

# Airport director gives annual aviation report

*Numbers were down in 2017 from 2016.*

**BY JOSH JONES**

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MT. VERNON — During Tuesday's Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners meeting, the 2017 aviation report saw a slight drop from 2016.

"You guys know that 2016 was a down year," said Chris Collins, airport director. "I was really surprised when I did all the stats, that we actually did just a little bit worse than 2016 to 2017."

According to Collins, the airport decreased by 1.3 percent, with \$20,808 operations as opposed to \$21,102 last year.

"Even with the addition of AirGo we didn't stem the tide of less aircraft coming in here," Collins said. "We have less corporate flying on the field now and the loss of the instructors in the training program. There is a lot contributing to this. AirGo did increase the operations a lot, but not enough to take us above last year's number."

Other stats show, jet opera-

tions dropped from 188 to 172 in 2017, while cargo dropped slightly and military stayed roughly the same. Based aircraft is currently sitting at 50, a slight drop from 51 at this time in 2016. Collins said that the numbers were a reflection of what all airports are currently facing in the state.

"Most of this is the general condition of our state. And developers, scouts and economic developing people who just aren't coming here and are going to neighboring states," Collins said. "And I can show that in the stats. Being here for 13 years I have all of that data. And I don't know how to say that any stronger."

"It is not just this airport, it is all of us in Southern Illinois that are experiencing lack of jet and turbo prop equipment sitting out on the ramps, they are sitting in other states. Most of it is property taxes and worker's compensation rates, it is just so much cheaper to do business in neighboring states," Collins continued. "And taxes on maintenance services in some neighboring states are far less than ours and some are even zero. It is just really tough and we are seeing that in our stats."

Chairman Mike Ancona com-

mented on the situation.

"We have touted the fact that our airport is better than anyone's around and it is. But it comes to a point, even as we have stretched every component of our airport to make it a utility for our facility, that will actually compliment everything in our community," Ancona said. "It goes a lot further than just being an airport. We have a lot of activities out here. Chris and our staff have worked really hard to make the airport a viable part of the community. But still we feel like we are being shut out, we need more. Where we go from here is a good question."

Collins said that the airport does its best to control their own destiny with their own operations and own corporate companies that fly at the airport. He is optimistic they will be able to bolster things up with companies and flight training in the future.

## **IN OTHER BUSINESS;**

- The board approved bid for the new sign project from T-Ham Signs at \$17,539.44.

- The board approved the date for Salute to Freedom for July 4, 2018.

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