

Airport Authority approves ARFF training class

The agreement is between the airport and the city

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MT. VERNON — During the August meeting of the Mt. Vernon Airport Authority Board of Commissioners, the board approved an agreement with the City of Mt. Vernon for Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) training classes for the Mt. Vernon Fire Department.

Airport Director Chris Collins discussed his involvement in regards to ARFF training scenarios at the airport as well as its overall need.

"The city of Mt. Vernon firefighters, we are very blessed to have them protecting all of us here at

the airport," Collins said. "And according to our 139 certificate, we have to have an ARFF qualified firefighter at the airport at all times."

Collins said that currently there are around 10 ARFF certified firefighters that rotate at the airport.

"There are certain days when it can be tough to schedule an ARFF certified firefighter at the station," Collins said.

According to Collins in order to be an ARFF certified firefighter, firefighters have to complete a 40-hour course as well as recurrent training.

"It is that initial course that most of the department has not had," Collins said. "It has been over, I am going to guess, 18 years since they have had an ARFF class."

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Collins said that they also had to consider that in the coming years there will be retirements of currently ARFF certified firefighters.

"If we don't have a class really soon, we are running the risk of not having any ARFF qualified firefighters over there within three to five years," Collins said.

Assistant Chief of the Mt. Vernon Fire Department Kevin Sargent explained the overall excitement when the class was approved.

"The last time this course was taught was in the early 2000's. Right now we have 14 members of the fire department that are airport certified, but they are getting to the point of retirement age," Sargent said. "We need to train the next generation to carry on so we have coverage for the airport in terms of aircraft emergencies."

Collins said there were some benefits to having the class on location.

"The good news is our firefighters don't have to

travel anywhere outside of Mt. Vernon and are taught by our own," Collins said.

Collins noted there were still costs attached to the class.

"Even though that sounds very good and affordable, there is still money attached to it," Collins said, "because we have to pay overtime for the firefighters, pay for the instructor and pay for the books and things like that."

"Right now the airport and the city have agreed to share the cost of the training, and we are thinking it is going to be a not to exceed \$10,000 total," Collins said. "It is one of those shining moments where the needle has centered and I think if we don't take advantage of this now we could be in a world of hurt."

Collins gave his overall reaction to the agreement.

"It is great having such a dedicated fire department here serving our city and our airport," Collins said. "We have got a lot of experience and a lot of talent."

The next regular meeting will be at 6 p.m. Sept. 11 at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

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