

Airport to abate property taxes

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MT. VERNON — The Mt. Vernon Airport Authority will abate \$15,000 in property taxes to be levied in 2016.

This action will let the authority keep its promise of there being little or no tax increases resulting from a recent \$660,000 bond issuance. The issuance is funding what is known as the Momentum 2020 Capital Development Plan, which involves various airport improvements and new equipment purchases.

Without this action, taxpayers with a home valued at \$67,000 might have noticed a 37-cent increase on the

airport authority's portion of their tax bill. While it's a small uptick, it would still be breaking the promise, Collins said. The increase would have been more for homes valued at a higher amount.

"This way, we can keep our promises," said Airport Director Chris Collins. He later added, "If you see our overall tax rate over the last 16 to 17 years, I mean we are stable. And I don't want to detour from that. I want to try to keep that stable."

The authority adopted the new bond ordinance last month. At that time, airport officials believed there would be no overall

tax increase, judging by a perceived increase in the equalized assessed valuation for this taxing district since the authority's last bond issuance in 2009.

However, after the adoption, Collins took a closer look at the EAV amounts for the past several years and noted the EAV at the 2009 issuance was almost identical to the current EAV.

This means, if the airport's bond and interest levy would be increased from \$205,900 to \$220,000 — as was the plan with the bond issuance — it could result in a "noticeable

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tax increase," states an airport news release.

The Mt. Vernon Airport Board Tuesday approved the \$15,000 abatement to prevent a possible increase. The ordinance instructs the Jefferson County Clerk's Office to amend the Tax Levy

Schedule provided by First MidState Bank to reflect a \$15,000 reduction of the bond and interest levy. This places the bond and interest levy back to \$205,900.

"I will have to manage this situation carefully over the next three years paying close attention to the EAV," Collins said in the release. "If there is a sizable increase in EAV, perhaps the airport will not have to seek the entire \$15,000 abatement each year."

The "worst-case scenario" for doing the abatement is the authority may have to postpone a few of

the smaller projects contained in the Momentum 2020 plan.

Also on Tuesday, SRT Aviation President Richard Carney informed the board one of the airplanes being used for flight training at the airport has been sold. The sale of the Cessna 172 has led to flight students and renters being upset, Carney said.

"They came in and in a matter of minutes bought the airplane and flew it out of here," Carney said. He later added, "We've got some students about ready to take their check rides and now they're

without an airplane."

The airport has agreed to work with SRT to acquire another airplane for flight training. SRT is the airport's fixed base operator.

"Flight training is the initial link that gets an airport to owners of airplanes that are now renting hangars from the airport authority," Collins said. "They're buying fuel, they're doing maintenance, essentially they're spending money. ... And so that's why it's vitally important that there be airplanes that are available for people to learn to fly in." 3-10-16