend a variable rate during the summer months.

"Gas is more volatile than electricity. Gas is different in that both proposals are based

on assumptions," said Authority member Gary Chesney. "I'm comfortable working with Rob. You're buying a commodity — that's what it is. It's good to have local people involved."

In other action, the Authority gave member Greg Martin and Airport Manager Chris Collins authority to prepare specifications for new doors to the front entrance at Koziara Terminal. The Authority has been discussing this item for several

months, and based on initial investigations by Martin has learned the two sets of slider doors could be purchased for approximately \$16,000. The sliding doors will work on a motion sensor system — much like the entrance/exist doors to Walmart and Kroger, according to Martin.

#### IN OTHER BUSINESS:

■ The Authority approved a change order of \$96.11 for the Innovation Park project. Collins reported that dry wall was being hung early last

week before the winter storm that stopped construction. He said the work has resumed and it may be completed by the end of the week. He added workers "are moving along" on the HVAC portion of the project.

■ The Authority formally approved the purchase of a snow plow truck and blade from Ford Square, with delivery occurring one day before the winter storm. Collins reported employees were able to clear the entire airfield in about

three hours after the winter storm hit.

"We're pleased with what we got and it got thoroughly tested," Collins said.

As a result of having to buy radios at a cost of \$600 through Mt. Vernon Communications, the entire cost of the project was \$24,438, it was reported. 1-15-19

■ An audit presented by David Kieffer of Olney was approved. We'll have more information on the audit's findings in Thursday's publication.