

Airport Authority refuses to let Red Cross out of its lease

BY RICK HAYES

MT. VERNON MANAGING EDITOR

MT. VERNON — Following a short executive session, the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority on Tuesday night declined to accept a one-time payout from the American Red Cross to forgive the organization for breaking a lease agreement.

Scott Jennings, representing the ARC during the public session of the meeting, asked for the board to consider the proposal.

"The organization is going through a lot of re-alignment which makes for tough decisions," Jennings said.

However, in its motion, the airport authority "respectfully refuses the American Red Cross offer and will not accept anything less than the full amount."

The Red Cross, which closed its

Mt. Vernon office at the airport this past summer and consolidated its services with a location in Centralia, was a few months shy of its second year in operation at Kozaira Terminal. The lease agreement is for a five-year period.

"They basically offered about half of what they owe, which is about \$27,540," Collins said.

During the "public comment" portion of the meeting, Mt. Vernon citizen Larry Griffin encouraged the board to stand its ground on the Red Cross lease issue.

"I'm appalled to hear the Red Cross is micro-managing the use of taxpayers money by getting out of the lease," he said. "I've checked some websites and their top executives are making in excess of \$100,000. I blame it on poor man-

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agement on their part. I encourage the board to not go along with that."

After the public meeting, Griffin said he was not aware that Jennings was a representative from the Red Cross, but that didn't change his opinion.

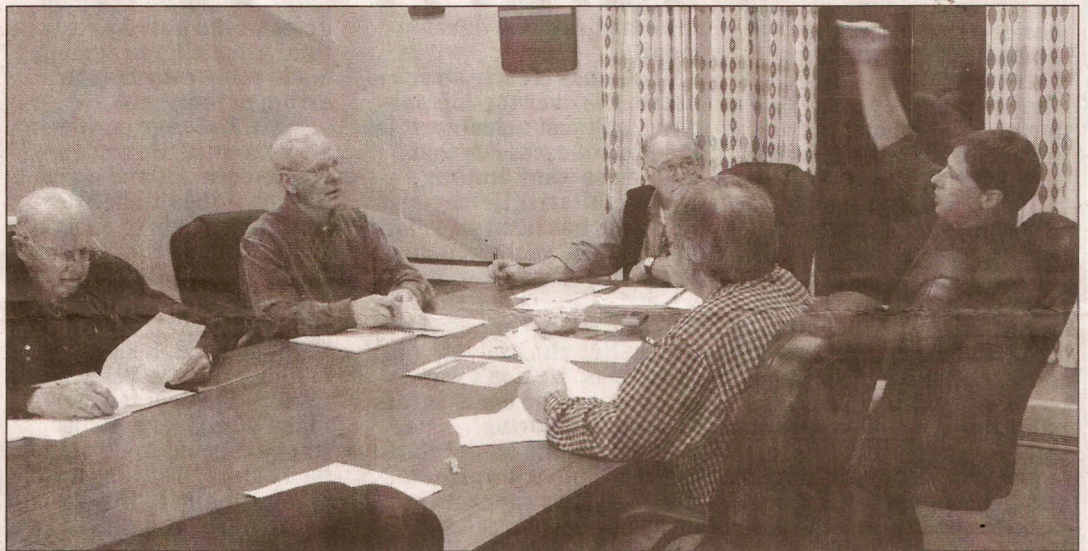
"If I would've known he was from the Red Cross, I would've directed my comments directly to him instead of the board," Griffin said.

In his annual aviation report, Collins said the airport realized a 3.75 percent increase in operations. He said the airport currently has a fleet of 42 planes; and there have been 38 jet operations since Jan. 1, adding that at this time last year, only 26 jets had been serviced.

"A lot of airports are trying to copy what we're doing, which makes me very excited," Collins said.

IN OTHER BUSINESS:

- Approximately \$25,000 in change orders for the new hangar were approved by the board, including a bid of \$24,000 from Lipps Construc-



Sentinel Photo/RICK HAYES

IT'S THIS HIGH — Mt. Vernon Airport Manager Chris Collins, **RIGHT**, makes a point to members of the Airport Authority during its meeting Tuesday. **FROM LEFT**, clockwise, board members Paul Dickerson, Gary Chesney, Mike Ancona, Collins and Kenneth Martin.

tion Co. for an epoxy floor covering. The remaining change orders were for a prop and painting a jam door [\$1,110] and to upgrade the hanging of heaters [\$1,120].

- Authorized Collins to put out for bid on E-Bay a Ford 9030 tractor with a snow-blower attachment. Collins said the tractor was purchased for \$68,000 in 1993, and he estimated a good starting bid for

the tractor should be about \$35,000. The snow blower — which cost about \$8,000 new — will list for \$4,000.

- Approved the purchase of a \$295 advertisement for a

Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce map.

- Approved the purchase of \$2,145 for new tires on the jet fuel truck.

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