

Airport Board looks at new event, discusses personnel matter

Mt. Vernon Outland Airport considered as location to start 2013 Air Venture Cup Race

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MT. VERNON — Pilots may be visiting Mt. Vernon this summer for the first time to kick off an annual aircraft race.

The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Authority Board of Commissioners met for its regular meeting Thursday night. Airport Manager Chris Collins gave an update on upcoming events. In addition to all of the annual events set to be held at the airport this spring through fall, he said there has been discussion of hosting yet another event that may draw visitors to Mt. Vernon from across the region.

In November, Collins said, he received a call from an airport manager in Wisconsin, who said he had attended the first Light Sport Aircraft (LSA) Expo the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport hosted. The caller he said he was impressed with many qualities of the airport, including its staff and leader's attitude and its infrastructure.

Thus, Collins said he has expressed interest in making Mt. Vernon a part of the annual AirVenture Cup Race, which is an annual cross-country flying course and last year had more than 50 aircraft participate, according to information from the race's website.

"This isn't set in stone yet, they're still working out all of the details," he said.

Also due to some weather issues farther north, Collins said, the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport has been considered as a part of the race, and he said the event organizers are looking at making Mt. Vernon the first stop on the three-stop tour, stopping second in

Dixon and then leading to Wisconsin. The pilots are timed between each stop, with a banquet held after the race completion.

Collins said it could be important for the airport and the community for a number of reasons.

"They would come in here ... meet the racers, see the airplanes, offer Young Eagles rides, maybe do demonstration flights around town," he said. "So it's beneficial to the community because of the two nights of the hospitality, and benefits the airport because of the prestige."

He said the event is being looked at for July 26-28.

Other good news regarding events, Collins said, is that he recently received a call from the Commemorative Airforce Arizona Wing that they are interested in visiting Mt. Vernon this year. He said they will bring a new plane, a B-25 Mitchell Bomber called "Maid In The Shade."

The group is set to visit Mt. Vernon from Sept. 3-9, which Collins said falls in conjunction with the annual LSA Expo.

PERSONNEL DISCUSSION

Also at Thursday's meeting, the board went in to executive session to discuss personnel matters.

"We had a personnel request from our former administrative assistant regarding vacation time," Collins said. "We had a lengthy discussion on whether to grant her vacation time or to deny it."

In February, the board accepted the resignation of six-year employee Mary Barnett-Johnson after she pled guilty to theft of government funds in the form of Social Security benefits from her

deceased mother, according to Sentinel archives.

He said there are a few unauthorized credit card charges that were on the former assistant's credit card that will also be a part of the forthcoming audit, which is a part of the reason why the board decided to take action of the issue of vacation time at a later date.

"If she's due the money, we'll pay it," Collins said.

The board approved a motion to table the issue of granting the vacation time until the official audit is completed.

Collins said the board was set to hear the results of the audit Thursday, but there are still a few items for the auditors to review.

He said the airport authority's finances are in good shape, however, they did recently send letters to the tenants at the airport regarding the missed invoices some of the tenants contacted them about.

"We have done everything we know to check our finances, working through the direction of our auditors on this exhaustive audit that is about to begin ... and one of those is to issue a letter to all of our tenants the balance on their accounts."

He said nothing was missed in the review of the tenant accounts and the airport has already received a response to a majority of the 50 letters it sent.

ALSO Thursday:

- Collins gave an update on the construction at Innovation Park. Due to wet conditions, he said crews have not been able to do much as digging is the next step.

- The board approved an annual insurance bid with Health Alliance, the lowest bidder, which Collins said is about \$345 a month lower than the rate last year, due to personnel changes. +14-13
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