Airport board approves CFI Initiative

The airport is facing a shortage of certified flight instructors

BY JOSH JONES
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — The Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners approved a committee and initiative for certified flight instructors (CFIs) at its monthly meeting on Tuesday.

"We are at a point where we need to do something," said Chris Collins, airport director. "Basically, we have some decline going on right now. We have guys that are selling airplanes and guys that are getting out of it. Couple that with a very limited instruction staff over at the FBO (Fixed Based Operator) and we need to try to help. What I am asking is to form a committee and report back to this board with an initiative to home grow some flight instructors."

Collins said that there were several different levels of certification and the goal is to find people in the area that are either a certified flight instructor or very close to the proper certification. He said currently they have two people close to certification.

"This is essentially to bridge the gap between someone that has a desire to want to fly and aircraft ownership," Collins said. "Because if there is no instructor, there is no way for that dreamer to get into the air."

Collins said in previous years there were four CFIs that were able to handle around eight students for instruction, but currently they have two part-time CFIs in which their schedules only allow them to instruct around two to three students.
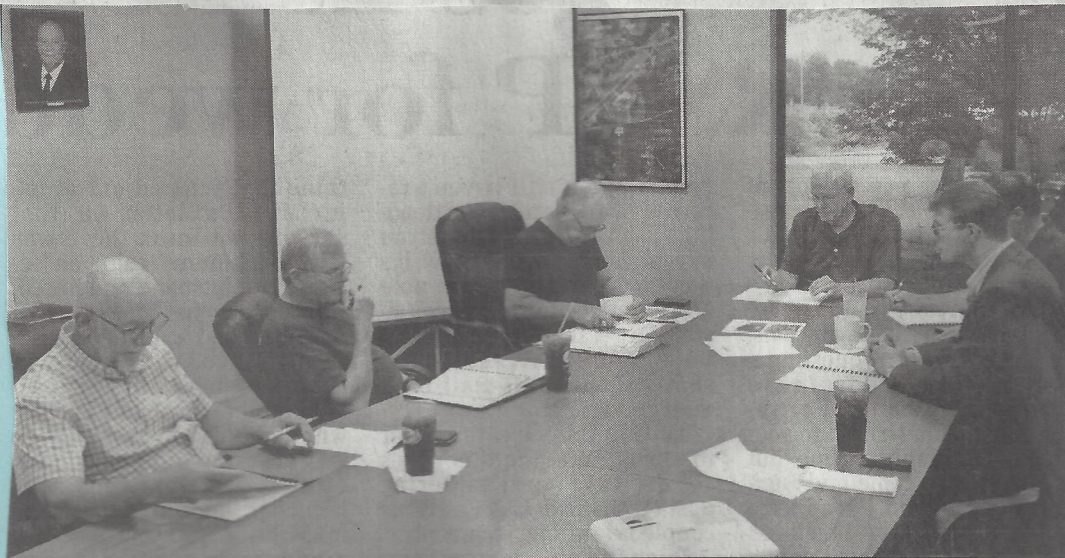
"With only two part-time CFIs on duty for private instrument training, we are watching opportunities decline as days go by," Collins said.

"Rich Carney, SRT (Aviation) President, informed me that the company has an impressive list of candidates willing to invest money for private pilot training and the airport desperately needs instructors."

Collins said upon finding candidates they will come up with agreements and contracts to help ensure that they stick around the area. Collins explained the importance of having candidates be from the area so that they are more inclined to stay.

"I recommend to the committee when they start formulating with somebody that they really want to invest with, look closely at breach of contract," said Commissioner Ryan Wellmaker. "So, in the event that we were to invest x amount of dollars into somebody and they were to pull out, breach of contract would be really important to make sure our investment doesn't go sour."

Sentinel Photo/JOSH JONES

CFI INITIATIVE — The Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners approved a committee and initiative for certified flight instructors during Tuesday's meeting. The goal of the group will be to find people that are either certified flight instructors or close to certification and form a partnership to help the airport gain instructors.

Airport:

Continued from Page 1A

The issue of not enough certified flight instructors is not exclusive to Mt. Vernon Outland Airport and is a growing problem in the industry.

"The problem is the airlines are just taking anybody that has time, less than age 60 and willing to relocate. They are after people like me, if you have multiple hundreds of hours and you just need a few things polished up, they will put a contract in front of you and send you to Florida," Collins said. "They are down at SIU-Carbondale right now. If you get an instrument rating at SIU your freshman or sophomore year, there is an airline waiting to give you a contract before you get a bachelor's degree at 200 hours.

"That is having an impact all over the country, where airports don't have instructors anymore," Collins said. "When airports don't have instructors there is no pathway to the hangars and, with no airplanes in the hangars, bills don't get paid and operations don't get made."

IN OTHER BUSINESS:

• The board approved the 2018/2019 Annual Budget Ordinance #2018-03.

• The board approved going out for bids and specs for the Hangar A-800 Revitalization Project.

jjones@morningsentinel.com