

Airport Authority accepts resignations

By RICK HAYES

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MT. VERNON — Resignations from the administrative assistant and security guard were accepted by the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority during a special meeting on Tuesday night.

Mary Barnett-Johnson, the administrative assistant, had submitted her resignation on Monday morning. The board also accepted the resignation of Ted Smith, a security guard, effective on March 12.

The Authority gave Airport Manager Chris Collins authority to begin the process of finding a replacement for Barnett-Johnson; and authorized hiring a Quickbooks consultant, Riley Barker, to assist Collins during the transition process.

Barnett-Johnson, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court on Friday to the theft of government funds in the form of Social Security benefits from her deceased mother. Barnett-Johnson reportedly received \$85,353 in Social Security payments from August 2003 through

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September 2011. Her mother died in 2003.

Theft of government funds carries a maximum sentence of 10 years to the Illinois Department of Corrections, a fine of up to \$250,000, supervised release of a minimum of three years and a special assessment fee.

"We here at the airport

have done our own in-depth study, checking our bank accounts, and other financials. Everything seems to be in order at this end. We're happy with that," Airport Authority Chairman Greg Martin said. It was noted that Barnett-Johnson was not authorized to sign airport checks.

Commissioners also said when auditor David Kieffer of Olney conducts the annual audit in April, the commission will request an

"in-depth audit."

"I'm not sure it could be more in-depth because they do a good job anyway," said Commissioner Gary Chesney. "We're just going to let them know; we want to make sure," Martin added.

Martin said he was "shocked and disappointed" by the news of Barnett-Johnson.

He added, "She has been a friend and a good employee, was here for functions and never com-

plained. If you want a model employee, I would've hired her in a heartbeat at my business to greet the public."

Commissioner Mike Ancona said, "This is a close-knit group out here, and everybody becomes family. When somebody in the family lets you down it's a hard pill to swallow. Mary was family for us."

Barnett-Johnson was employed by the Airport Authority just shy of six years, according to Collins.

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