

Airport readies for cross country race

Planes will race from Mt. Vernon to Oshkosh, Wis., next month

BY EMILY ROTH

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MT. VERNON — Director Chris Collins announced on Tuesday's airport board meeting that the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport is currently gearing up for the Air Venture Cup Race to be held July 17 to 19.

The airport was selected as the venue for the race's starting point over Dayton, Ohio. Mt. Vernon previously hosted the race in 2013.

"This is the country's fastest cross country race from good ol' Mt. Vernon, Ill. to Oshkosh, Wis.,"



Sentinel Photo/EMILY ROTH

REVIEWING NOTES — Airport Director Chris Collins, RIGHT, seated by Chairman Mike Ancona, LEFT, looks over notes on Tuesday while updating the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Authority Board of Commissioners on the impending Air Venture Cup Race. Planes will race from Mt. Vernon to Oshkosh, Wis., from July 17 to 19.

Please see **Airport**, Page 3A

Airport:

Continued From Page 1A

stated Collins. "We hope to have this here every odd year because in the even years it starts in Mitchell, S.D."

The Air Venture Cup traditionally has a starting point in South Dakota in even years and Ohio in odd years. Due to Mt. Vernon's past experience with hosting the race, officials were reportedly impressed with the airport as a venue and the hospitality of the city.

Dayton reportedly provided logistical problems for the pilots because of the need of having to fly around Chicago and the rough weather the planes encountered. There was also the need for multiple hotel rooms, which caused race officials to look due south for a new starting point.

"There are already 32 race planes signed up, if I remember right, that's the most [race

organizers] have said they've ever had this far in advance," explained Collins. "We could be looking at over 60 race planes here and 10 to 15 support aircraft. They're coming in from all over the country and from Canada."

Collins estimated that the last Air Venture Cup Race held in Mt. Vernon drew 50 race planes. He hopes that the race will encourage visitors to spend money with local businesses, stimulating the local economy.

"It's going to be a very very busy summer for us here at the airport," he said. "I don't know about you guys, I'm excited, but I'm also overwhelmed. Hopefully we didn't bite off more than we can chew."

Other events to be hosted by the airport over the summer are the annual Salute to Freedom Independence Day celebration and flights aboard the B-17G Flying Fortress "Aluminum Overcast" from July 3 through 5.

"We want to show the EAA that we're worthy of having these events here," said Collins.