

Mt. Vernon Airport Board votes to freeze annual tax levy

Board agreed to freeze tax levy at \$123,128 in its annual meeting

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MT. VERNON — The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Board voted at its monthly meeting on Tuesday to unanimously approving a motion to freeze its annual tax levy at \$123,128, which was the same amount allotted to the board last year.

"I see no reason to increase [the tax levy]," Airport Director Chris Collins said as he addressed the board. "I think we all at the table kind of agree we want to stabilize the taxes, and in keeping with that theme, we should freeze our levy at \$123,128."

Collins continued though the formula is complicated he felt freezing the tax levy was the best idea possible to keep the airport in good financial shape.

"In basic finance, whether it's the airport, or school district or the library, we all are subject to property taxes and elimination, and so we can only take a 4.99 percent increase over the previous levy." Collins said. "That's all the state statute allows us to do."

"Many districts have to do calculations to see if they want to take up to 4.99 percent, leave it the same, or decrease it, and it's very rare to see anyone decrease, or anyone freeze it. And I recommend we freeze it because we were doing very well financially. If we weren't doing very well, we would have asked for the 4.99 percent increase."

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Sentinel Photo/SHAWN SINGLETON

MONTHLY BUSINESS — FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Board Chairman Mike Ancona, Airport Director Chris Collins and Board Commissioner Ryan Wellmaker discuss business during the board's monthly meeting on Tuesday.

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Two years ago, the board voted to freeze the tax levy. However, last year it voted to ask for an increase. But Collins made calculations in the spring that led to his decision to call for a freeze in the best interests of taxpayers in Jefferson County.

"I don't want to gamble and then the taxpayers see an increase, and that's really why I did what I did," he said. "We're trying to hold our taxes steady and stable, and so to make sure they stay steady and stable, we're not taking the increase."

The freeze is part of a fis-

cally conservative approach to running the airport Collins said is designed to make the airport as viable as possible with minimal burden to taxpayers.

"I'm very proud that if you pull a tax bill, and you look at the taxes, the only one on there that's lower than us is the Rend Lake Conservancy District," he said. "If you look at Jefferson County, we're the lowest thing on the tax bill, and I want to keep it that way."

"I want to try to live within our means, and generate as much revenue on the field here to take it off the backs of our taxpayers — and I know these five guys [on the Airport Board] feel that way too."

In the end, an increase

would only be a go-to should the airport experience any financial problems in the future.

"But we also want to say, 'hey, if we get into trouble.' Not any real trouble, but if something happens where we need a little help, we also want to ask the taxpayers — and that's in the form of the 4.99 percent," Collins said. "I hope we don't ever have to float an alternative revenue bond, which would mean that there was a instance like a hole in the runway or something we didn't have the money to fix that would take an alternative revenue bond for us to capture or something funny like that."

"That's a doomsday thing." ssingleton@morningsentinel.com

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